

## **ENL 467 Topics in Cultural Studies: Reading and Writing Detroit**

How can we read and write the city we live in? What might it mean to explore the various meanings Detroit creates? What does it mean to live in a complex city like Detroit, to experience its ruins, to think about its history, to challenge its race relations, to explore its tension, to imagine its past and future? In this course, we will investigate Detroit as a series of meanings and mythologies; from Tiger Stadium to Eastern Market, from Highland Park to Corktown, from Woodward to Michigan Avenue, from Motown to Techno, we'll consider how the city's various places, ideas, problems, movements, and problems all juxtapose and influence one another. We'll spend time writing about and writing the city in provocative, innovative ways.

This course requires you to work extensively with computers. While you don't need any prior knowledge regarding how to make a website or participate on an email listserv, you must be willing to actively learn these technologies during this semester and actively use them. Thus, you will need to devote time in your schedule for sending weekly emails and for applying what you learn in class regarding website creation.

This course also requires you to do extensive out of class work and preparation. You will only read three required books for this course. The rest of the semester will be spent researching your project, plotting your project, putting together your project, and receiving and soliciting feedback on your work as it progresses.

All students must have a University of Detroit Mercy FTP account and an email account.

### **Texts**

*Keywords* - Raymond Williams

*Mythologies* - Roland Barthes

*Stalking Detroit* - Georgia Daskalakis (Editor), Charles Waldheim (Editor), Jason Young (Editor)

Computer disks

### **Recommended**

A grammar handbook

### **Rules and Requirements:**

1. Attendance is mandatory. Class discussion depends on the entire class being present. Because this course meets twice a week, you are allowed two unexcused absences throughout the course. After that, your final grade will drop by one letter grade for each additional absence. Prolonged absences due to illness or absences due to having to attend a university sponsored event (athletics, theater, music, field trip) will be excused if you provide me with proper documentation from an appropriate authority. You are responsible for all work due for any missed class as well as for the homework for the following class. You are also responsible for any work covered during the class you missed. You should get the phone numbers of a couple of your classmates in case you miss a class. You can also contact me by e-mail.
2. Don't be late to class. The class depends on your presence in order to conduct peer review and other in class activities. Three tardies will count as one unexcused absence.
3. Assignments are due on the class day they have been assigned for. Late work will not be accepted.
4. All assignments (unless otherwise noted) must be typed on white 8 1/2 X 11" paper, be double spaced, have 1" margins, and be according to MLA style.
5. All students are expected to honor the University's Honor Code. All work must be your own. Copying work without giving credit is considered plagiarism. Evidence of plagiarism will be dealt with according to the university's regulations.
6. Turn off your cell phones when you come to class. There is zero tolerance for cell phones going off in class and points will be deducted from your final grade if your phone does go off.
7. Many different opinions will be expressed in this class. Students are expected to respect the views of other students. Sexist and racial hate speech will not be tolerated. A difference of opinion will naturally result and is expected and encouraged. But students must still respect the view points of the other students in the class.
8. The classroom is not a space for public grievances. If you are upset with a grade or some other class related issue, you should make an appointment with me so that we can discuss the problem. If you are not satisfied with the results of that meeting, you can then follow university procedures for grievances. Do not, however, make the class space or the email listserv a place for your complaints. Doing so will result in grade penalties. Anyone who uses the class listserv in order to complain about me, a grade, class, or other students will be removed from the listserv and given a 0 for email as well as a 0 for participation.

### **Assignments**

**Project One: Keywords of Detroit** (100 pts)

**Project Two: Mythology of Detroit** (200 pts)

**Presentations** (100 points/50 points each) Two presentations on your work in progress. Responses required as well. .

**Email** (100 pts)

You are required to post at least 2 emails each week on the class listserv. Some posts you will make in response to specific assignments given in class. Other posts you will make on your own accord. The listserv will help us talk about the readings and the work we are doing. It is an open forum for collaboration and idea sharing. Frivolous emails with no substance (such as writing only "I like/don't like this reading" or "class was good" with no reason or justification) don't count. No personal grievances or attacks on the instructor or classmates will be tolerated. If such attacks occur, the guilty part will be removed from the listserv and given a 0 for email.

**If you do not do the email requirement, you cannot receive higher than a C on your overall grade (assuming you have done exceptionally well in all other areas of the course)**

**Participation** (100 pts)

Come to class ready to participate. Take notes on readings and bring ideas to discuss. This class is not a lecture class, so your participation is mandatory.

**Homepage** (50 pts)

Early in the semester you will make a homepage with three links (two to other pages you have made) and with three images. The homepage will help you get familiar with web writing.

**Various Assignments** (250 pts)

In order to help you prepare for each major project, various small assignments will be given. Check the schedule for each assignment.

