

Instructor: Ramzi Fawaz
 Session Hours: M 2:30-5
 Location: L155 Education Building

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English 245_Section 002: Seminar in the Major

A Home in the World: Community and Belonging in Twentieth Century U.S. Culture

Course Description: This course will explore competing visions of community, belonging and collective life in twentieth century U.S. culture and politics. We will ask how writers, artists, filmmakers, political thinkers, and scholars in this period produced multiple definitions of “hanging together” within the framework of American democracy, while articulating vastly different motivations for pursuing collectivity and shared governance. In particular, we will study antiracist, feminist, and queer responses to such phenomenon as Jim Crow segregation, post-WWII internationalism and human rights, the nuclear family ideal of the 1950s, the Cold War, the Vietnam War, neoliberalism and Islamophobia among others. In so doing, we will ask: how did a nation wracked by dramatic and often violent economic, social, and political inequality also encourage the invention of innovative, rebellious, and effective forms of alternative community and belonging? Along the way we will compare, debate, and rethink a range of concepts describing different forms of solidarity and togetherness in American society including pluralism, cosmopolitanism, human rights, radical democracy, collectives, multiculturalism, and “postethnic” perspectives among others.

Required Texts:

Octavia Butler, *Dawn* (1987)
 Marilyn French, *The Women’s Room* (1977)
 Andrew Holleran, *Dancer from the Dance* (1978)
 Carson McCullers, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1940)
 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland* (1915)
 Toni Morrison, *Sula* (1973)
Octavia’s Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements, edited by Walida Imarisha and Adrienne Maree Brown (2015)
 Sarah Schulman, *Conflict is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility, and the Duty of Repair* (2016)

All texts marked with * will be available to you online through the D2L portal at <https://learnuw.wisc.edu>.

Course expectations: This course will demand rigorous reading, writing, and viewing on a weekly basis in addition to consistent attendance in our weekly seminar meetings. Students should be prepared to devote a significant amount of time to preparing for class, especially on weeks when we are reading literary texts, which require more time to complete than scholarship or films. You should always bring a physical copy of the text we are reading to class on the day we are discussing it. This includes printing out any literary or scholarly text that is posted on D2L, bringing it with you to class, taking notes in the margins, and using it as a resource for

study and essay writing. You should maintain a course notebook and use it to keep a written record of the ideas and concepts you encounter in our course readings and viewings and seminar discussions. In the first four weeks of class, we will practice developing strong note taking skills through a series of exercises that ask you to write down observations and ideas about our course texts. You will use these notes to develop your first two paper assignments.

Screening movies: All course films will be streamed on D2L for your convenience. Each assigned movie must be viewed **PRIOR TO** the class session under which it is listed. You may also view any of the movies using iTunes, Netflix, and YouTube if they are available.

Course Assignments and Grade Distribution: Your grade will be determined by three rubrics: note taking exercises, paper assignments, and participation in discussion. There are three papers of varying lengths, which ask you to exercise different skills including an oral history analysis, close analysis of a cultural text, and independent research. **Participation in our weekly discussions represents a significant portion of your grade and should be taken just as seriously as any assignment in the course.** Grade distribution will be as follows:

Assignment #1: Note Taking Exercises, 10%

Assignment #2 Oral History Analysis, 15%

Assignment #3: Analyzing a Cultural Text, 20%

Assignment #4: Mini-research Paper: 25%

Participation: 30%

Important Note: No late papers will be accepted, and no extensions will be granted on written work without advance approval based on medical or emergency circumstances.

Attendance: Attendance and participation at every seminar meeting is non-negotiable. That means not only showing up, but arriving prepared to discuss our week's readings, and being actively engaged in class dialogue. An unexcused absence incurs a 10% percent reduction in your participation grade unless otherwise permitted in advance. Inform me of all unforeseeable absences, such as those caused by illness or a personal emergency, as soon as possible. Unless you require a laptop as a learning aid, all portable electronic devices need to be discontinued during class sessions. **I will grant each student one excused absence for any reason.**

Academic Integrity: To learn strategies for researching, compiling, and presenting your arguments, you must complete all stages of the work yourself: taking the words of others, or presenting the ideas of others as your own not only prohibits you from learning the skills of academic research, it is also a violation of the University's Code of Academic Integrity. All members of our community share responsibility for creating an environment supportive of intellectual honesty and integrity. In other words, don't cheat or plagiarize. It's just bad form.

Course Accessibility: At all times, this seminar will be open and accessible to students with disabilities. If you are a student enrolled with the McBurney Disability Resource Center or have a disability but have not used the MDRC, I encourage you to speak with me or your TA regarding your rights to accommodation. For more information, contact MDRC, 702 W. Johnson Street, at 608-263-2741. Or refer to <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/services/>.

**Part I:
Democracy's Others**

Week 1: Monday, January 23

Pre-reading: selections from Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America Vol. 1**

W.E.B. DuBois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," and "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others," from *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)*

Emma Goldman, "Patriotism: A Menace to Liberty" (1908)*

Randolph Bourne, "Trans-National America" (1916)*

Week 2: Monday, January 30

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland* (1915)

Mari Jo Buhle, "Introduction," from *Feminism and its Discontents: A Century of Struggle With Psychoanalysis* (1998).

**Part II:
The Many Voices of "The People"**

Week 3: Monday, February 6

Screening: **Sullivan's Travels** (Sturges, 1939)

Michael Denning, "Introduction," and "Waiting for Lefty," from *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (1997)*

Kenneth Burke, "Revolutionary Symbolism in America" (1935)*

Selections from Lawrence and Cornelia Levine, *The People and the President: America's Extraordinary Conversation With F.D.R.* (2002)*

Assignment #2 due Friday, February 10 by Noon

Week 4: Monday, February 13

Carson McCullers, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1940)

Part III:
“The American Century” and its Discontents

Week 5: Monday, February 20

Henry Luce, “The American Century” (1941)*

Hisaye Yamamoto, “Seventeen Syllables” (1949) and “Wilshire Bus” (1950)*

Martin Luther King Jr., “Loving Your Enemies” (1957)*

Christina Klein, “Sentimental Education,” from *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (2003)*

Week 6: Monday, February 27

Marilyn French, *The Women’s Room* (1977), pages 1-130.

Betty Friedan, “The Problem that Has No Name” and “The Happy Housewife Heroin,” from *The Feminine Mystique* (1963)*

William Whyte, “The Ideology of the Organization Man” from *The Organization Man* (1956)*

Warren Susman and Edward Griffin, “Did Success Spoil the United States?: Dual Representations in Postwar America” (1989)*

Week 7: Monday, March 6

Finish *The Women’s Room*.

Part IV:
Against the Grain of American Community

Week 8: Monday, March 13

Screening: **Berkeley in the Sixties** (Kitchell, 1990)

Selections from Students for a Democratic Society, *The Port Huron Statement* (1962)*

Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet” (1964)*

Hannah Arendt, “Lying in Politics” (1972)*

Shulamith Firestone, “The Dialectic of Sex,” “On American Feminism,” and “Conclusion,” from *The Dialectic of Sex: A Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970)*

Assignment #3 due Sunday, March 19 by noon

Week 9: Spring Break

Week 10: Monday, March 27

Toni Morrison, *Sula* (1973)

The Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement” (1978)*

Week 11: Monday, April 3

Andrew Holleran, *Dancer from the Dance* (1978)

Robert McRuer, “Gay Gatherings: Reimagining the Counterculture” (2001)*

Week 12: Monday, April 10

Screening: *Network* (Lumet, 1977)

Jimmy Carter, “The Crisis of Confidence Speech” (1979)*

Christopher Lasch, “The Awareness Movement and the Social Invasion of the Self,” from *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (1979)*

Arlie Russell Hoschild, “Exploring the Managed Heart” and “Feeling Management: From Private to Commercial Use,” from *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (1983)*

Part IV:

Worldmaking and other Practices of Hanging Together

Week 13: Monday, April 17

Octavia Butler, *Dawn* (1987)

David Hollinger, “Postethnic America” (1992)*

Week 14: Monday, April 24

Wendy Brown, “Preface,” “Undoing Democracy: Neoliberalism’s Remaking of State and Subject,” and “Educating Human Capital,” from *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* (2015)*

Moustafa Bayoumi, selections from *How Does it Feel to Be A Problem: Being Young and Arab in America* (2008)*

Week 15: Monday, May 1

Sarah Schulman, *Conflict is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility, and the Duty of Repair* (2016)

**Assignment #4 due Saturday, May 13 by noon*