

American Studies 423  
**The Search for Community**

Spring 2017  
MW 1:00-2:15pm  
LH 403A

Instructor: Dr. Carrie Lane  
Office Hours: MW 9:30-11:00am, and by appointment  
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**Course Description:**

This upper-level seminar offers an interdisciplinary exploration of the concept of community and its role in American culture. Drawing on works from anthropology, sociology, history, fiction, and film, we'll explore what constitutes community, how communities vary in form and function, and what draws people into and away from various social groupings. Course materials concern groups as diverse as Appalachian miners, gay Asian Los Angelenos, dispossessed Midwestern farmers, Star Trek fans, isolated suburbanites, and Jewish senior citizens. These communities are examined on their own terms and within the wider context of American cultural and political life. Students investigate different disciplines' methodological and theoretical approaches to the study of community and the advantages and challenges of interdisciplinary work through close and critical reading of course texts, vibrant class discussion, and extensive writing.

**Required Texts:**

Peter Lovenheim, *In the Neighborhood: The Search for Community on an American Street*  
Kathryn Dudley, *Debt & Dispossession: Farm Loss in America's Heartland*  
Kai Erikson, *Everything in Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*  
Eric Wat, *The Making of a Gay Asian Community* [free web version; used copies for sale online]  
Setha Low, *Behind the Gates: Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America*  
Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*  
Additional **Required** Readings on Titanium website

Books for this course are available for purchase at Little Professor Book Center (725 N. Placentia) and the University Bookstore. I do not require a specific edition of any of these books, so feel free to purchase used copies of older editions (I recommend the website Half.com for used books).

## **Course Requirements:**

**Technical/Email Requirements:** As a registered student you are enrolled in Titanium. I will regularly use Titanium to communicate with you about this class, so be sure to check your student email address at least once every three days during the semester. With technical problems, contact the student help desk at (657) 278-8888 or email [StudentITHelpDesk@fullerton.edu](mailto:StudentITHelpDesk@fullerton.edu).

**Participation:** The success of this course depends on your contributions as seminar participants. I expect you to come to class having completed all assigned reading for that day and prepared with questions and comments for class discussion. Failure to regularly participate will reduce your final grade. Students who are hesitant to speak in class should feel free to discuss their concerns with me. I will do my best to encourage and assist you however I can.

**Attendance:** Attendance is required at every seminar. Any absence must either be cleared in advance or be the result of serious, documented extenuating circumstances. You are expected to attend **each and every class**. Each student will be allowed **three** unexcused absences. After that, each absence will result in an immediate reduction of your final course grade by one-half a letter grade (10 percentage points). If you have more than five unexcused absences, you will fail the course.

**Teach us about a Community:** At some point in the semester, each student will deliver a brief oral presentation (with visual aids) informing the class about an American community they find especially interesting. Your presentation should be engaging, thoughtful, and well-organized, and you should be prepared to answer questions from your professor and classmates following your presentation.

**Theories of Community Paper:** In this brief paper (approximately 4 pages) you will engage with our three weeks of readings on ideas about what community is and how it works. In your essay, summarize and compare at least three different conceptions or definitions of community presented in those readings and assess which you find most useful or convincing. If you'd like, you may incorporate specific examples from your own experiences or observations of American communities to support your conclusions.

**Final Project:** In addition to required course readings, each undergraduate will read one additional book about an American community of your choosing (historical or contemporary), although not one already covered in course readings or films. I hope that over the semester you will each serve as our resident expert on your community, referencing it when relevant during class discussions. I have provided a list of community studies at the end of this syllabus to spark your imagination. You may opt to study one of these communities or select another **with my approval**. No two students may read the same book, so be sure to run your selection by me as soon as possible.

At the end of the semester, each student will prepare a final project about the community they chose to study. That project may be presented in one of three forms:

1. Write a **5-7 page paper** in which you analyze the additional community you elected to study with regard to course readings and themes. Your paper will inform the reader about that community and consider it in comparison to other communities we studied in class, as well as to our initial readings about the nature and definition of community. Each paper will have its own original argument, and should incorporate the additional book and **at least three** course readings.

2. Make a **video of 5-10 minutes** analyzing the community you chose to study with regard to course readings and themes. Your video will inform the reader about that community and consider it in comparison to other communities we studied in class, as well as to our initial readings about the nature and definition of community. Your video should make an argument about this community, not just describe it, and should incorporate **at least three** course readings and one additional book on your community. The video should include a list of sources, either integrated into the film or presented as a bibliography at the end.
  