Grading Scale

A: 850 - 900  
B+: 800 - 850  
B: 750 - 800  
C+: 700 - 750  
C: 650 - 700  
D: 600 - 650  
F: - 600

**ENL 467 Topics in Cultural Studies: Reading and Writing Detroit**

**Schedule**

**Week 1 Jan 6-8**

T: What is Cultural Studies?

R: Bring a computer disk to class. Learning how to make a homepage

**Listserv:** Respond to our talk on cultural studies with your understandings/lack of understandings of what cultural studies entails

**Week 2 Jan 13-15**

T: *Keywords*

**Listserv:** Discuss one keyword as you understand it. 500 words (one or two emails to do so)

R: *Keywords*

**Listserv:** Visit websites on resource page as well. Do you see a keyword anywhere? Where?

**Due:**Homepage due (50 pts)

**Week 3 Jan 27-29**

T: *Keywords*

**Due:** Come up with 5 Detroit keywords after reading links and other sources Bring them in on paper with research material/sources you used to find them

Suitable materials for research include: newspapers, magazines, films, TV shows, comics, ads, music, political speeches, govt documents, etc.

R: *Keywords*

Put your keywords on the Web (50 pts)

**Week 4 Feb 3-5**

T: *Keywords*

**Due:** Bring in 5 new keywords. They should already be on the Web so that you can talk about them with the class. (50 pts)

R: *Keywords*

Finish talking about keywords from Tuesday

**Week 5 Feb 10-12**

T: Presentations

R: Presentations

**Week 6 Feb 17-19**

Peer Review of Project One

**Week 7 Feb 24-26**

T: *Stalking Detroit*

R: *Stalking Detroit*

**Listserv:** Comment on one article in *Stalking Detroit*. Do you recognize the place? What would you add? Why?

**Week 8 March 1-7 Spring Break****Week 9 March 9-11**

T: *Stalking Detroit*

R: *Stalking Detroit*

**Due:** Identify city spaces/neighborhoods in Detroit and write about them on website. Talk about: origins, connotations, feelings you have for these spaces, history, problems, etc. (50 pts)

**Listserv:** Respond to each other's places of Detroit.

**Week 10 March 16-18**

T: *Mythologies*

R: *Mythologies*

**Listserv:** What mythologies could Barthes add today? Two choices.

**Week 11 March 23-25**

T: *Mythologies*

**Due:** Bring in Detroit myths with research material. Put your ideas on the Web (i.e. what will you write about for mythology project, and what are you reading in order to write about it?) (50 pts)

R: *Mythologies*

**Week 12 March 30-April 1**

T: *Mythologies*

R: *Mythologies*

**Due:** Flesh out one myth on website into a larger mythology – i.e. expand its focus and ideas you have (50 pts)

**Listserv:** Respond to one classmate's myth

**Week 13 April 6-8**

T: Presentations

R: Presentations

**Week 14 April 13-15**

T: Peer Review Project Two

R: Peer Review Project Two

**Week 15**

Final Projects Due

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## Assignments

### Project One: Keywords of Detroit

Raymond Williams identifies key terms for cultural studies (and academic studies) and breaks down their various etymological, social, political, etc. meanings. His reason is to show that the terms we use are not "natural" but instead are constructions. Identifying meaningful terms as constructions helps us better understand our relationships with entertainment, politics, school, work, and our daily lives.

For this project, construct a keywords of Detroit. Your project should identify and breakdown terms you feel are relevant and important towards understanding Detroit. Your focus should include some or all of the following:

- Politics
- Entertainment
- Place (bars, neighborhoods, streets, places)
- History
- Education
- Weather
- Culture

But to construct a keywords, you must research the areas you isolate. While you may already recognize certain features about Detroit and want to write about them, remember the key principle of doing cultural studies: meanings are not natural. We are not always aware of what a "text" means because familiarity causes us to only see our first impression. Your keywords will allow us (your readers) new understandings of the city and will help us get around the familiar meanings we have become too comfortable with. Even more importantly, your keywords will allow us to create connections between terms we might not have already seen as connected.

Remember: Williams tells us that part of his rationale for doing a keywords is "to analyse, as far as I could, some of the issues and problems that were there inside the vocabulary" (15).

How will your keywords allow you to create an analysis of Detroit's vocabulary?

Your keywords should be alphabetic. It may include images. It must be at least 3,000 words.

Divide your project over several pages. Don't put 3,000 words on one webpage. Make a main page with a table of navigation for readers to follow. Think of how you might connect terms or ideas among your keywords by using hyperlinks.

Use MLA in text citation. Create a Works Cited page with appropriate citation. You need to make a link to the project from your homepage.

