

WRIT-015: Writing and Culture Seminar
Reading and Writing the Urban Centuries



Photo Credit: "Hill St. Look North to 6th." 1950s. Photograph. Dorothy Peyton Gray Transportation Library and Archive at the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Los Angeles, CA.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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OFFICE HOURS

Tuesdays 2:00-4:00 p.m.
Thursdays 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
and by appointment

Class Locations

Sec. 23, WF 11:00-12:15 Car Barn 300
Sec. 20, WF 12:30-1:45 Car Barn 300
Sec. 21, WF 3:30 - 4:45 ICC 219A

COURSE WEBSITE

<https://writingandculture015.wordpress.com>

Password for Readings: Fall2015

In this course, we will:

- Read critically, paying attention to the ways that texts reflect their contexts, purposes, and audiences.
- Adapt our writing for multiple genres, styles, and technologies in ways that reflect different rhetorical situations.
- Based on analysis of genre, context, purpose, and audience, deploy language's many resources, including its figurative power as well as conventions of grammar, punctuation, syntax, and semantics, to shape and communicate meaning with clarity and fluency.
- Research, evaluate, and synthesize evidence in order to build and support effective analyses and arguments for different contexts, purposes, and audiences.

In order to achieve these goals, we will study the urban centuries: the concentration of people in cities throughout the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first century. Scholars, policymakers, and planners have already described the twenty-first century as *the* urban century, and the promise or inevitability of the mega-city seems to offer something distinctly new and has been met with a mixture of foreboding and excitement. Similarly, in the past, individuals experienced dramatic changes in urban spaces and demographics as something radically new. For instance, in the nineteenth century, the populations of London and Paris increased by nearly 500% as people flocked to cities for new types of work. This mass migration became known as the urban revolution. Throughout these past and recent urban transformations, writers, artists, and philosophers have explored the meaning of the city experience and measured how cities have changed the texture of daily life and the structure of relationships.

Although this course is not designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the development of cities or urban planning policies, our writing projects will allow us to inquire about aspects of urban experience: What defines a city? How do we read cities? How do we access history in cities? What is the relationship between the imagination and cities? What is public space? What unique challenges and opportunities do cities present? Due to the complexity and diversity of cities, we will have many opportunities for critical reading and writing.

This class is project-driven. During the first half of the semester, we will practice reading cities by evaluating maps, short films, first-hand accounts, and scholarly texts. You will complete two writing projects that ask you to curate objects related to an urban environment by writing a very short text on an early film of New York City and by creating an interactive geocaching tour of Washington, D.C.. In the second half of the semester, we will turn our attention to developing our own arguments about how others have interpreted and represented cities. You will pursue an individual project that investigates the relationship between a representation of a city (film, t.v. show, series of advertisements) and the “reality” of that city. The argument that you develop in

your project will be remixed as a short video essay. Throughout the entire semester, we will develop research practices that are appropriate for the college-level.

Course Texts and Materials

Fish, Stanley. *How to Write a Sentence and How to Read One*. Harper. 2011.

Freeland, David. *Automats, Taxi Dances, and Vaudeville: Excavating Manhattan's Lost Places of Leisure*. NYU Press. 2012.

Hacker, Diana and Barbara Fister. *Research and Documentation in the Digital Age*. Sixth Edition. Bedford. 2015.

You should NOT purchase e-versions of these books. You are required to bring a physical copy of the book to class. Other readings will be available through our course website. During class discussions, you will not be permitted to use your computer to refer to the readings. I will make available the relevant passages, but you might choose to print out the readings.

Course Work

Your work in this class will be evaluated in the following way:

Participation and Homework: 100 points

Reading Responses: 100 points

Creating Context Paper: 150 points

Geocaching Tour: 300 points

Investigative Paper on Representation of City: 300 points

Short Video Essay: 150 points

Final Process Statement: 100 Points

Total Number of Possible Points: 1, 200 points

Participation and Homework: Your active participation in the course is expected. To participate actively, you should show up for class on time, complete the reading assignments carefully, and bring the appropriate materials to class. Be prepared to respond to discussion questions, pose questions of your own, demonstrate respect for other students' comments, and

help to create a positive learning environment for everyone. Peer reviews and class workshops will be important activities in this course; you are required to participate fully in these activities. You will also regularly complete short homework activities. I will be paying attention to the quality – not simply the quantity – of your participation.

