

Honors 251: Citizen and Self in Washington DC
Western Kentucky University
Summer 2015 Syllabus

Program Leaders:

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Trip Dates: May 28-June 13, 2015

House Location: 4907 14th Street NW, Washington, DC 20011

Note on Travel: You are responsible for transportation to and from the Nashville Airport. All other transportation costs, including airfare and travel within the DC Metro Area, are included in your course fee. The fee also includes lodging, tuition, and access to the group groceries in the kitchen of our house.

Course Description: This course employs a public humanities framework to explore the challenges facing American democracy. We are used to thinking of citizenship as a series of civic duties such as voting, paying taxes, and serving your country. And these things are important! But we will seek to expand this definition to include other practices, including collaborative engagement with the social issues facing Washington DC as a city and community. Through site visits, group activities, readings, and a public journalism research project, this course will help you develop the tools and civic skills for getting involved in your community. We will particularly emphasize how the arts and humanities can play a role in addressing complex problems usually addressed through disciplines in the social sciences. The problems we face as a democratic nation in a complex, interdependent world demand creative citizens who can think and act beyond traditional frameworks. This course is called “citizen and self” because our premise is that personal goals and civic duties are two sides of the same coin.

Note on participation: This class will be most successful, and you will get the most out of it, if we work together as a group. Thoughtful participation can take many forms—expressing your own ideas, asking questions, drawing connections, and respectfully debating. Above all, please note that there are unique challenges involved in building a productive and safe living-learning environment. Instead of being around each other for a few hours each week, you will be living in the same house, sharing meals, and spending “down time” together. It is imperative that you work to build positive relationships with your classmates. The instructors will not tolerate bullying, fighting, or any other forms of social and physical intimidation. We must all work together to cultivate a positive, fun, safe, and engaging learning environment.

Course materials:

This course will include a public journalism assignment that includes recording an interview, writing a feature story, and selecting illustrations. If possible, you should bring a laptop and digital camera in order to prepare your final report and illustrations. All participants will need to have some way to take notes, access readings, and complete your journal assignment. Please do not hesitate to contact the instructors if you have concerns about accessing the necessary technology.

Preliminary Reading Packet:

1. Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic*, June 2014.
2. Ta-Nehisi Coates, "King David," *The Atlantic*, February 2015.
3. Leslie Jamison, "Indigenous to the Hood," *LA Review of Books*, November 26, 2012.
4. Amanda Grzyb, "Homeless Chic' as Domestic Poverty Tourism," *Expositions*, 2011.
5. J.B. Wogan, "Why DC's Affordable Housing Protections Are Losing a War with Economics," *Governing*, February 2015.
6. Kara Hadge, "Columbia Heights: A History of Development through Community Engagement," 2011.
7. Grace Lee Boggs, "A Paradigm Shift in Our Concept of Education," *The Next American Revolution*, 2011.

Assignments:

Public journalism group project: 400 points (40%)

Participation: 300 points (30%)

City-as-Text Photo Essay: 300 points (30%)

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will learn how to identify and critically engage with issues of democracy and citizenship through the methods, concepts, and vocabulary of the public humanities.
2. Students will gain confidence in their ability to take on leadership roles in addressing major challenges to democratic life, including issues related to gender, race, religion, ethnicity, and national identity.
3. Students will learn how to incorporate a range of sources and texts into their research.
4. In the context of the citizen professional framework—a central element of public humanities scholarship—students will be able to articulate the ways that their intended careers can serve a public purpose.
5. Students will demonstrate competency in, and be able to explain the value of, the following skills: interacting with the community beyond the classroom; writing clearly and convincingly for both academic and public audiences; working in a team; taking part in and facilitating deliberations about complex political and social issues; identifying common ground in the midst of conflict and competing interest; interpreting creative expression from a public perspective; conducting archival, library, internet, and community-based research.

Accessibility and Dietary Restrictions: This course involves a great deal of walking, but we will make sure it is accessible to students with any mobility challenges. Please notify the instructors of any accessibility issues so that we can make arrangements. In addition, please let us know by April 2015 if you have any dietary restrictions since we will be purchasing food to stock the kitchen. Due to allergy concerns, we are seeking to make the house a peanut-free atmosphere, so **please do not bring any foods with peanuts into the kitchen under any circumstances.**

Course Schedule

PART I: Social Issues and City Exploration

May 28 (Th): Travel to Washington DC from Nashville

Discuss Boggs

May 29 (F): National Mall: American National Identity

May 30 (Sat): National Mall: Public Art and Public Space

Discuss Coates, "The Case for Reparations"

May 31 (Sun): Our Neighborhood: Public Art and Public Space in Columbia Heights

Discuss Wogan and Hodge

June 1 (M): Washington DC Scavenger Hunt

June 2 (T): Historical Society of Washington DC and Evening Poetry at Busboys & Poets

Discuss Coates, "King David"

June 3 (W): Navy Yard and Anacostia River Walk

Discuss Jamison and Grzyb

June 4 (Th): Research for Projects (Interviews, Libraries, Site Visits), Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens

June 5 (F): Research for Projects (Interviews, Libraries, Site Visits), Evening Arts Event

June 6 (Sat): Two Options for City Exploration: National Zoo (Olson) or Eastern Market (Watkins)

PART II: Approaches to Citizenship

June 7 (Sun): Writing Day in Northern Virginia

June 8 (M): Meet with Honors College Alumni in Washington, D.C.

June 9 (T): Site Visit: Rock Creek Park

June 10 (W): Site Visit: Common Good City Farm

June 11 (Th): Reflections and Closing Dinner

June 12 (F): Final Writing Day: Final draft of group project due at 11:59pm

June 13 (Sat): Travel from Washington DC to Nashville