

Spring 2021

HSS 403-108: Newark Narratives

Jonathan Curley

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NEWARK NARRATIVES

KUPF105
6:00-8:50

Jon Curley
Senior University Lecturer
Department of Humanities
Cullimore 409
(973) 596-3258
jcurley@njit.edu

Office Hours Tuesdays 4-6 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 CANVAS 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 CANVAS and expected to interact with its contents regularly. Find the link at canvas.njit.edu.

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

Also, in defiance of the Pandemic Crisis, I am presenting here, with some radical modifications, the usual syllabus to this course. I understand that some assignments, projects, time tables, and modes of instruction and investigation will have to change or await what Philip Roth in NEMESIS calls “the tyranny of contingency”—regardless, we as a collective force will evolve a viable form for Narrating Newark and immersing ourselves in this course, in this city, and thinking about this city and its citizens!

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>.

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. **Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university.** If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu”

Grade Breakdown

Class Participation	15 points
Weekly writings	15 points
Mid-Term Essay	20 points
Pandemic Points	10 points
Fieldwork Assignment	20 points
Final Project	20 points

Required Texts & Tickets

Baraka, Amiri. Poetry and Drama (available online)

Roth, Philip. Nemesis (Vintage: 978-0307475008)

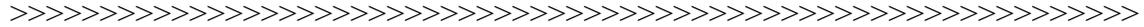
Roth, Philip. *American Pastoral* (Vintage: 978-0375701429)

Williams, Junius. *Unfinished Agenda: Urban Politics in the Era of Black Power*
(Google Drive available on course CANVAS homepage)



Supplementary Materials will be utilized as well, including the new Digital Humanities Lab located on the third floor of Cullimore Building. There, we will undertake critical, creative, and

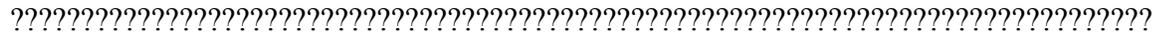
conceptually exciting projects using various artistic media and technologies to bolster our notions and representations of this course and its directives.



*****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.

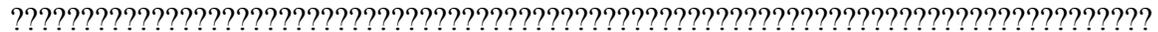
Calendar/Course Outline



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....?)



Week 1 (1/21)

Remote Introduction by Instructor (on Webex during classtime)

Week 2 (1/28)

Continued discussion of *Nemesis* and discussion of *American Pastoral*
(Read to AT LEAST page 113)

Week 8 (3/11)

Roundtable Discussion

Discussion of *American Pastoral* (Read to AT LEAST page 283)

Final Project Proposal Due

Rough Draft of Mid-term Essay due in Class

Week 9 ***** Spring Recess March 13-March 21 *****

Week 10 (3/25) Discussion of *American Pastoral* (Read to the end)

Week 11 (4/1)

Virtual Class visit by Filmmakers Marylou and Jerome Bongiorno

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

Week 12 (4/8)

Read Introduction to *SOS Poems 1961-2013* (found here: <http://www.yourimpossiblevoice.com/preface-s-o-s-poems-1961-2013-amiri-baraka/>) & I will introduce the Poet and Poetry in each class of Amiri Baraka; we will also discuss and share poetry in general.

Week 13 (4/15)

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 14 (4/22)

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”

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

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

Week 15 (4/29)

Last Day of Class

Our Final Seminar Session

FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT DUE BY 4pm Thursday, May 6th