Reading Responses: Throughout the first half of the semester, you will respond to assigned reading through response papers. I will provide a prompt for each response paper. While there will be six opportunities to write responses, you must complete a minimum of five reading responses. In other words, you may skip one response paper; however, the first assigned response paper is required for everyone. If you complete all six response papers, I will drop the lowest grade. You cannot earn extra credit by completing all six response papers. **Please note: Response papers will always be due by noon on Tuesdays. Late response papers will not be accepted.**

Creating Context Project: The first major writing assignment for this course will be very short: 300-350 words. You will choose an early film of New York City from a collection organized by the Library of Congress. In your text, you will create a context for the film by illuminating a specific way of understanding the film. In your text, you will not simply report facts, but you will help the viewer understand the significance of the film. Your text should be focused, rather than provide general information. Your text should offer a point of view and provide the reader with a sense of the significance of the film.

Geocaching Tour: Geocaching is an outdoor scavenger hunt that relies on user-generated content and GPS technology. Working collaboratively with a small group, you will design and publish a tour about and within Washington, D.C.. Together, you will develop a theme, and each individual on the team will produce one “stop” on the tour. In class, we will explore the various possibilities for making your tour informational and interactive. In addition, the group’s tour as a whole should offer a point of view or perspective; the goal for this project is not only to inform a public audience, but to present and support an interpretation of some aspect of the city.

Independent Project/Investigative Paper on Representation of a City: For this project, we will take our inspiration from Thom Andersen’s documentary *Los Angeles Plays Itself*. In this film Andersen contends that Los Angeles is a city where “the representation and the reality get muddled.” In your project, you will choose a representation of a city (film, t.v. show, video game, etc.) and make connections between the representation and the “real” city itself. In this 8-12 page thesis-driven paper, you will make a claim about the relationship between the representation and the reality of your chosen city and support that claim with evidence.

Short Video Essay: As you develop your individual project on the representation of a city, you will plan to remix the content of your essay into a video essay. In a short video (3-5 minutes), you will convey the conclusions from your project to a public audience. You will make choices about what content to include and what images and music to accompany that content. We will have assistance from a multimedia specialist, so no prior experience without video editing is required.

Final Process Statement: During the final exam period, you will submit your investigative project and the video essay remix of your project. At this time, you will also turn in a process statement in which you reflect on how the remixing of the original project revealed something to you about audience, evidence, argumentation, etc. I will provide a prompt for this statement.

Digital Submission of Work: All of your work for this class will be submitted electronically through Google Drive. You do not need to print your work. Instructions for creating and sharing a work folder for this class will be distributed on the first day of class.

Late Work

Late reading responses will not be accepted. All other work for the class should be submitted on time. Any work that comes in late will lose five points for each day it is late.

Drafts of Papers, Office Hours, and Email

I encourage you to use my office hours to share your work with me and to discuss ideas for papers. I am very happy to meet with you at any stage of the writing process. I am also very happy to read drafts of papers. However, I will not pre-grade or proofread a paper.

In addition to office hours, I am happy to answer questions over email. If you'd like me to read a draft, you can email it to me, but we will meet in person to discuss it. I check email regularly during "business hours" Monday-Friday. If you send me an email after 6 p.m. or over the weekend, please expect that I will reply either the next day or on Monday.

Writing Center:

The university has a fantastic Writing Center located in Lauinger Library (217a, next to Midnight Mug). This free tutoring service is available for all students. Writing Center tutors can assist you at any stage of the writing process. Whether you are brainstorming ideas for a paper or polishing a final draft, the tutors at the Writing Center can help you assess and review your work. To set up an appointment, visit <http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu>.

Attendance

Your attendance is required. You may miss up to three classes before absences affect your final grade. Excused absences apply only to religious holidays or health/family emergencies. After three absences, there will be a ten point reduction of your accumulated points for the class. Any student who misses six class sessions - three weeks worth of class - will automatically fail the course. If you have a cold, you may miss class, but it will not be an excused absence. If you have a serious medical condition that requires a hospital stay, then we can work together to ensure your continued participation in the course. For student-athletes, you may miss class for athletic events, but, like all students in the course, you may not miss more than three classes.

Screens in the Classroom

We will use class time to write and to workshop projects; therefore, you should bring a computer to class on a regular basis. I will let you know in advance if your computer is not needed. There will be times, however, when I will ask us to go “screen free” during a class session.

Georgetown Honor Code

At Georgetown, every member of the community is expected to behave responsibly and to exercise academic integrity. All work that you should submit for this course should be your own and should be written for this course.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability, I will make accommodations for you in this class. Please see me early in the semester to discuss what accommodations you need. If you think that you have a disability that will influence your performance in the class, but do not have documentation, please contact the Academic Resource Center (arc@georgetown.edu) for more information.

