

Spring 2019

HSS 403-106: Newark Narratives

Jon Curley

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NEWARK NARRATIVES

KUPF 106

W 6-8:50

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Office Hours Wednesdays 3-5 and by appointment

Course Description

This course is a comprehensive survey of Newark, a combined literature/cultural studies seminar and anthropological field work course designed to explore and map Newark in various disciplines, including literature, history, film, politics, religion, architecture, and sociology. It will be provisional and investigative, based on knowledge accrued and acquired, delving into various possible lines and intersections of inquiry. We will be cartographers of the cosmopolis, generating new insights into the various meanings about cities and city life.

Requirements

You are expected to keep up with the reading in the texts and complete all assigned exercises. Classroom participation is essential. The seminar format for this course requires discussion, a constellation of active, energetic voices. If you are not inclined or comfortable at discoursing at length about our various topics, issues, and themes, this course might not be right for you. Participation can also take the shape of various other engagements, including Moodle forum posts, written commentaries or suggestions, and other input not assigned. ***A full 20 points accounts for participation alone so keep this point of order in mind.***

I will ask that you bring responses to particular texts under discussion each week and compile a weekly writing journal based on your writing experience, classroom reactions, and any other thoughts related to this course and this city. You will be utilizing MOODLE 2.0 and expected to interact with its contents regularly. Find the link at <http://njit2.mrooms.net>.

Keep in mind that MOODLE 2.0 will both complement, supplement and, at times, correct the syllabus in terms of timetables, scheduled speakers, field trips and content.

Field Work Project

You are required to undertake Field Work in preparation of ONE of TWO final projects that will help construct and map your understanding of the city. This labor will also help you understand the logic of how we theorize and imagine Newark in relation to some of the key ethical and aesthetic issues of this course. Your approach can be flexible and multi-disciplinary and should include at least 2-3 relevant interviews. All interview subjects should be either residing in Newark or working in its borders. No interview subject should be affiliated with NJIT or Rutgers-Newark. I encourage you to immerse yourself in the urban community and its urban environment. Literary focus is not necessary. However, as you should be establishing connections between the course particulars and the realities you encounter beyond campus. You can explore art, culture, history, music, architecture, sports, civil rights activism, housing and commercial realty, education, power companies, grassroots organizations, rehabilitation centers, et cetera. Please consult with me about your ideas and I shall offer intensive oversight throughout your project.

The structure of this project will consist of:

- an abstract/introduction of your subject and reasons for pursuing it (2-3 pages)
- a transcription of entire or partial interview or link to audio files or other embedded web-based
- a 5-7 page discussion of your vision, methodology, conclusions, change or deepening of perspective, the necessity of your work and its potential use-value, relationship to this course and its possible enhancement of its pedagogical underpinnings

Final Project

The Final Project can be either a substantial extension of your mid-term paper (10-12 pages) or a non-text-based work (with supplementary explanatory notes concerning its creation) relating to this course and your experience in it. Some examples include (and are not limited to): video diaries, site photography, music, poetry sequences, short stories, paintings, filmed excerpts of various texts, statistical analysis of City Hall budget, comparisons of local public and charter schools, restaurant guides, historical demographic trends, real estate studies, and on and on. We will devote considerable time to discussing and developing these projects.

NJIT University Code on Academic Integrity

“Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at:

<http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>.

*****Important Public Service Announcement*****

This course is a deep-immersive ethnographic course of study. As a result, we will find ourselves visiting various sites, being visited by some incredibly insightful NJIT and Newark-based individuals, and embarking on an odyssey to known and unknown destinations. Scheduling these events and interactions will occur throughout the semester. As a result, there is an element of contingency in the calendar, conditions, and trajectories of our exploration. I will notify you the at least the previous class about a development affecting the next class.

Calendar/Course Outline

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We begin our descent into our destination of Newark—including the downtown area but spreading throughout the city expanse—through poetry, perhaps an unlikely entrée into the physical, mental, and political structures of a city but perhaps giving access to the city through the most meaningful means—the roundabout, the detour, the oblique, the subterranean and also the authentic, the urban trumpet, cosmopolitan trumpet, story’s siren, narrative’s necessary intrusion into the realm of the insensate.

How do we make connections between art and society on the following levels:

- Psycho-geographical
- Materialist
- Tradition & Culture
- Spatial location; metaphysical conceptions of space and place
- Multidisciplinary artistic and non-artistic exercises (such as....?)

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Week 1 (1/23)

Lecture/Presentation: “Newark through the Ages” (Liz Del Tufo, Newark Landmarks and Heritage Preservation Commission)

Introduction by Instructor

Week 2 (1/30)

Documentary Screening: *Revolution 67* (2007; Directors Marylou and

Quiz #4

Week 8 (3/13)

Roundtable Discussion

Final Project Proposal Due

Rough Draft of Mid-term Essay due in Class

Week 9 ***Spring Break 3/16 >>>>>>>>> 3/24 NO CLASSES***

Week 10 (3/27)

Discussion of *American Pastoral* (Read to the end)

Class visit by Filmmakers Marylou and Jerome Bongiorno 3/27

Final Draft of Mid-term Essay due in class 3/27 (be prepared to share thoughts, ideas, and impressions about your work)

Week 11 (4/3)

Read Introduction in *SOS Poems 1961-2013* & I will introduce the Poet and Poetry in each class of Amiri Baraka; we will also discuss and share poetry in general.

Week 12 (4/10)

Amiri Baraka: The Legend Begins

1. The Bohemian Poet

“Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note”

“In Memory of Radio”

“The Bridge”

“Vice”

“The New Sheriff”

“Notes for a Speech”

2. Poet in Transition

“Balboa, the Entertainer”

“A Contract. (For the Destruction and Rebuilding of Paterson)”

“An Agony. As No”

“Short Speech to My Friends”
“The Politics of Rich Painters”
“ A Poem for Democrats”
“Duncan Spoke of a Process”

Sounds:

<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Baraka.php>

Sights:

www.youtube.com

Week 13 (4/17)

Amiri Baraka Continued

3. Poet as Black Nationalist

“Black Dada Nihilmus”
“Political Poem”
“The Liar”
“A Poem Some People Will Have to Understand”
“Tone Poem”
“Numbers, Letters”
“Black Art”
“Poem for HalfWhite College Students”

+ Oral Presentations

Week 14 (4/24)

4. “Poet as Marxist Revolutionary”

“When We’ll Worship Jesus”
“Reggae or Not!”
“Wise 1- Wise 4”
“I Am”

Field Work Project Due in Class

Roundtable Discussion about Amiri Baraka and Reflection/(Read any 10-15 poems from page 337 to 528)

Be ready to share your creative/critical homage to/takedown of Baraka (details to follow)

Oral Presentations Continued

Week 15 (5/1)

Last Day of Class

Oral Presentations (if need be)

Our Final Seminar Session

FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT DUE BY 4pm Wednesday, May 8th at 409 Cullimore!