

## **Segment 2: What Is Community?** (3 credit)

**PURPOSE OF THE COURSE:** In this course, we focus on how humans create, maintain, and undo the threads of community that bind us together. Our core reading examines a social theory that explores these threads through a consideration of mimetic desire and the phenomenon of scapegoating, and then considers this theory in connection with the present flashpoints of populism, climate and war-triggered refugee movements, and geopolitical realignments. In the second half of the course, students will undertake individual Research Projects to explore social issues that interest them and will meet in daily tutorials with faculty advisors.

### **AIMS OF THE COURSE**

- Gain an understanding of mimetic desire and scapegoating in the work of René Girard, and how they play out in both small communities and global events
- Focus attention through a storytelling perspective on identity formation and race in the U.S.
- Increase familiarity with divisions in the U.S. and other parts of the world that have given rise to populist movements
- Consider factors and events behind these divisions, including competition for resource control, climate change, ethnic and nationalist loyalties, immigration, freedom movements and social media
- Explore the role of local communities in building resilience in the face of these pressures
- Experiment with reading fiction to discern its moral claims
- Learn how to pose a specific and manageable research topic within the larger frame of the course, “What is community?” and then pursue familiarity with that topic through independent research

### **COURSE TEXTS**

Ursula K. LeGuinn, “The Ones Who Walk away from Omelas”  
René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*  
Britt Bennett, *The Vanishing Half: A Novel*  
Yascha Mounk, *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It*  
Additional books and articles will be read in tutorials and research project (see below)

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

- 1) Book notes (for core books)
- 2) One-Idea paper (1)
- 3) Memo (1)
- 4) Attendance at daily lectures
- 5) Full participation in daily small group discussion
- 6) Weekly faculty-student conferences
- 7) Commonwealth exercises
- 8) Research Project
  - Daily reading within focused topic and completion of reading notes
  - Daily meetings with faculty advisor
  - Completion of Best Draft (3000-4000 word research paper)
  - Revision and completion of Final Draft
  - Project presentation to student group

### **EXPLANATION OF REQUIREMENTS**

- 1) **Book notes**

Students will be asked to continue improving on the methods of note taking introduced in Segment 1. With an eye toward the research project, students should keep thinking about argument, analysis, and use of evidence. Notes may be collected on a daily basis by professors, so students must bring them to discussion every day.

2) **One-Idea Paper (1)**

Isolate one major idea from the week's assigned readings, then write one page in which you describe and analyze the idea in your own words, while being as faithful as possible to the author's intent. Be prepared to read this to your Friday small group and handle questions and responses from the group.

3) **Memo (1)**

As in Segment 1, memos are a more personal form of reflection. Write one page in which you share any important thoughts from the week's readings, lectures, and discussions. Be prepared to read this to your Friday small group and handle questions and responses from the group.

4) **Attendance at daily lectures.**

Absences must be excused.

5) **Full participation in daily small group discussion**

Absences must be excused. Come prepared with all reading completed and book notes in hand. Dive in.

6) **Weekly faculty-student conferences**

After lectures on Mondays, students will meet one-on-one with the discussion group leader to talk about note taking, participation in daily discussion, writing assignments, and ideas that are in the air. Possible Research Project topics will be considered.

7) **Commonwealth exercises**

The OE is a small commonwealth. A commonwealth is a group of people associated by their own choice and linked together with common interests and objectives. The ancient meaning of the word "wealth" is happiness. During the segment we'll try a few things together to strengthen the bonds of the OE commonwealth. We'll practice some random acts of kindness on each other and our neighbors.

8) **Research Project.** Identify a topic that falls within the open question: *What is community?* Make it a topic that has been stirring your curiosity. You know a little about it, but not nearly enough. It could be your Moby Dick. It could be a fuzzy mirage you just can't get out of your field of vision and it's finally time to go and see what is really there. With the help of OE professors, figure out how to investigate it in an academically focused way, keeping in mind that if you are seeking credit in a particular area (e.g., history), you need to read what historians have to say about the topic.

- **Daily reading within focused topic and completion of reading notes.** While expectations will vary given the difficulty of individual texts, students are expected to read approximately 100 pages per day during their week of research. Students should maintain diligent note-taking habits, as this will ease the writing process.
- **Daily meetings with faculty advisor.** Students will work one-on-one with their individual faculty advisor to develop a reading list, and then to elaborate and clarify what they are learning through conversation. Students meet regularly with their advisor in order to prevent last-minute problems with the scope of the project or the availability of necessary research materials.
- **Completion of Best Draft.** On the date identified on the course schedule, students will be required to turn in a "best draft." Note that this is NOT a rough draft; this should be the equivalent of what students would normally turn in as a final paper. 3000-4000 words, following MLA guidelines or Chicago Manual of Style.
- **Revision and completion of Final Draft.** Faculty will take approximately a day to read the draft and respond extensively. Students will then revise their paper in response to faculty feedback, turning in this revision by the deadline listed on the course schedule. This is typically 24 hours later.
- **Project presentation to student group.** Each student will have 60 minutes to lead a graduate-school-type seminar on his/her topic. The class will consist of 4-6 peers and one professor (who did not serve as advisor). All who are present will have read the finished paper in advance of the seminar. With this in mind, the student seminar-leader should not use the time to read or rehash the paper, but instead to talk about the project's development, describe additional material that did not make it into the paper, and elaborate on further ideas and questions inspired by the research. The best seminars will get all who are present involved in a conversation during the hour.

## GRADING

### Grades will be assessed based on the following:

- Quality of book notes, one-idea paper, and discussion group participation.
- Weekly faculty-student conferences reviewing the note-taking, writing, and discussion opportunities of the previous week (during the core phase)
- Documented completion of all reading and book notes on time (core)
- Regular meeting with faculty advisor; completion of adequate reading and note taking (during project phase).
- Completion of best draft and revised final draft (project)
- Completion of coherent project presentation (project)
- Active participation in one's own presentation and in other students' presentations (project)
- Self-evaluations, followed by faculty-student conferences, at the end of the segment

### Assessment will be performed according to the following guidelines:

- We reserve the **A** for the combination of consistently high *effort* and *achievement* displayed across the board in your written and spoken work during the segment. The Research Project is well written and well researched, and the seminar presentation is confident, clear, and coherent.
- **B** indicates high effort but less than high achievement; or moderate effort but (nonetheless) relatively high achievement.
- **C** indicates moderate effort at best and significantly less than high achievement.
- **D** indicates low effort and low achievement generally.

## SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

See Segment 2 calendar.

## COURSE CREDIT

*Students will choose from among the following course offerings, tailoring the two-week Research Project to the necessary credit area. Each project will be an individualized course of study, including readings in and discussions with faculty about the relevant discipline.*

### **ART 396 – Perspectives on the Intersection of Art and Society**

An exploration of the role the fine arts play in reflecting and/or shaping the social realities of a particular locale and period in world history.

### **BIST 396 – Selected Social Issues in Biblical Perspective**

An examination of biblical texts relevant to current social issues and helpful in understanding the underlying dynamics of human society.

### **COM 396 – Perspectives on the Relationship Between Society and Human Communications**

An exploration of the role human communications play in reflecting and/or shaping the social realities of a particular locale and period in world history.

### **EDU 396 – Perspectives on Educational Theory and Practice**

A study of the theories and practices of selected educational thinkers or movements, with special concern for their insights into or reflections upon the dynamics of contemporary social life, and their implications for social change.

### **ENVS 396 – Perspectives on the Relationship of Science and Society**

An examination of the roles science and the scientific method play in the contemporary world and contemporary thought, with special attention to the impact of science and technology on social and natural environments.

### **HIST 396 – Social Thought in Historical Perspective**

An examination of the contributions of selected social, economic, or political thinkers to an understanding of contemporary social life and the nature of social change.

**LIT 396 – Literary Perspectives on Society**

An analysis of a specific writer or writers in a literary period or genre, with special concern for their insights into the shape and meaning of their own social milieu and human society in general.

**PHIL 396 – Selected Social Issues in Philosophical Perspective**

An analysis of the ways selected philosophers have thought about specific social issues or human society in general.

**POL 396 – Social Perspectives on the History of Political Thought**

An investigation of selected political thinkers and theories that addresses the dynamics of human political organization and explores possibilities for social change.

**PSY 396 – Selected Social Issues in Psychological Perspective**

An examination of how selected psychological theorists have thought about specific social issues and human society in general.

**SOC 396 – Perspectives on the Study of Society**

An analysis of how selected social thinkers contribute to an understanding of the dynamics of human social life and the nature of specific social issues.

**REL 396 – Perspectives on the Relationship of Religion and Society**

An examination of how selected religious thinkers contribute to an understanding of specific current social issues and/or the underlying dynamics of human society.

**Directed Study 396**

An individualized course of study examining a topic of critical interest to a student in an academic area not included in the “What Is Community” course listings above. Topic will be approved in conjunction with the student’s home campus academic advisor and the Oregon Extension faculty.