

**Long Island University**  
**Core Seminar 50.018: The Idea of the Human**  
**3 credits; Prerequisite English 16**  
**W 2:00-4:30, Spring 2012, H 206**

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**THE IDEA OF THE HUMAN: PATHWAYS TO FREEDOM**



Members of CORE sit in at 1038 Union St. in a protest against alleged discrimination in renting. The demonstrators are, from left, A. P. Jones, Vince Young, Claire Toombs, Arnold Goldwag, Ed Lewinson and Cynthia Toombs.

“Core Sits In at Crown Heights Apartment.” Housing Sit-Ins (Misc.), Etc. 1961-1964. Arnie Goldwag Brooklyn Congress of Racial Equality collection, ARC.002, box 1, folder 1; Brooklyn Historical Society.

*Every other organism we know about lives in the world as presented to them by Nature, human beings live in a world that they consciously symbolize and re-create in their own minds. Which is what makes us such fascinating – and dangerous – creatures.*

Ian Tattersall, Monkey in the Mirror.

**Welcome** to Core Seminar, an interdisciplinary, writing-intensive course that inquires into the idea of the human: what makes us human; how do we perceive ourselves, others, and the world around us; what is the role of creativity in human experience; and what is the role of the social context in considering all of these? During our time together in this seminar, we will continue to meet with other classes in joint sessions as well as explore off campus sites on small group fieldtrips. We will also continue to develop the academic writing, information literacy, rhetorical strategies, and research skills introduced to you in English 16C. We will also focus on developing the particular objectives of Core Seminar—the cognitive skills necessary for inquiry, abstract thinking, and critical analysis; a general knowledge base that might serve as a foundation for further in-depth inquiry; and a respect for human commonalities and diversity. The course includes a research project.

After focusing last semester on the role of African Americans in building the city from 1776 to the Civil War, we will explore what happens to a society that fails to see that freedom and wellbeing must be guaranteed to all people, not just to some. We will investigate the human condition—how human beings construct their worlds, for better and for worse—by focusing on the changing face of Brooklyn from Reconstruction to the present. After briefly reviewing the causes of slavery and emancipation, we'll set off in Unit 1 into new territory to inquire why the federal government failed to support Reconstruction after the Civil War. You will begin to research a topic related to the BHS archives that will form the basis of a research project due on March 28.

Meanwhile, we will move forward to watch how Jim Crow laws sprouted in the absence of federal commitment to oversee Reconstruction, making life untenable for Black Americans, particularly in the Southern states but also in the North. The “Great Migration” from south to north overlapped with migratory patterns between and among states and from counties to cities in New York. Continuing, in Unit 2, we'll explore migratory, ideological, and social movements arising in response to world war, revolution, the rise of scientific racism, and increasing racial tensions. Against this historical backdrop, we will look at particular local conditions and interrogate seemingly benign federal economic, social and housing policies that helped create the segregated ghettos and widening economic disparities between blacks and whites in Brooklyn. Finally, in Unit 3, our semester will culminate in actual interviews with Brooklynites who witnessed or participated in the Civil Rights protests of the 1960s and '70s. You will have the unique opportunity to conceptualize, research, frame and record live oral histories.

This semester your cohort will be looking at Brooklyn through the wider spectrum of History 2 and Coop 1, which you and your fellow participants in “Pathways to Freedom” will take in tandem with Core Seminar. We will continue to work with BHS and with the LIU library to both particularize and broaden the historical lens through which you see this place called Brooklyn.

### **Required texts and supplies**

- ❑ Mark G. Birchette, et al. *Core Seminar: The Idea of the Human: Reading Anthology*.
- ❑ Clarence Taylor. *Civil Rights in New York City: From World War II to the Giuliani Era*.
- ❑ Craig Wilder, *A Covenant with Color: Race and Social Power in Brooklyn*
- ❑ Isabelle Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of the Great Migration*
- ❑ Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*. 6<sup>th</sup> Ed.
- ❑ Photocopied & electronic essays to be supplied
- ❑ *Webster's Dictionary* or equivalent
- ❑ A class notebook, pens, and a library bar code
- ❑ A flash drive to save all your work, much of which will be included in your final portfolio

### **Required writing**

- ❑ 6 blog posts and 2 responses to a classmates' blog posts
- ❑ Research Project
  - One six-source final annotated bibliography with a research question.
  - One 6-8-page thesis-driven research project with drafts. The project will utilize a range of rhetorical strategies and a minimum of six sources, which must include one archival source from BHS, two library sources (e.g.,

academic database), and one Internet source (e.g., web page), or other medium (e.g., film), and two course readings. You will work together in teams to research the topic and then go on to write your own essay. This project will be digitally uploaded onto the SAFA website.

