

HON 2290 (01): Special Topics Seminar; Fall 2000

Mondays, 2:00-3:15, LIB 409; Wednesdays, 2:00-3:15, BB 293 (computer lab)

Catalogue course description:

A special topics course offered exclusively for students admitted to the Undergraduate Honors Program and designed to examine a single theme or issue from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, providing students with the opportunity to work individually or collaboratively on a cross-disciplinary project.

Prerequisite: admission to the undergraduate honors program

Instructor Information

Dr. Sarah Robbins	work telephone:
English Department; Building 27; HU 204	office hours: M 4-5, 8-8:30 p.m.; W 1:30-2:00; regularly online; and by appointment
Kennesaw State	email:
1000 Chastain Road	home telephone:
Kennesaw, GA 30144	(Please call the home telephone before 9:30 p.m.)

Course objectives/goals:

Students in this class will explore a variety of interdisciplinary approaches for the study of American communities. Students will read print texts from multiple disciplines, but also form interpretations from a range of non-print sources (including film, public history sites, interviews, observation of “vernacular” public spaces [e.g., shopping malls, bowling alleys, grocery stores, fast food outlets]). In addition, class members will use multiple new technologies (e.g., the Internet, a course WebCT site) to assemble and interpret information about past and current communities in northwest Georgia. Students will collaborate on projects presenting some of their findings. Each student will create an individual inquiry project drawing on personal interests and abilities related to the course theme. Throughout the term, students will reflect on their own learning processes, on the body of knowledge they are creating together, and on the implications of their work for humanities-based study of local communities as participants in global cultures.

Through their enrollment in this seminar, students will become members of an interdisciplinary inquiry community being supported by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. This program, *Keeping and Creating American Communities*, includes university scholars, schoolteachers, community leaders, and students around the country collaborating to develop interdisciplinary models and resources for studying local culture. Students in this honors seminar will be joining that regional and national inquiry group, which is being guided by several core principles derived from American Studies and Literacy/Composition Studies:

- 1) Local communities continually define and redefine themselves in relation to ideas about national (and sometimes international) communities. More specifically, communities within Northwest Georgia (e.g., farm towns, suburbs, the city of Atlanta) have had complex yet productive interactions with shifting ideas about how best to be “American” while retaining a strong sense of local culture.

- 2) Many types of texts contribute to the formation of community culture. These include literacy-centered social activities (e.g., holding festivals, reading and performing literary pieces, generating public policy texts) and producing material culture (e.g., designing buildings, planning parks, producing public exhibits, constructing neighborhoods).
- 3) Retrieving and examining a range of community texts can help us better understand both our own local cultures and the larger (imagined) communities with which we are trying to affiliate (or resisting affiliation).
- 4) To become proactive participants in our communities, we should recover and analyze past and current texts that reflect shared values, because we can use that “keeping” process to guide our own “creating” of new social texts embodying the kinds of communities to which we want to belong.

Required Texts to be purchased by all students:

Andrews, *The Last Radio Baby*

Conley, *Mountain Wind Song*

Allen, *Atlanta Rising: Invention of an International City*

Deedy, *Growing Up Cuban in Decatur, Georgia* (audiotape)

Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*

Course packet [labeled **cp** below] of secondary and primary materials (ed., Robbins)

Tentative Schedule of Reading, Writing and Presentation Assignments

Note: Mondays, we will meet in Library 409; Wednesdays, we will meet in BB 293, a computer lab. Be sure to check our WebCT site regularly for updates/revisions of the schedule and for detailed instructions on individual assignments. The listing for each date on the schedule indicates what is DUE that day and/or what major activities are planned for that class session.
Cp= course packet

August 21: Introducing Our Community Study

Video: “Displaced in the New South,” a study of new immigrants in northwest Georgia

Discussion topics to include: varieties of immigrant communities with differing needs and aspirations, variations on “The American Dream,” ways of studying immigrant culture, contributions of new residents to local culture, forms of “documenting” immigrant community life

August 23 (lab): Experimenting with WebCT

Introductions: a) to studying Cherokee culture b) to using our WebCT discussion space; exploring the course calendar and course documents features on WebCT

Bulletin Board discussion topics to include: memorable images from the “Displaced in the New South” video

August 28: Beginning to Recover Cherokee History and Culture

Reading assignment: *Pushing the Bear* by Diane Glancy (copies loaned by instructor)

August 30 (lab): Images of the Cherokee in American Culture

Discussion preparation: Be sure you have completed your reading of *Pushing the Bear* and prepare responses to written questions provided by the instructor.

Computer Activity: Using the university “P Drive” of images and other resources

Analysis topics to include: 19th-century images of tribal cultures

September 4: Labor Day—Class will not meet

Assignment: By September 6, create and post a WebCT wrap-up response to the introductory Cherokee unit. See writing prompts on WebCT.

September 6: Attending a Workshop on Rural Culture

Assignment: See September 4.

