

AmCS L98-301B
Individual & Community
American Culture Studies
Spring, 2013

In this course we explore the relationship between individuals and community and how each interacts to “create” the other. The process involves shaping their respective identities and internal cohesiveness. We concentrate on understanding theories of the formation of individual “selves” and community by working to understand theoretical explanations of the social and political forces that create differentiation as well as communal experiences based on race, ethnicity, class, and gender. We then consider these theories in relation to “real world” communities and those located in virtual space (the internet) and weigh their similarities relative to how they operate and impact social cohesion, feelings of belongingness, and sense of one’s self. For example, for race and ethnicity, the subtitle one book we read, *The Cosmopolitan Canopy*, is “race and civility in everyday life; for class and ethnicity, the subtitle of a second book, *Ain’t No Makin’ It*, is “aspirations and attainment in a low-income neighborhood”; for dynamics relating to “virtual” communities and gender are explored in readings on women’s on-line communities and on harassment of women in the online community of gamers

We also have three field undertakings, two designed to explore and apply our readings to St Louis and an internet community. The third is to attend the Washington University Powwow, held on Saturday, April 21st. Descriptions are on the last page of the syllabus.

Requirements: One take home mid-term exam (20%); a final paper (25%); three field expeditions with writeups (15% each). Attendance and participation (10%).

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(my personal number--Texts acceptable)

Office Hours: Tue: 2:30-4:00

and by appointment

Books on order in the bookstore:

Anderson, Elijah. *The Cosmopolitan Canopy*. W. W. Norton & Company; Reprint edition (March 12, 2012).

MacLeod, Jay. *Ain’t No Makin’ It*. Westview Press; 3rd edition (July 29, 2008).

Approximate Reading Schedule.
All reading due the day it appears on the schedule

Week 1: Jan 15-17

Mon: MLK Day
Tue: FIRST day of the Semester
Wed: Introduction—No readings

Week 2: Jan 22-24—Conceptualizing Community

Mon: Conceptualizing Community: Excerpt from A. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, pp. 7-38, 109-118 (on BB)
Wed: Kasarda and Janowitz, “Community Attachment in Mass Society,” pp. 328-332 and Shumar and Renninger, “On Conceptualizing Community” (both on BB)
Some practical considerations on studying communities: Elijah Anderson: “Jelly’s Place: An Ethnographic Memoir” (BB).

Week 3: Jan 29-31—An Urban Community (or Communities): Philadelphia and a Cosmopolitan Experience

Mon: Anderson: *The Cosmopolitan Canopy*, Ch’s 1-3. Anderson,
Wed: Anderson, *The Cosmopolitan Canopy*, Ch 4, 5, & 7

Week 4: Feb 5-7—Theorizing the Social Foundations of Community and their Physical Manifestations

Mon: Networks and strong and weak ties: Granovetter: “The Strength of Weak Ties” (BB). Plus, progress and presentations of field assignment #1.

Wed: Berger & Luckman, Excerpt from *The Social Construction of Reality*, “Society as Objective Reality: Institutionalization,” pp 65-84 (BB).

Friday the 9th: Final draft field assignment#1 due.

Week 5: Feb 12-14—Theorizing the social foundations of individual identities

Mon: George Herbert Mead: “Self.” (BB).
Wed: Making Individuals Part 1, Goffman, “On Face Work” (BB).

Week 6: Feb 19-21—Individual, Community, and Future

Mon: McCleod, *Ain’t No Make’n’ It*, Chapters 1-6
Wed: McCleod, *Ain’t No Make’n’ It*, Chapters 9-11

Week 7: Feb 26-28

Mon: McCleod, *Ain't No Make'n It*, Chapters 12-14
Wed: MID TERM EXAM (Take home, essay)

Week 8: March 5-7 Virtual Communities

Mon: Eden Litt (2012), "Knock, Knock. Who's There? The Imagined Audience" (BB).
Lessig, *Code V2*, Chapter 2, "Four Puzzles from Cyberspace" (pp. 9-28) (BB).
Wed: Three Virtual Communities: (1) Fandom, (2) Women of the Alt Right and
(3) suggestions? Readings on BB.

