



AMERICAN CITIES

ENGL23045 | Fall 2016 | MWF 12-12:50 | Kauke 244

Professor Laura Finch

Office: Kauke 214

Hours: WF 8:30-9:30am

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Course description

Today more than 50% of the world's population live in cities - and in the United States this number is a staggering 82.5 %. However, to study the city is not merely to collect facts and figures but also to think about the ways that we imagine and represent urban space. As the travel writer Jonathan Raban has said, "the city as we imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, and nightmare, is as real, maybe more real than the hard city one can locate on maps" (1984). In this class we will cover a broad sweep of 20th century American novels, poetry, films, and plays to consider questions such as: What is the relationship between the written city and the lived city? How has the American city altered over the course of the century? How do different populations experience urban space - with a central focus on race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality throughout the course.

Required Texts

1. Nathanael West, *Miss Lonelyhearts* and *Day of the Locust* | 978-0-8112-1822-1
2. Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* | 978-0-06-091307-6
3. Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange* | 978-1-56689-064-9
4. Samuel Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* | 978-0-8147-1920-6
5. Laurie Weeks, *Zipper Mouth* | 978-1-55861-748-3
6. John Edgar Wideman, *Philadelphia Fire* | 978-0-679-73650-9
7. Claudia Rankine, *Citizen* | 978-1-55597-690-3
8. Jennifer Marie Brissett, *Elysium* | 978-1-61976-053-0

You will leave this class with the:

- Ability to engage with different literary genres (poetry, drama, novels, films)
- Understanding of changing literary history across the 20th/21st centuries
- Awareness of the way that structural inequality affects peoples according to ethnicities, races, genders, sexualities, and classes and how this informs the structure of literary works.
- A foundation in the evolving history between cities and literature
- Developing close, critical reading skills.
- Ability to participate constructively in in-class discussions, group work, and active note-taking.
- Ability to write critical, analytical English essays in exam and non-exam contexts.
- AND you will have read some incredible / shocking/ unexpected/ all round awesome novels in a community of readers who want to discuss these books with you!

Course Requirements

Participation		
Attendance + Participation		25 %
Leading Discussion*		15 %
Exams		
Mid-term exam (In Class)	Oct. 7th	10 %
Final exam (Take Home) **	Dec. 12th	20 %
Papers		
Short paper 1 ***	Sept. 16th	10 %
Short paper 2	Nov. 9th	10 %
Short Paper 3	Nov. 21st	10 %

* Leading Discussion: In pairs you will lead the first half of a class during the semester. This will include writing two substantive discussion questions to be distributed to the entire class in the lesson before the class you will lead. You will come to class with 2-3 key passages that you will be ready to discuss that are related to at least one of the discussion questions, although you may move on from there to other topics.

** OPTIONAL Research Paper: If you feel inspired to get even more involved in one or two of the texts, you may write a 5-6 page research paper for optional credit. If the paper is completed satisfactorily your final grade will go up by one notch (e.g. from a B+ to an A-). Due on Dec 12th with final exam.

*** Three Short Papers: Very short essay or essays giving a close reading of a passage from a text. The passage you are looking at should be at the top of the paper (you can photograph and put the screenshot of the excerpt on the page as long as it is legible).

Syllabus

Unit one: Issues and Contexts		
Wed 24th August	Intro, Syllabus	
Unit two: Race and Space		
Fri 26th	Harlem Renaissance Poetry: Claude McKay, "Subway Wind"; Langston Hughes, "Theme for English B"	
Mon 29th	Harlem Renaissance Poetry and Massey and Denton "The Continuing Causes of Segregation"	
Unit two: Race and Space		
Wed 31st Fri 2nd September	Lorraine Hansbury, Raisin in the Sun (1959) and Langston Hughes "Harlem (A Dream Deferred)"	
Mon 5th	No Class	
Unit three: Getting Weird in LA		
Wed 7th	Day of the Locust	
Fri 9th	Mike Davis "City of Quartz"	
Mon 12th		
Wed 14th	Writing Workshop	
Fri 16th	<i>Crying of Lot 49</i>	First Short Paper Due in Class
Mon 19th		
Wed 21st		
Fri 23rd		
Mon 26th	<i>Tropic of Orange</i>	
Wed 28th		
Fri 30th		
Mon 3rd October		

Wed 5th

Fri 7th

**Midterm In-Class
Exam**

FALL BREAK

Unit Four: Queering the City

Mon 17th Times Square Red, Times Square
Blue

Wed 19th

Fri 21st

Mon 24th *Zipper Mouth* and Iris Marion Young,
"The Ideal of Community"

Wed 26th

Unit Five: Policing the City

Fri 28th *Philadelphia Fire* and Michel
Foucault "Discipline and Punish"