Workshop preparation: Come to the Leadership Room on the second floor of the Student Center for a workshop facilitated by area teachers who have been studying rural and exurban culture with their secondary students. Bring your questions about rural versus agricultural communities, the history of rural culture in Georgia, ways of studying rural communities, and differences between Paulding and Cherokee county rural areas.

September 11: Oral History as a Record of Rural Life

Reading assignment: “Two Landowners’ Point of View” from *Cornerstones of Georgia History: Documents that Formed the State*, ed. Thomas Scott; Calvin Brown’s “Foreword” from *Yesterday in the Hills*; “Field Work” from *Yesterday in the Hills*, eds. Floyd Watkins and Hubert Watkins (Note: all readings in the course pack)

Discussion topics to include: approaches for gathering and shaping oral histories; similarities and differences between oral histories, memoirs, and fictional historical narratives; the value of the everyday in historical records

September 13 (lab): Oral Histories and Community Portraits on the Web

During class, we will read and respond to oral histories originally created as part of the WPA life histories project. We will identify other websites exploring aspects of rural culture in our area and other regions of the U.S.

Inquiry assignment: Begin work on your rural culture recovery project, for which you will find and interpret some cultural artifact(s); conduct and present an oral history; or describe and explain your observation of a particular “rural scene” or event. (Detailed instructions will be provided in a handout and on WebCT.)

September 18: Writing Memoirs of Rural Life

Reading assignment: Andrews, *Last Radio Baby* (33-45, 61-76, 79-91, photographs and cover materials [author blurb, advertisements, etc.]

September 20 (lab): Work Day for gathering materials for your rural culture project
Optional conferences with the instructor may be scheduled today.

September 25: Discussion of *LRB* and Questions about Rural Inquiry Project Drafts

Assignment: Complete readings from *Last Radio Baby* (129-148, 152-172, 178-197, 213-221) begin work on rural inquiry project write-up

Class activities: final discussion of Andrews' text; possible workshop time for drafts

September 27: Country Versus City Life—Contrasting Web Representations

Assignment: Rural Inquiry Project due

Class activity: Exploring urban images on the web

October 2: Constructing Atlanta as an International City

Assignment: *Atlanta Rising* (Chapter 2, "Airmindedness," 20-38; Chapter 6, "Atlanta, U.S.A.," 112-138; excerpt from "It's Atlanta" and "Epilogue," 233-248; photographs throughout the text). Choose two photos of particular interest and prepare a rationale for your choices.

October 4 (lab): Researching AJC "Stacks" for Stories of Atlanta as Urban Center

Assignment: Read one additional chapter of your own choice from *Atlanta Rising*. Bring your copy of *Atlanta Rising* with keywords already identified to help you search the AJC stacks online resource.

Class activities: Working in teams of 2-3, you will identify several pertinent articles on urban life in Atlanta from the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* "stacks" feature.

October 9: Assembling Journalistic Resources and Mapping Urban Spaces

Reading Assignments: *The Power of Place*--excerpts from the course pack

Additional resource assignment: prepare material from your AJC "stacks" search for sharing with your classmates (article or photograph; relate what you found to your reading of *Atlanta Rising*).

Class activities: discussion of readings and stacks artifacts

October 11 (lab): Atlanta Urban Life Project—Time for Group Work

Assignment: finding and critiquing one Website focused on an event or ongoing social practice in urban Atlanta; bringing a disk with the site address (URL) book-marked

Class activity: explanation of Urban Life Project; presenting student-found Websites that could support your work on the Urban Life Project

Overview of Urban Life Project: you will either a) create a community resource product—e.g., a Web page, a design for a brochure—that provides information on an urban Atlanta event or ongoing social practice OR b) assemble several texts on the same urban life topic (e.g., article, Web pages, poster) and present an analysis of their content and presentation style OR c) generate a proposal for a set of linked resources (e.g., website and print materials)

October 16: Representing Urban History and Culture in Exhibits

Assignment: "Biddy Mason" chapter from *The Power of Place* (handout)

Class activities: discussion of chapter and time for teams to workshop ideas for their Urban Atlanta Life Projects with other class members.

October 18 (lab): Work Day for Urban Life Projects

Assignment: Meet with your partner(s) to prepare your project

Class activities: Conferences with the instructor may be scheduled during class time.

October 23: Suburban Stories

Reading assignment: *Crabgrass Frontier* (Chapters 1 and 3-5, pp. 3-19 and 45-102; From Chapter 2, see table 2-1 [page 23] and 2-3 [page 24] and the maps and chart on pages 26-27.)

Class activities: discussion of *Crabgrass Frontier* (opening chapters)

October 25 (lab): Presentations of Urban Life Projects

Each team will present its project to the whole class. Some component of the project should be shared effectively via the lab's data projector or other display technology.

October 30: Assessing Suburban Life

Reading assignment: *Crabgrass Frontier* (Chapters 10 [172-189] and 13-16 [231-305] and all photographs.