Week 9: March 11-17

SPRING BREAK

Week 10: March 19-21—Virtual Communities Continued

Mon: Three Virtual Communities Continued.
Wed: Progress and update on assignment.

Week 11: March 26-28: Order, Control, and Authority.

Mon: Weber: "Class, Status, and Party" and "Types of Authority" (BB).
Wed: Ellickson: Excerpt: *Order without Law* (BB).
Friday, the 30th: Final Draft field assignment #2 on Virtual Communities due

Week 12: 2-4 Community and Gender Roles

Mon: Gender & Family—Excerpt from Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*; excerpt from Bella, et al, *Habits of the Heart* (BB).
Wed: TBA

Week 13: April 9-11 The Dis-functional Community: Alienation, Anomie, and Anomic Society

Mon: Durkheim on Anomie excerpts (BB) & Marx on "Estranged Labour" (or Alienation) Excerpt (BB).
Wed: Fandom in the virtual world run amuck: readings on BB; Disintegrating "small town America" (BB).

Week 14: April 16-18--Community Maintenance & Reproduction: The Native American Experience and the Washington University Powwow.

Mon: Remaking and Maintaining Community—Issues of authenticity: Canada’s Inuit (on BB); Ethnic Communities in the US (BB); return to Cohen: symbolic boundaries, oppositional forces, identity. Essay guidelines handed out.

Wed: “The Powwow as a Public Arena for Negotiating Unity and Diversity in American Indian Life” (BB) + read links on www.buder.wustl.edu/Events/Pages/PowWow.aspx.

SATURDAY: April 21, 2018—Washington University Powwow.

Week 15: April 23-25

Mon: Short essay on Powwow due. Discuss Powwow.

Wed: TBA

Final Exam: Final Papers due no later than day of final.

ASSIGNMENTS

Field Expeditions:

#1: This is an observation exercise **only** and should be carried out with one other person from class. You should both observe, take notes, and Ride the Metrolink from one end to the other. Objective: what can you divine about the ridership and the city from your observations? Who are the riders? Where are they going? How diverse is the ridership? What parts of the city does the Metro travel through—who is it linking together? Who is it excluding? How is it tied into other forms of public transportation? How do people communicate on the ride? What norms or conventions of interaction can you identify. How do the ways people interact and comport themselves compare with what we see in Anderson's *Cosmopolitan Canopy*?

#2: Virtual communities. Spend time defining the parameters/boundaries and membership of a virtual community—this can be on a single website (although one would need to locate the lone website in a network of similar websites with strong and/or weak ties) or a network of websites. What makes it community? What is shared? What is known and not known about the members that contribute to its cohesiveness. What are central values and norms communicated. How strong or weak is the community? What factors contribute its strengths? How fluid are they (historically contingent or age determined, for example).

#3: Washington University Powwow. Guidelines and descriptions in assigned readings.

Final Paper:

Topics will be handed out mid-semester. The topics will revolve around one of two exercises that have you do research that is informed by the semester's readings. (1) An observation exercise **only** carried out at Soulard Market **or an alternative, established, public community center or gathering place**. Similar to the previous assignment, you should observe and take notes in order to address the following questions. What is the character and form of the gathering place? What makes it a community? The patrons, the shop keepers, or some variation? Who seems to belong and who doesn't? Who are the patrons? What appear to be their primary goals? How diverse is the crowd? How do they "present" themselves? How do people get to and from the market? How do patrons communicate with one another and with the shop keepers in the market? What norms or conventions of interaction can you identify. What are the physical and symbolic boundaries of the market as a whole and within the market? OR (2) Examine the relationship between an individual and a community she is immersed in. How is the individual's daily life shaped by their engagement with the community and in return, how is the community affected by their involvement. What does the individual contribute to and shape the community? This exercise can be executed through observation or by studying a particular figure and their role/engagement with their community (such as a leader of a movement) by using secondary sources.