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Fall 2014: English 101/200

BOSTON: CITY = CULTURE (Experiencing, Reading, & Writing the City)

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Course Theme: How does the “city = culture”?

How does the city create culture, represent culture, enact culture, express many groups’ cultures, contain “high and low”/“elite and pop” culture?

Yes! This course asks you to experience the process of reading and writing by asking you to experience Boston. We will explore the culture of Boston together, asking how we define “culture” by experiencing it!

Boston has a rich cultural history and offers an unparalleled opportunity to connect the activities of reading and writing to spaces of art, urban design, literature, history, and politics. This course will engage you in “field work” in Boston, encouraging experiential learning on Boston’s city streets and at Boston’s museums, libraries, shops, and urban spaces. Each week of the course will feature questions about the “culture” of the city. Each week will answer those questions through on-site learning in Boston, with field trips, workshops, and guest speakers designed to give the group unique insights into the interpretive possibilities created by city-based research.

This on-site learning will inspire a wide variety of forms of reading, writing, and critical thinking. The course creates opportunities for you to explore what happens when the reading and writing process is connected to a dynamic, exciting, idea-triggering city! Your writing will include the forms of close reading, observation, inquiry, theory/concept-application, reflection, analysis interpretation, and argumentation. By working outside of the classroom, you will explore new literary, social, and historical contexts, while also developing these critical thinking skills. The act of situating reading and writing within different spaces of literary inspiration, production, and preservation can have a profound impact on how reading and writing is practiced. By engaging in on-site work together, we will come to a richer understanding of how the literary text shapes and is shaped by cultural and historical spaces.

Course Texts:

(In order on syllabus):

Selected short stories featuring the city (handouts and on wiki)

Selected poems featuring the city (handouts and on wiki)

Selected essays on public space and urban design (handouts and on wiki)

Robert Allison, *A Short History of Boston* (Commonwealth: 1889833479)

Shaun O’Connell, *Boston: Voices and Visions* (UMass Press: 1558498206)

Edward Glaeser, *Triumph of the City* (Penguin: 9780143120544)
Jhumpa Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies* (Mariner: 039592720X)
Sandra Cisernos, *The House on Mango Street* (Vintage: 0679734775)
[[Paul Auster, *City of Glass* (Penguin: 0140097317)
[[Paul Karasik, *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel* (Picador: 9780312423605)
[[OR
[[Anthony Lukas, *Common Ground* (Vintage: 0394746163)

- **No ebooks/kindle editions allowed!**
- **These books are very inexpensive. Please factor in the printing out of texts (the cost of toner!) as part of your course prep and costs.**
- **Also consider your T passes as part of the course costs.**

Course Wiki-page:

<http://engl-boston-culture-course.wikispaces.umb.edu>

Course Designation: Course Fulfills ENGL 101 and ARTS Requirements

1. This course fulfills your required ENGL 101: Freshman English writing course. As a result, this course will feature lots of writing!
2. This course fulfills the ARTS General Education requirement. It asks you to develop an informed appreciation of literature as an artistic expression of human culture and meaningful exploration of the human condition. The theme of the city will allow us to explore how literature works to create and record or “capture” culture.
3. For ENGLISH MAJORS, this course counts as one of your three required “gateway courses” for English major. This course will introduce you to some of the methodologies of literary investigation, which will prove useful in future English courses.

II. COURSE STRUCTURE

Course Assignments

1. Mini-papers #1-4: 10% each	40%
2. Observation/Inquiry Paper	20%
3. Inquiry Portfolio/Reflection	10%
4. Analysis Paper	20%
5. Review of Event	10%

Critical Thinking: Habits of Mind Triggered by Reading and Writing

1. Close reading and observation
2. Inquiry and question-asking
3. Theory and concept-application
4. Analysis
5. Interpretation
6. Argumentation

7. Reflection

The “Literary Method” (our “Scientific Method”):

1. Enter a literary world.
 2. Close read.
 3. Create questions and interpretations.
 4. Read again, thinking “inwards” (to literary theme and literary form/structure)
Read again, thinking “outwards” (to cultural context and theoretical criticism)
 5. Form meaning.
 6. Maintain openness.
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III. COURSE POLICIES

Attendance:

Your attendance is crucial to your success as well as the success of the course as a whole. *If you have six absences (two weeks of course time) by the Withdrawal Deadline you will be asked to drop the course. Note that two tardies count as an absence.* If you plan to miss class, please discuss it in advance with me. If you miss class, you are responsible for finding out what you missed by asking a classmate.

At the end of the semester, **your final grade will be raised or lowered based on attendance** (average attendance with 3-5 absences is expected and will keep your grade the same; poor attendance with 6-7 absences will lower your final grade by one half grade; excellent attendance with 0-2 absences will raise it by one half grade).

Class Field Trips:

This course requires **general “good will”** concerning the field trip-based learning goals of the course. We will obviously be visiting Boston sites and trying to engage in meaningful conversations about the sites. Although there will be many distractions (from late T rides to noisy tourists to ice cream stores!), we will work to keep the academic goals of the course “front and center.” There are bound to be unexpected bumps in the road, such as bad weather, difficulty finding discussion space, T troubles, and the like. Please enter into this course with the knowledge that it is an **experiment**—and that we’ll be trying to be both flexible and rigorous in our interactions with each site.

For each field trip, we will be travelling together, making sure that everyone is safe and sound. Field trips will be clearly explained with maps and timelines. Please come prepared with:

1. Comfortable walking shoes (sneakers) and comfortable clothes
2. Water bottle
3. Suntan lotion or an umbrella as needed
4. Bring a light bag or backpack so you aren’t carrying something heavy

Class Discussion Preparation and Participation:

You must bring the assigned readings to class; the course will frequently ask you to open your book to find specific quotations. Often you will need to print out and read a text from the our course wiki; you must bring that print out to class. You *must* attend class *prepared* to participate

in class conversation by reading *all* of the assigned material due that day. We will engage in open-ended discussion—I want you to express your opinions on the class readings, clarify and debate the ideas from earlier classes, and learn from your peers. There will be many discussion-starting exercises employed in class, but you must come ready to participate. *Your active participation is essential.*

Plagiarism:

Students are required to adhere to university policies on academic honesty and student conduct. Please note the University’s official statement on academic honesty: It is the expressed policy of the University that every aspect of academic life—not only formal coursework situations, but all relationships and interactions connected to the educational process—shall be conducted in an absolutely and uncompromisingly honest manner. The University presupposes that any submission of work for academic credit indicates that the work is the student’s own and is in compliance with University policies. In cases where academic dishonesty is discovered after completion of a course or degree program, sanctions may be imposed retroactively, up to and including revocation of the degree. Any student who reasonably believes another student has committed an act of academic dishonesty should inform the course instructor of the alleged violation. The current Code of Student Conduct, including information about academic dishonesty is available online at: http://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/policies/community/code

Plagiarism is a serious offence and is strictly prohibited. *If you plagiarize, you will at the very least fail the assignment and are likely to fail the course.*

Disability:

If you have a disability and feel you will need accommodation in order to complete course requirements, please contact the Ross Center for Disability Services at 617-287-7430. Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 offers guidelines for curriculum modifications and adaptations for students with documented disabilities. If applicable, students may obtain adaptation recommendations from the Ross Center for Disability Services, M-1-401, (617-287-7430). The student must present these recommendations and discuss them with each professor within a reasonable period, preferably by the end of Drop/Add period.