Class activities: discussion of *Crabgrass Frontier*

November 1 (lab): Images of Suburban Atlanta

Assignment due: image(s) of suburban life on a zip disk for mounting on the P-Drive

Class activity: practice preparing a PowerPoint presentation on suburbia, with your image as a central part of the presentation

November 6: Hearing Immigrants' Stories of Life in Suburban Atlanta

Assignment due: *Growing Up Cuban in Decatur, Georgia* (Deedy)

Discussion topics to include: Deedy's "Mango and Magnolia" hybrid voice, avoiding stereotypes of immigrants, oral performances as social texts, performance techniques

November 8 (lab): Revising Suburban Imagery Projects

Class activities: time to revise your PowerPoint presentations based on class feedback and/or to update your WebCT contributions

November 13: Film Images of Suburbia

Reading assignment: bring and be prepared to present one newspaper or magazine article on suburban life

Class activities: discussion of articles pre-selected by class members; interpreting film excerpts on suburbia (e.g., from *The Graduate*, *Truman Show*, and *American Beauty*)

Discussion topics to include: satirizing suburbia; telling versus showing suburban life; compare/contrast modes and media of oral story-telling versus film texts

November 15 (lab): Presenting Suburban Imagery Projects

Reading assignment: Study the instructor's information sheets on the final project and come prepared to ask questions.

Class activities: presentation of your PowerPoint projects on suburban images

November 20: Continue Presentations of Suburban Imagery Projects

November 22: KSU Holiday--Fall Break for Thanksgiving

Reading assignment: Begin Conley's *Mountain Wind Song*

Optional conferences will be scheduled via individual sign-up. They will be held in Dr. Robbins' office (HU 204) rather than in the computer lab, unless otherwise announced on November 20.

November 27: Revisiting the Cherokee

Reading assignment: "Introduction," *Living Stories of the Cherokee* (course pack); begin *Mountain Wind Song*

Discussion topics to include: the role of story-telling in community-building, cross-cultural story-telling versus story-telling within a cultural group

November 29 (lab): Revising/Workshopping Major Project

Students will have an opportunity to workshop their major project pieces, offering each other feedback to assist revision. They will also have time to catch up on WebCT postings.

December 4: Reclaiming the Land and Sustaining Community Culture

Reading assignment: Conley's *Mountain Wind Song*

Class activities: multiple story-lines from differing communal heritages in *Mountain Wind Song*; comparing and contrasting *Pushing the Bear* with *Mountain Wind Song*; representing others' cultural heritage

December 6 (lab): Revising/workshopping Major Projects

December 13: final projects due at 2:00 p.m. to Dr. Robbins' office

Breakdown of course grade

Assignment	% of total grade
Ongoing class participation	20%
Rural Georgia artifact(s)/observation/interview piece	20%
Team-prepared Urban Atlanta Life project	20%
Team-prepared suburban image(s) plus interpretive writing [PowerPoint OR WebPages with explanatory materials you prepare to interpret the image(s)]	20%
Final project (individual inquiry product)—in lieu of exam	20%
TOTAL	100%

The following factors are taken in consideration to determine your participation grade: attendance (including punctuality), contributions to oral class discussion, contributions to WebCT discussion (at least 5 SUBSTANTIVE postings—e.g., responses you write to others, additional postings), informal presentations of individual and group work.

Students may request a tentative participation grade report after the mid-point of the semester.

Last Date to Drop without Academic Penalty: October 23

Final Exam: Wednesday December 13, 2:00-4:00

Attendance policy:

Since the class uses an interactive inquiry model, with students making frequent oral presentations and participating in open discussions, regular attendance is essential. A student may miss two class periods without penalty and without seeking instructor approval. A third unexcused absence **or a notable number of late arrivals or early departures** will result in a *significant* deduction from the participation grade.

Tardiness Policy:

Students are expected to arrive on time and attend the entire class period. (See attendance policy above.) Three unexcused tardies or early departures would be treated as one missed class.

Policy on Due Dates:

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date listed. Exceptions should be negotiated in advance. A student who must miss a class for an excused absence should still be sure that assigned work is turned in on time. (In that case, assignments may be turned in by email or fax versions before class starts.)

Policy on Changes to the Syllabus

Since updates of the tentative syllabus will be posted regularly to the course's WebCT site, students will be responsible for any changes made to the paper version (including course schedule, assignment requirements, etc.), which is distributed early in the term.

KSU's Academic Integrity Statement:

Every KSU student is responsible for upholding the provisions of the Student Code of conduct, as published in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs. Section II of the Student Code of conduct addresses the University's policy on academic honesty, including provisions regarding plagiarism and cheating; unauthorized access to University materials; misrepresentation/falsification of University records of academic work; malicious removal, retention, or destruction of library materials; malicious/intentional misuse of computer facilities and/or services; and misuse of student identification cards. Incidents of alleged academic misconduct will be handled through the established procedures of the University Judiciary Program, which includes either an "informal" resolution by a faculty member, resulting in a grade adjustment, or a formal hearing procedure, which may subject a student to the Code of Conduct's minimum one semester suspension requirement.