- Reflection on the research project
- ❑ Oral History Project
  - One 1-2 hour interview to be conducted as a team
  - Complete metadata information
  - Short, excerpted segment from the interview & reflection on it in the context of the whole interview
- ❑ Final Portfolio to be drawn from a variety of course content: one blog post, one photo of interviewee and one photo of interviewers; annotated bibliography; research essay with drafts; and final course reflection (personal statement about the impact of Pathways to Freedom on you as a first-year student)

### Course Overview

**Unit 1:** Why Reconstruction Failed: Jim Crow and the Great Migration

**Unit 2:** Brooklyn 1920 – 1990: Growth, Struggle, and Protest

**Unit 3:** Brooklyn Civil Rights Activists: Oral History in Historical Context

### Learning Goals

Because Core Seminar is an intensive writing, interdisciplinary course in critical thinking and not a composition course (as is English 16C), the learning goals apply to a wide spectrum of objectives found in many disciplines. This seminar aims specifically to help students develop the following cognitive abilities, which will require using the skills developed in English 16C:

- ❑ To understand, analyze, and interpret reading and other material critically
- ❑ To write organized, coherent, rhetorically driven, critical discourse
- ❑ To speak organized, persuasive discourse
- ❑ To listen critically in order to comprehend and interpret oral discourse
- ❑ To research efficiently and knowledgeably
- ❑ To reason abstractly in order to comprehend, interpret and synthesize course material; and
- ❑ To interpret numerical data

### Grading

A/A-/B+/B/B-/C+/C/C-/D/F/UW/W/I. The “W” (Withdrawal) grade indicates that a student has officially withdrawn from the course, while a “WF” (Withdrawal Failing) indicates that a student has officially withdrawn with a failing grade. The “UW” (Unofficial Withdrawal) indicates that a student did not officially withdraw but stopped attending classes. The “I” (Incomplete) indicates that a student did not complete the requirements of the course and must complete them before the end of the next semester, at which time the grade will become an F. Please note that the Incomplete is reserved for students with good attendance records who have kept up with their work but experience an emergency that prohibits completion of the coursework.

You will be evaluated on the basis of formal writing, informal writing, one oral history interview (successfully completed with metadata, reflection on excerpt, and collaborative introduction), class participation, and attendance. Your final grade will be calculated as follows: research essay = 30%; oral history = 30%; blog posts = 15%; personal statement = 10%; attendance and class participation = 15%.

Your final grade may be affected by failure to meet your responsibilities as follows:

- Every two times you are late to class will count as one absence.
- More than the equivalent of two weeks' absences may result in failing the course.
- Repeated violations of any of your responsibilities, such as using a cell phone or texting in class, may affect your final grade.
- Coming to class without required texts or other materials will result in being marked unprepared and may affect your final grade.
- For every day an assignment is late, a half point will be deducted from your grade.

### **Student and Teacher Responsibilities**

Your responsibilities as students are:

- To attend each class, arrive punctually, and participate actively
- To participate in all required Brooklyn Historical Society visits and other class trips
- To respect your classmates and me (e.g., do not talk when another person is talking, raise your hand, be courteous to everyone)
- To refrain from eating in class (drinks are allowed)
- To turn off your cell phones and any other electronic devices at the door except when you are using them for class purposes**
- To bring all required texts to class
- To be sure to have a library bar code in order to access electronic books and print copies of readings the day we are scheduled to discuss them
- To bring a pen and notebook to every class
- To complete and submit all reading and writing assignments on time
- To be present and fully prepared to workshop your essay on scheduled dates
- To notify me by email or phone if you are absent to find out what you missed
- To **save all work** on a flash drive or some other electronic storage device

My responsibilities as your teacher are:

- To ensure a safe, supportive learning environment
- To respond to your writing regularly and in a timely fashion
- To discuss your writing or any other concern during office hours or by appointment

### **Blackboard and SAFA Electronic Sites**

We will be using a combination of Blackboard and SAFA sites for course materials, blogging, and posting work. All course materials and electronic readings will be posted on Blackboard. You must use your LIU email address in order to access Blackboard. It is the only email address with which you may communicate to your classmates or me. If you do not have access to the Internet at home, please see me about using your LIU account and using computers on campus. **You must check Blackboard for this class on a daily basis. All class correspondence will be through Blackboard, and many resources will be posted there.** Blogs will be posted on the SAFA site. In general, blog posts should include (1) a brief summary of the text or experience; (2) your analysis of the text or experience; (3)

your thoughts about the subject of the text or experience in relation to other course readings and class discussions; and (4) if a text, at least two quotations effectively integrated into your own ideas. However, these elements may vary for particular posts. Final projects will be posted on the SAFA site.