3. Conduct an **ethnographic study** of a contemporary US community, including at least one observation of at least two hours and at least two interviews of at least half an hour each (or four shorter interviews) and write a 5-7 page paper in which you inform the reader about that community and consider it in comparison to other communities we studied in class, as well as to our initial readings about the nature and definition of community. Each ethnography will have its own original argument, and should incorporate **at least three** course readings.

**Graduate Students:** Graduate students will complete all assignments required of undergraduate students but will be expected to demonstrate a higher level of written, oral, and/or digital communication and a greater scope, depth, and length of analysis than that expected of undergraduates. Graduate students may choose any of the final project options outlined above, but will be expected to consult at least 5 additional secondary sources on their community and meet other additional requirements that will be outlined by the professor in individual consultations.

### Grading Details and Procedures:

In grading your assignments and exams I will pay close attention to both substance and form (grammar, spelling, organization, and clarity of expression). In evaluating the substance of an essay, I will examine whether you have demonstrated a critical understanding of course materials **and** presented and substantiated a coherent thesis or argument. I reserve the right to modify or add assignments throughout the semester.

|                             |     |                              |
|-----------------------------|-----|------------------------------|
| Teach us about a Community  | 15% | Individually scheduled       |
| Theories of Community Paper | 25% | Due 2/22 in class            |
| Final Project               | 40% | Due 5/15 to UH-313 by 4:30pm |
| Seminar Participation       | 20% |                              |

Extensions must be requested well in advance of the assignment deadline. There is no make-up work in this class without a written documented excuse.

|           |           |                |
|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| A 92-100% | B- 80-81% | D+ 68-69%      |
| A- 90-91% | C+ 78-79% | D 62-67%       |
| B+ 88-89% | C 72-77%  | D- 60-61%      |
| B 82-87%  | C- 70-71% | F 59% or lower |

The +/- grading system will be used; no extra credit will be offered. Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade for every unexcused day overdue. Keep all graded assignments so that any discrepancies can be easily and fairly straightened out.

## **RESOURCES AND REQUIREMENTS**

**Students with Special Needs:** Please inform the instructor during the first week of classes about any disability or special needs that you may have that may require specific arrangements related to attending class sessions, carrying out class assignments, or writing papers or examinations. According to California State University policy, students with disabilities must document their disabilities at the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office in order to be accommodated in their courses. Additional information can be found at the [DSS website](#) , by calling 657-278-3112 or email [dsservices@fullerton.edu](mailto:dsservices@fullerton.edu).

**Academic Dishonesty Policy:** Academic dishonesty includes such things cheating, inventing false information or citations, plagiarism, and helping someone else commit an act of academic dishonesty. It usually involves an attempt by a student to show a possession of a level of knowledge or skill, which he/she in fact does not possess. I take all forms of academic dishonesty very seriously; students who engage in cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of dishonesty in this course will receive a zero on the assignment in question and be reported to judicial affairs. Additional information on this policy is available from [University Policy Statement 300.021](#).

**Emergency Preparedness:** Please visit CSUF's [Classroom Preparedness website](#) to review procedures to follow in an emergency. Please contact Professor Lane if you have any concerns or questions about what to do should an emergency occur during this class.

**University Learning Center (ULC):** The goal of the ULC is to provide CSUF students with academic support including assistance with assignments, general study skills, and computer user needs. The ULC offers one-to-one peer tutoring, online writing review, and many more services. More information can be found on the [ULC website](#).

**Writing Center:** Located on the first floor of Pollak Library, the Writing Center offers 30-minute, one-on-one peer tutoring sessions and workshops, aimed at providing assistance for all written assignments and student writing concerns. Registration and appointment schedules are available at the [Writing Center Appointment Scheduling System](#). Walk-in appointments are also available on a first come, first served basis, to students who have registered online. More information can be found at the [Writing Center webpage](#) or by calling (657) 278-3650.

