HU 4890
Communication, Culture, and Community
Fall 2001

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Course Objectives

This course examines the relationship among culture, communication, institutions, and public and private life. We will explore the possibilities and problems of contemporary forms of community via critical analyses of course readings and through studies of local volunteer organizations. Throughout the semester we will strive to understand better how community life is created, sustained, repaired, and transformed through communication. Second, we will critically examine questions of commitment and participation, place, and identity, and issues of class, gender, race, and ethnicity as they are inflected in various dimensions of contemporary community conflict and cohesiveness. Finally, the course will provide a context where students can experientially explore the practical, ethical, and moral problems which arise in contemporary community life.

Required Texts

Course readings are on reserve at the library.

Course Assignments

Attendance and class participation 10%
Individual Presentation and Paper 10%
Group Project 15%
Quizzes 15%
Paper #1 (3-5 pages) 15%
Paper #2 (3-5 pages) 15%
Final Paper (4-6 pages) 20%

You are required to complete the reading assignments before you attend class. This will lead to more fruitful discussion.
**Individual Presentation and Paper**

Each member of the class is required to interview a volunteer coordinator at a local non-profit organization off campus. You will submit a 2-3 page typed description and briefly present (3-5 minutes) some basic information about the organization (when it was formed, how many people volunteer, etc.), the goals of the organization, the constituency served by the organization, and the strengths and weaknesses of the organization.

**Group Presentation**

You and your group will be responsible for one group project and presentation during the semester. This project will focus on the design of public space and count toward 15% of your final grade. These projects will be presented in class. (I will give you a handout at a later date that further explains this assignment.)

**Papers**

Papers will be evaluated for their ability to critically examine issues from course readings and illustrate their relevance to a concrete instance of community life. All papers should be typed, double-spaced, and use a consistent style (i.e. MLA, APA, etc.). Use one inch margins and 12-point font. Further details on written assignments can be found on a separate handout.

**Paper #1 and Paper #2** should analyze a set of readings and make an argument that intervenes creatively in the conversation. While I want your papers to cover a specific theme (i.e. homelessness and public space), your approach to the topic should reflect your own theoretical interests. Your paper must make an argument. Merely summarizing a reading or stating that a reading is “correct” because it speaks to your own personal experience is not an argument. (See the syllabus addendum for further information about writing for this course.) Papers must be turned in no later than seven days after we cover the readings (e.g. If you’re writing about James Carey’s “A Republic, If You Can Keep It” then your paper would be due September 17th). The first paper must cover a reading of your choice from the section on public life or the section on social problems. It is due by October 3rd. The second paper, which must cover a reading of your choice from the section on sties of community, is due by October 29th.

The **Final paper** should serve as a think piece on volunteer service and community life more generally. This assignment asks you to write an analysis that grows from your engagement with course material, your study of a local non-profit organization, and the work you did on your group project. The objective of this paper is to assess your own ideas about volunteer work with regard to issues of community life, your participation in it, and what conclusions you’ve drawn about the value of doing service work. In general, you should develop a thesis that considers these questions: a) “What are the lessons I’ve learned this semester?” b) “What do these lessons tell me about community life?” and c) “What is the value of community participation on the public and private level?” This paper requires you provide more than a description of your
experiences. You need to write an essay that establishes a claim about the relationship between service work and community life. This paper is due on December 17th by Noon.

**Pop quizzes** will be short answer and will allow me to gauge how well you understand the arguments made in the readings. Unlike your papers and class discussion, where I am interested in your opinions about the issues and the strength of the writer’s argument(s), the quizzes are designed for you to state the author’s argument only. In other words, I am not striving to understand what you think about the issues; rather, I am interested in how well you understand the construction of the author’s argument. If we do not understand what s/he’s saying then our critique of her/his work will not be properly grounded.

**Course Policies**

**Attendance and Active Participation** are expected and required. Excessive absences will result in a lower final grade.