### **BHS Archives, Class Trips, and Colloquia**

One of the most exciting aspects of the SAFA project is the integral role the Brooklyn Historical Society archives play in it. We will be visiting the BHS library as a class once this semester to conduct primary research on archival materials from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and at least one return visit as a team or on your own is required. These visits are mandatory; missing them will put you at a great disadvantage in completing the required coursework. In addition to the BHS trips, you will be required to visit the Weeksville Heritage. Because we are part of a larger learning community, we will also meet periodically with other sections of COS 50 to share ideas and collaborate on research plans. You *may* qualify to participate in a six-week summer seminar at BHS in which selected students will create a public exhibition based on their research and receive a \$1,000 stipend.

### **Formatting and Submitting Formal Essays and Drafts**

All drafts **MUST BE TYPED and DOUBLE-SPACED** (12 pt. Times Roman font, one-inch margins all around. Indent paragraphs; do not skip extra lines between them; be sure to number pages). Write all drafts on a computer to make revising easier (although you may certainly start drafts with pen and paper if you prefer). First drafts should be as fully developed as possible and follow all formatting guidelines. All drafts and revisions must be submitted on Blackboard before class meets at noon the day they are due; late papers result in a half point deduction. If you are presenting an essay, you will need to submit your essay to me at least two days prior to the date of the workshop in order for me to circulate it to the class; everyone is responsible for printing drafts and bringing them or an electronic device on which they can be read to workshops.

### **WAC Statement**

COS 50 is a writing intensive course and fulfills part of LIU Brooklyn's writing-intensive requirement. For graduation, all students are required to take nine credits of writing-intensive courses: English 16, Core Seminar (COS 50) and one writing-intensive course in the major.

### **Plagiarism**

The Council of Writing Program Administrators defines plagiarism thus: "In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source" ([www.wpacouncil.org](http://www.wpacouncil.org)). This is a good definition, and you should keep it in mind as you write. *If the idea and/or the writing is not your own, you need to document it; if you are not sure and cannot ask me, document to be safe.* Plagiarism is theft and can lead to failing the class and even to suspension. If I find that you have plagiarized writing in this course, the plagiarized paper will be graded F. If you do it again, you will fail the course, and I will submit a report to the Dean.

**LIU Writing Center**

The LIU Writing Center is located in H 218C. I urge all of you to utilize the Writing Center's resources, which include *free* weekly tutoring sessions, drop-in appointments, small groups, and workshops.

**NOTE: If there is any student who feels that she or he may need an accommodation for any type of disability, please make an appointment to see me during my office hours.**

## Tentative Course Schedule

*This is a rough outline of the course, including readings and due dates for papers. These dates may change; be sure to check on Blackboard for updates. If you must be absent and for legitimate, extenuating circumstances, email me the scheduled assignment before class begins and you will be credited for the work. Then also e-mail a classmate or me for the current assignment, which will be due when you return to class. Please make sure that you have the appropriate reading material in class on the day it is due.*