### Project Two

#### Mythology of Detroit

For your second project, we will take up Roland Barthes' interest in mythologies and apply his theory to Detroit.

Mythologies, Barthes tells us, encompass the assumptions we make about places, events, popular culture, ideas, etc. as if these things are *natural* when, in fact, they are social and ideological constructions. The task of writing a mythology is to write about the less obvious features of a given item in order to describe these constructions in detail.

Barthes writes that "Our society is the privileged field of mythical significations. We must now say why" (137). Our challenge is to say *why* Detroit embodies various mythologies.

For your project, you will write a mythology on some aspect of Detroit. Barthes chooses wrestling, Greta Garbo, wine and milk, and other items. You are to choose one item relevant to Detroit. These items can include, but are not limited to:

- A person
- A park
- A place
- An event

- A street
- A sports team
- A recording studio
- An advertisement campaign
- A casino
- A restaurant

To write a mythology, however, you have to research it. You need to uncover its history, connections to other city moments or people, sociological importance, economic importance, racial importance, etc. You must uncover and present the various *significations* which are used to represent your mythology. "The function of myth is to empty reality; it is, literally, a ceaseless flowing out, a hemorrhage, or perhaps, an evaporation, in short, a perceptible absence" (143). Thus, you must *empty out* the meanings of your item which you already recognize in order to more fully explore the other meanings you have not yet considered (and we assume neither has the audience for your work).

Your mythology must be at least 3,000 words.

Divide your project over several pages. Don't put 3,000 words on one webpage. Make a main page with a table of navigation for readers to follow. Think of how you might connect terms or ideas among pages and sections by using hyperlinks.

Use MLA in text citation. Create a Works Cited page with appropriate citation. You need to make a link to the project from your homepage.

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**ENL 467 Topics in Cultural Studies: Reading and Writing Detroit**  
**Detroit Resources for Research/Reading**

**History, Culture, and Ruins**

Forgotten Detroit  
Fabulous Ruins of Detroit  
David Sheridan's Detroit Project  
Discuss Detroit Forum  
Detroit Historical Museums  
Detroit Pix  
Virtual Motor City  
DIA  
Wayne State University American Studies Links on Detroit  
Heidelberg Project  
"Detroit in Ruins"  
Detroit City and Suburbs Studies  
Digital Detroit  
"Why America Loves to Fear Detroit"  
"DETROIT'S BUILDINGS: Landmarks Keep Rotting as City Codes Gather Dust"  
"INSIDE FORGOTTEN BUILDINGS: Old Towers Hide a World of Violations and Shadowy Lives"

**School**

Technology in Urban Schools  
"Technical Difficulties" - Computers and Schools  
Detroit Schools Face Cuts

**Music**

Detroit Techno  
"Machine Soul: A History of Techno"  
"Crossover Dream" (about Eminem)  
Detroit . Pursuit And Resistance Technologies  
Mixmaster Morris Detroit Techno Links  
Motown  
George Clinton  
New Funk Times  
Detroit Rock and Roll Bands  
On the Detroit Hip Hop Summit  
Detroit Jazzfest  
Jamrag Magazine  
Creem Magazine Online

**Street and People**

Tribes of Cass Corridor  
Detroit Synergy  
Warren Avenue Graffiti  
Motosoul Detroit Collaborative on Graffiti  
Hastings Street Links  
TURL  
Michigan Central Station Our Hip Hop Mayor  
Henry Ford  
Detroit Blog  
Michigan Chronicle

***Detroit News Stories of Interest***

Race Relations at the Millenium  
Census News and Detroit  
Segregation in Detroit (A five part series)  
Blight in Detroit  
Local Arabs and the War on Terror  
Detroit Mass Transit  
50 Year history of Elmhurst  
Rearview Mirror  
Ossian Sweet  
1943 Riots  
RenCen  
Hippies in Detroit

**Cultural Studies**

"What is Cultural Studies Anyway?" by Richard Johnson  
University of Iowa's Cultural Studies Page  
Voice of the Shuttle  
Popcultures.com  
Cultural Studies Central  
Cultural Studies at George Mason University  
Blackwell Cultural Studies Resources

**Web Resources**

Javascript.com  
Javascript Source  
Javascript City  
Dynamic Drive DHTML  
DHTML Central  
WebMonkey HTML Basics  
Network Writing Environment HTML Help  
How to Make an Image Rollover  
How to Make an Imagemap  
BigNoseBird HTML tricks  
Tips and Tricks  
HTML tricks  
Using Stylesheets  
W3 Introduction to Stylesheets  
Stylesheet Layout Techniques  
Steve's Free Web Templates

**Search Engines**

Google  
Google Image Search  
Dogpile  
Yahoo  
UDM Library  
MagPortal