Mon 31st

Wed 2nd
November

Fri 4th

Mon 7th Writing Workshop

Wed 9th *Citizen*

**Second close
reading paper due**

Fri 11th

Mon 14th

Unit Six: Storms in the City

Wed 16th Essay on Katrina

Fri 18th Writing Workshop

Mon 21st *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, dir.
Benh Zeitlin (2012)

**Third close reading
paper due**

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Mon 28th *Elysium*

Wed 30th	
Fri 2nd December	
Mon 5th	
Wed 7th	City film to be decided
Fri 9th	Don Mitchell, "The S.U.V. Model of Citizenship"
Mon 12th, 7pm	Final Exam Monday 12th December, 7pm

Class Etiquette

This is a discussion based class that relies on your participation. Come to class: on time, ready to discuss the reading, with a hard copy of the text that you have annotated, and with respect for your classmates. Be aware of your class participation: if **you talk a lot, wait and see if someone else might have something to add. If you speak very little, work towards participating more. As a class community we are aiming to make an environment where everyone feels that they can speak and be heard freely.** Enjoy the chance to discuss the wide range of texts that we will encounter in the class. We are here to ask questions!

This course requires you to be a mindful and courteous participant during in-class discussions. Therefore, laptops and cellphones are not allowed unless specified by the instructor. If I catch you sneakily checking your phone, I will ask you to turn it off! Repeated infractions will lower your participation grade.

Accommodations

This class welcomes students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult or if you have medical information that you need to share with me, please let me know. I am committed to creating an effective learning environment for all students, but I can only do so if you discuss your needs with me as early as possible. I promise to maintain the confidentiality of these discussions. The Learning Center also offers a variety of services and accommodations to students with disabilities based on appropriate documentation, nature of disability, and academic need. In order to initiate services, students should meet with Pam Rose, Director of the Learning Center, at the start of the semester to discuss reasonable accommodations. You may contact the Learning Center at ext. 2595 or through email at prose@wooster.edu.

Other resources

Office of Sexuality and Gender Inclusion <https://www.wooster.edu/students/diversity/osgi/>
Office of International Student Affairs <https://www.wooster.edu/students/diversity/oisa/>
Office of Multicultural Student Affairs <https://www.wooster.edu/students/diversity/omsa/>

Personal Pronouns and Chosen Name

In the first meeting of class we will all have a chance to state our preferred name and pronoun (she, he, they, ze, etc). This class will honour any request to be addressed by an alternate name or gender pronoun.

Absences

Please inform me of excused absences (sport, religious holiday, etc) at least a week ahead of time. You are permitted two unexcused absences in the semester. After this you will lose 5 points (out of the possible 25 available for participation and attendance) for every absence. Repeated lateness of more than five minutes will also count as an absence. If you are having trouble with time-management please speak to me and visit the Academic Advice and Learning Center:

<https://www.wooster.edu/academics/apex/academics/>

College is a hectic and exciting place, and many of us need help to manage time, with writing and reading, or with focus studying. The Learning Center offers all these services and more - make use of it!

Paper and Exam Submission Policy

All papers must be submitted as a hard copy in class.

1. The short papers have an extension built in. Any paper submitted by the class after the deadline will receive a 5% grade reduction. After this, NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.
2. There are no excused absences for in-class exams. If you miss these classes you will receive a zero.
3. Only the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement can approve a petition to reschedule your final exam. Unless you are rescheduling for a medical reason, the petition must be submitted 3 or more weeks before the exam date.

Guidelines for Written Work

Type all written assignments in a standard 12-point font.

Use double spacing.

Set all four margins to 1 inch.

Number your pages.

Include your name, the course number, and the correct date on page 1.

Give your essay a creative yet informative title.

Spell-check and proofread your essay. If possible read it aloud - you'll be amazed how many mistakes you'll notice if you do this.

MLA citations: When you quote a passage from a text, give the number of the page from which the passage comes in parentheses after the passage, e.g.

"This is the quotation" (27).

Do not use the abbreviations "pg" or "p" within the parentheses. Quotations of more than four lines should be single-spaced, indented, and without quotation marks.

Please use <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/> which gives examples and tips

Academic Integrity

You can find Wooster's academic integrity policy here: <https://www.wooster.edu/students/diversity/oisa/academic-concerns/integrity/>. It is the College's expectation that students be aware of and meet the expectations expressed in this policy. Dishonesty in any of your academic work is a serious breach of the Code of Academic Integrity and is grounds for an "F" for the entire course. Such violations include turning in another person's work as your own, copying from any source without proper citation, crossing the boundary of what is allowed in a group project, submitting an assignment produced for a course to a second course without the authorization of all the instructors, and lying in connection with your academic work.