Title IX

Georgetown University and its faculty are committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including relationship violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault. University policy requires faculty members to report any disclosures about sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the University’s response to sexual misconduct. Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources who can provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct. These resources include Jen Schweer, MA, LPC, Associate Director of Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention, (202) 687-0323 (jls242@georgetown.edu) and Erica Shirley, Trauma Specialist Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS), (202) 687-6985 (els54@georgetown.edu). More information about campus resources and reporting sexual misconduct can be found at <http://sexualassault.georgetown.edu>.

Course Schedule

This schedule provides a tentative plan for the course; I may change, add, or delete assignments or topics as appropriate to our work as a class. Work is due on the day listed. W = writing due, R = reading due, and HW = homework due.

Week One

Friday, September 4

Introductions

Week Two

Tuesday, September 8

W: Reading Response #1 Due by Noon

Wednesday, September 9

R: Paul Lynch, “The Sixth Paragraph: A Re-Vision of the Essay”*

R: David Freeland, “Introduction” of *Automats*, (xv-xxvii)

HW: Register with course website and set up google folder

Friday, September 11

LIBRARY DAY: We will meet for our first library session. We will meet in the Dubin Room on the second floor of the library.

R: David Freeland, Part One of *Automats*, ...

HW: Map potential research questions for early film

Week Three

Tuesday, September 15

W: Reading Response #2 Due by Noon

Wednesday, September 16

R: Nicholas Carr, “Is Google Making Us Stupid”*

R: David Freeland, Part Two of *Automats*,...

HW: Refine research question and find two sources

Friday, September 18

R: David Freeland, Part Three of *Automats*, ...

HW: Prepare draft to share

Week Four

Tuesday, September 22

W: Reading Response #3 Due by Noon

Wednesday, September 23

R: Lloyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation"*

R: David Freeland, Part Four of *Automats*, ...

HW: Prepare complete draft for peer review

Friday, September 25

R: David Freeland, Part Five and Epilogue of *Automats*, ...

W: **Final Version of Creating Context Project**

Week Five

Tuesday, September 29

W: Reading Response #4 Due by noon

Wednesday, September 30

R: Paul Mathieu, "Writing in the Streets"

R: Zachary Neal, "Locating Public Space"

HW: Geocaching Exercise

Friday, October 2

R: David Pinder, "Arts of Urban Exploration"

HW: Review Library Research Guide on Washington, D.C.

HW: Geocaching Exercise

Week Six

Tuesday, October 6

W: Reading Response #5 Due by Noon

Wednesday, October 7

R: Ralph Johnson, "The Role of Audience in Argumentation..."

HW: Geocaching Teams should submit tentative tour theme

Friday, October 9

R: Jane Jacobs, Selection from *The Death and Life of American Cities*

HW: Prepare for in class workshop of geocaching tour

Week Seven

Tuesday, October 13

W: Reading Response #6 Due by Noon

Wednesday, October 14

R: Anis Bawarsi, "Constructing Desire: Genre and the Invention of Writing Subjects"*

HW: Prepare for in class workshop on geocaching tour

Friday, October 16

R: Don Mitchell, "The End of Public Space?"

HW: Prepare for in class workshop of geocaching tour

Week Eight

Wednesday, October 21

R: Cynthia Abramson, et al, "Art and the Transit Experience"

HW: Prepare for in class workshop of geocaching tour

Friday, October 23

R: Sandra Giles, "Reflective Writing and the Revision Process: What Were Your Thinking?"

HW: Prepare for in class workshop of geocaching tour

Week Nine

Wednesday, October 28

R: Thom Anderson, *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (in class)

Friday, October 30

R: Thom Anderson, *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (in class)

W: **Publish Geocaching Tour and Submit Project Portfolio**

Week Ten

Wednesday, November 4

R: Sample Student Paper

HW: Map Tentative Research Questions

Friday, November 6

Library Day: Meet in Dubin Classroom

Week Eleven

Wednesday, November 11

R: Stanley Fish, *How To Write a Sentence*, 1-24

HW: Complete two source annotations

Friday, November 13

R: Stanley Fish, *How To Write a Sentence*, 25-44

HW: Complete two source annotations and prepare writing to share

Week Twelve

Wednesday, November 18

R: Stanley Fish, *How To Write a Sentence*, 45-60

HW: Complete two source annotations and prepare writing to share

Friday, November 20

R: Stanley Fish, *How To Write a Sentence*, 61-98

HW: Prepare writing to share

Week Thirteen

Wednesday, November 25

Peer Review via Google Docs

Week Fourteen

Wednesday, December 2

R: Stanley Fish, *How To Write a Sentence*, 99-132

HW: Prepare writing to share

Friday, December 4

R: Stanley Fish, *How To Write a Sentence*, 133-160

Submit Drafts of Research Paper

Week Fifteen

Wednesday, December 9

Reflections and Conclusions

Final Projects Due on Wednesday, December 16 by 11:59 p.m.