**Promptness** is expected as a general rule. If you are consistently late to class your grade will be negatively effected.

All assignments are due on assigned days. There will be **NO MAKE UPS**. Documented illness or documented emergencies are the only exception to this policy. Changes in work schedules, personal celebrations (i.e. birthdays), transportation problems, etc. are NOT considered to be legitimate reasons for missing assignment deadlines or class meetings. If you miss a quiz and have documentation for your absence then you will take the quiz on the next date you attend class.

If you have a cellular phone turn it off. If you have a pager set it to vibrate or turn it off.
### Tentative Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>READING ASSIGNMENTS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/27</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/29-8/31</td>
<td>Video: <em>Road Scholar</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>9/3</td>
<td><strong>Public Life</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9/5</td>
<td>Bellah et. al, “We Live Through Institutions”</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/7</td>
<td>Bellah et. al, “Ch. 1: Making Sense of It.”</td>
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<td>9/10</td>
<td><strong>K-Day</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9/12</td>
<td>James Carey, “A Republic, If You Can Keep It”</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/14</td>
<td>Robert Putnam, “The Prosperous Community”</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/17</td>
<td><strong>Social Ills</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9/19</td>
<td>Walter Kirn, “Crack Country”</td>
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<td>9/21</td>
<td>Mary Rogan, “Please Take Our Children Away”</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/14</td>
<td>James D. Hunter, “Family”</td>
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<td>9/24-9/28</td>
<td>Peter Marin, “Helping and Hating the Homeless”</td>
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<td>10/1</td>
<td>Krzysztof Wodiczko, <em>Critical Vehicles</em> (Excerpts)</td>
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<td>10/3</td>
<td>Mark Edmundson, “As Lite Entertainment for Bored College Students”</td>
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<td>10/5</td>
<td>Earl Shorris, “As a Weapon in the Hands of the Restless Poor”</td>
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<td>10/8-10/10</td>
<td>Mike Davis “The Empty Quarter”</td>
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<td><strong>Sites of Community</strong></td>
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<td>10/5</td>
<td>John Robert Howard, “The Flowering of the Hippie Movement”</td>
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<td>10/3</td>
<td>Dawson Bell, “Asphalt Optimist”</td>
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<td><strong>Individual Presentations</strong></td>
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10/12  Sara Mosle, “The Vanity of Volunteerism”
10/15  “Children of the Cul-de-Sac” (Discussion)
10/17  Stephen Doheny-Farina, “Virtual Vermont”
10/19  James D. Hunter, “Media and the Arts”
       Jennifer Belle, “The Art Critic”
10/22  “Time to Die: Epicenter Zone 1990-1999”
10/24  David Samuels, “Rock is Dead”

**Public Space**
10/26-10/29  Ray Oldenburg, “The Problem of Place in America”

**LAST DATE FOR PAPER #2**

10/31-11/2  No Class—National Communication Association Convention
11/5-11/7  *Harper’s* Forum “Whatever Became of the Public Square?”
11/9-11/12 Steven Lagerfeld, “What Main Street Can Learn From the Mall”
11/14  Russ Rymer, “Back to the Future: Disney Reinvents the Company Town”
11/16  TBA
11/19-11/23 Thanksgiving Break
11/26-11/28 Michael Pollan, “Town-Building is No Mickey Mouse Operation”
11/30  David Harvey, “The New Urbanism and the Communitarian Trap”
12/3-12/14 Group Presentations
12/17  FINAL PAPERS DUE BY NOON
Student: ______________________

Course: HU 4890 Fall 2001

Attendance/participation 10% ___(pts.) X .10 = _____
Individual presentation/paper 10% ___(pts.) X .10 = _____
Quizzes 15% ___(pts.) X .15 = _____
Group Project 15% ___(pts.) X .15 = _____
Paper #1 15% ___(pts.) X .15 = _____
Paper #2 15% ___(pts.) X .15 = _____
Final Paper 20% ___(pts.) X .20 = _____

Final Grade= ____________