## Course Schedule

### 1/23 & 1/25 Introduction: Who Are You People?

- No Reading

**In Class:** My Communities exercise

### 1/30 & 2/1 In Search of Community

- Peter Lovenheim, *In the Neighborhood*

### 2/6 & 2/8 What is Community? [all Titanium]

- Kai Erikson, "Villages"
- Benedict Anderson, "Census, Map, and Museum," *Imagined Communities* (1983)
- Zygmunt Bauman, *Community*, "An Overture" and Ch. 1

### 2/13 & 2/15 And Where Did It Go? [all Titanium]

- Ray Oldenburg, "The Problem of Place in America"
- Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital"
- Garry Wills, "Putnam's America"
- Stephen Marche, "Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?"

### 2/22 (No class 2/20 due to Presidents' Day)

- No reading
- **DUE: Theories of Community Paper**

### 2/27 & 3/1 Traditional Communities

- Kathryn Dudley, *Debt & Dispossession*, Preface & Chapters 1-4

**In Class:** Watch *Number Our Days*

### 3/6 & 3/8 Are Individualism and Community Antithetical?

- Kathryn Dudley, *Debt & Dispossession*, Chapters 5-8

### 3/13 & 3/15 Intentional Communities [all Titanium]

- Esther Sullivan, "Individualizing Utopia"
- Tendai Chitewere, "Equity in Sustainable Communities"

**3/20 & 3/22 Are Fandoms Communities?**

- Kai Erikson, *Everything In Its Path*, Introduction & Parts I-II (discuss after break)

**In Class:** Watch *Trekkies*

\* \* \* **SPRING BREAK** \* \* \*

**4/3 & 4/5 Can Communities Die?**

- Kai Erikson, *Everything In Its Path*, Part III

**4/10 & 4/12 Is There Such a Thing as “The” Gay Community?** [book available online via Titanium]

- Eric Wat, *The Making of a Gay Asian Community*, Ch. 1-5

**In Class:** Watch *Small-Town Gay Bar*

**4/17 & 4/19 Creating a Community Study**

- Eric Wat, *The Making of a Gay Asian Community*, Ch. 6-10

**4/24 & 4/26 Community and Inequality**

- Setha Low, *Behind the Gates*, Prologue and Ch. 1-6

**In Class:** Watch *Class Divide*

**5/1 & 5/3 Gated Communities**

- Setha Low, *Behind the Gates*, Ch. 7-11 & Appendices

**5/8 & 5/10 When the Gates Come Down**

- Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

**5/15 No Class: FINAL PAPERS DUE to Professor Lane’s Mailbox in UH-313 by 4:30pm**

## Community Studies

This book list is intended to inspire ideas for your final course projects. You may choose to write about a community study from this list or select another American community.

Elijah Anderson, *A Place on the Corner*

Rich Benjamin, *Searching for Whitopia: An Improbable Journey to the Heart of White America*

Phillipe Bourgeois, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*

George Chauncey, *Gay New York*

John Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*

Kathryn Dudley, *End of the Line: Lost Jobs, New Lives in Postindustrial*

Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins, *Celebration, U.S.A.: Living in Disney's Brave New Town*

Frida Kerner Furman, *Facing the Mirror: Older Women and Beauty Shop Culture*

Herbert Gans, *Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community*

Willard Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880–1920*

Faye Ginsberg, *Contested Lives: The Abortion Debate in an American Community*

Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men*

Maria Kefalas, *Working-Class Heroes: Protecting Home, Community, and Nation in a Chicago Neighborhood*

Madhulika Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian: An Immigrant Community in NYC*

Alex Kotlowitz, *There Are No Children Here*

Jonathon Kozol, *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation*

Elliot Liebow, *Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men*

Jose Limón, *Dancing with the Devil: Society and Cultural Poetics in Mexican-American South Texas*

Kenneth Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years*

Robert and Helen Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture*

Jay MacLeod, *Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations of Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood*

Sarah Mahler, *American Dreaming: Immigrant Life on the Margins*

Melba Patillo McCoy, *Black Picket Fences*

David Neiwert, *Strawberry Days: How Internment Destroyed a Japanese American Community*

Katherine Newman, *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*

Gilda Ochoa, *Becoming Neighbors in a Mexican American Community: Power, Conflict, and Solidarity*

Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, *Inside Deaf Culture*

Padma Rangaswamy, *Namaste America: Indian Immigrants in an American Metropolis*

Andrew Ross, *The Celebration Chronicles: Life, Liberty, & the Pursuit of Property Value in Disney's New Town*

Carol Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*

Carol Stack, *Call to Home: African-Americans Reclaim the Rural South*

William Whyte, *Street Corner Society*

Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco*