

Carleton University
Fall 2024 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English

**ENGL 3911: Introduction to Cultural Studies
Crisis, Conflict, and Memory**

Prerequisites: third year standing or permission of the department.

Instructor: Franny Nudelman
Email: frannynudelman@cunet.carleton.ca

***** This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change.
A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term. *****

Course description:

Cultural studies defines culture broadly to include a wide range of texts, objects, and practices that shape our everyday habits and perceptions, give rise to institutional power, and determine some of our most deeply held assumptions about identity and belonging. At the same time, cultural studies celebrates the production of culture as a source of radical imagination and new forms of knowledge and relatedness. Culture emerges as a consequential site of struggle, invention, and world-building. Focusing on US culture and history, this course explores and tests this model of culture as it relates to the challenges of our moment, including economic inequality, the struggle for racial justice, climate emergency, and forced dislocation. We will pay special attention to the contested spaces—both public and private—where we live and congregate. Placing emphasis on intersectionality, intertextuality, and interdisciplinarity, we will ask how cultural producers (writers, dancers, filmmakers, actors, artists, musicians) grapple with the complexities of our moment, paying special attention to how they draw on the past to help them interpret the present and conjure the future. We will also reflect on the ways that our work in the classroom—reflecting, analyzing, discussing—makes real the assumption that culture matters.

Learning Outcomes:

In this course, you will learn some of the key principles, aims and methods of cultural studies. In the process, you will practice interpreting and interrelating texts in different media; reflect on the relationship between culture and history; develop interesting and original ideas that evolve over the course of the term; express those ideas in clear and concise prose. Throughout, we will generate questions and ideas collectively through discussion.

Texts may include:

Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (2016); Cathy Park Hong, “Stand Up,” from *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning* (2020); Spike Lee, “Do the Right Thing” (1989); Herman Melville, “Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street” (1853);

Anna Deavere Smith, *Twilight Los Angeles* (1992); Joe Talbot, “The Last Black Man in San Francisco” (2019); the Royal Canadian Navy Monument (2010).

Evaluation:

Class participation is essential to your learning in this course. To that end, I expect you to attend class regularly; complete the reading/viewing and be prepared to discuss it; contribute thoughtfully to our weekly conversations. Your final grade will be based on your attendance and class participation (40%); impromptu in-class writing assignments (25%); research presentation and short (5-6 pp.) essay (35%).