DATE	IN CLASS	READING DUE	WRITING DUE
<b>Unit 1: Why Reconstruction Failed: Jim Crow and the Great Migration</b>			
<b>Week 1</b> 1/18	<b>Joint Session</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• Read Whitman aloud</li> <li>• PBS film: <i>Slavery in America: The Challenge of Freedom</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whitman, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed" (to be provided)</li> </ul>	
<b>Week 2</b> 1/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course &amp; SAFA websites</li> <li>• Discuss Wilder/In-class writing</li> <li>• Assign research topics &amp; form groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wilder, Chapter 6</li> </ul>	Blog post # 1: Respond to syllabus
<b>Week 3</b> 2/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>LIU Library Session</b> Find LIU library source &amp; begin contextualizing BHS sources</li> <li>• Discuss DuBois/In-class writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• W.E.B. DuBois, "The Freedman's Bureau"</li> <li>• Sources for research topic</li> </ul>	Library Research Assignment: Find on LIU database either one scholarly journal article or two reputable newspaper articles on your topic. Annotate the article(s) and bring to library session.
<b>Week 4</b> 2/8  (Note: 2/1: ½ cohort goes to BHS, ½ stays at LIU. Reverse roles on 2/8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss Wilkerson &amp; DuBois</li> <li>• Film: <i>Soul of the People</i></li> </ul> <p>-----</p> <p><b>BHS visit # 1 (primary sources)</b> <b>Meet at BHS with half the cohort</b></p>	Isabelle Wilkerson, <i>The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration</i>	Blog post # 2: Reflect on the BHS visit. Due 2/10 if you go to BHS on 2/8; due 2/17 if you go to BHS on 2/15.
<b>Week 5</b> 2/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss Wilkerson</li> <li>• Film: <i>Soul of the People</i></li> </ul> <p>-----</p> <p><b>BHS visit # 1 (primary sources)</b> <b>Meet at BHS with other half of cohort</b></p>	Wilkerson	Blog post #3: Respond to Wilkerson & DuBois. Due 2/10 if you stay at LIU on 2/8; due 2/17 if you stay at LIU on 2/15.  Oral History Assignment #1 <b>Must be submitted no later than 2/17</b>
<b>Unit 2: Brooklyn 1920 - 1990: Growth, Struggle, and Protest</b>			
<b>Week 6</b> 2/22	Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary &amp; secondary sources</li> <li>• Gould, "Mismeasure of Man" and essay packet</li> <li>• Richard Wright, excerpt from <i>Black Boy</i></li> </ul>	Annotated Bibliography (3 sources, including 1 BHS primary source and 1 library source).

DATE	IN CLASS	READING, ETC. DUE	WRITING DUE
<b>Week 7</b> 2/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>LIU Library Session</b></li> <li>• 2-3: research paper – contextualizing BHS sources</li> <li>• 3-4:30 oral history – background information on interviewee</li> <li>• Distribute Weeksville Field Trip Handout</li> <li>• Discuss Wright and Gould</li> </ul>		Oral History Assignment #2  <b>NOTE: Oral History interviews will be conducted between 3/8 and 4/9</b>
<b>Week 8</b> 3/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral History Guidelines (Sady Sullivan) – Joint Session</li> </ul>		<b>Draft of research paper due Wed. by 6:00 PM but accepted until Fri. 9:00 AM</b>
<b>SPRING BREAK</b> 3/14	<b>NO CLASS</b>		
<b>Unit 3: Brooklyn Civil Rights Activists: Oral History in Historical Context</b>			
<b>Week 9</b> 3/21	Joint Session on Weeksville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weeksville literature (bring to class!)</li> <li>• Tillinghast, “Depending on Ourselves”</li> <li>• Wilkerson – Part 4</li> </ul>	Blog Post #4
<b>Week 10</b> 3/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss Wilder</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wilder Ch. 7</li> <li>• “UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights”</li> </ul>	Blog post #5
<b>Week 11</b> 4/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss Purnell &amp; Biondi</li> <li>• Review Metadata</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purnell, “Taxation...”</li> <li>• Biondi, “Brooklyn College...”</li> </ul>	<b>Draft # 2 of research paper and annotated bibliography (5 sources) due</b>
<b>Week 12</b> W 4/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss Wilder</li> <li>• Writing an Introduction</li> <li>• Transcribing an oral history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wilder, Ch. 8</li> <li>• Wilkerson – Part 5</li> </ul>	<b>Draft # 1 of Collaborative Oral History Introduction</b>  Blog post #6
<b>Week 13</b> W 4/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss Hughes &amp; Bambara</li> <li>• Workshop Introductions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Langston Hughes, “Theme for English B”)</li> <li>• Toni Cade Bambara, “The Lesson”</li> <li>• Wilkerson – final discussion</li> </ul>	<b>Transcription of excerpt of oral history due &amp; individual reflection</b>
<b>Week 14</b> W 4/28	<b><i>Pathways to Freedom Program</i></b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Portfolios due</b></li> <li>• <b>Departmental response due</b></li> <li>• <b>Final drafts of Oral History Collaborative Introduction &amp; Individual Reflection due</b></li> </ul>