ISS 210-001: Society and the Individual
"The Politics of Becoming Human"

Instructor and ULA:

Dr. Sandy Burnley and Riane Molloy

Office:

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Email:

Professor's email: burnley2@msu.edu
Email the professor if you have questions about class content, assignments, or grades.
ULA's email: molloyri@msu.edu
Email your ULA regarding technology, attendance, due dates, homework, or readings.
*Please keep in mind, it may take 24 hours to receive a response M-F.

Office hours:

Mondays and Wednesdays: 12:00 pm -1:00 pm
*Please fill out the appointment form to schedule a meeting and ensure availability

Course Description:

"Society and the Individual" is an interdisciplinary exploration of social problems, western cultural constructs, philosophical inquiries around ethics, morality, and human behavior, kinship, other-than-human actors, and institutions. The premise of this course will revolve around a seemingly simple aphorism that "man is a social animal," as Aristotle infamously claimed, but what defines man, society, and animal? Who are we when we think of ourselves as individuals? Do our identities shift in social groups? What happens when someone sees us as different from the way we see ourselves? ISS 210 will span philosophical, sociological, literary, cinematic, journalist, humanist, and posthumanist models to explore the relationship between the individual and society, exploring who resides at the center of this question, who is often marginalized, and how these sites of focus are constructed, transported, and challenged in Western society.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course students will be well-versed in:

- Applying critical and analytical thinking to dissect social issues
- Forming a carefully articulated, conscientious, and well-grounded argument to affect change, understand perspectives, and contextualize social constructions and institutions
- Collaborating with peers to refine awareness of how diversity emerges within cultures and social groups
- Using an interdisciplinary approach to research and reframe pressing questions and concerns

Reading Material:

Claudia Rankine's *Citizen*

The American Lyric above is the only text you must purchase. You can obtain it either through the MSU's Student Bookstore on Grand River (sbsmsu.com), Amazon, or another platform. All other reading material will be made available weekly via links on D2L and/or digitally through the MSU library.

Other Required Materials and Technology:

To every class you are required to bring the following:

- Reading material assigned for that day
- Internet compatible device (i.e. computer, tablet, etc.) to participate in discussions, quizzes, and other mandatory assignments
- Daily access to D2L

Failure to bring these required materials may lead to a deduction in participation/attendance.

- See https://tech.msu.edu/students/ for help accessing technology on campus.
- See https://spartanslearn.msu.edu/ for training in software and technology.
- See the Loaner Program if you need to borrow a wifi-enabled device.

Attendance and Late Policy (10% or 100 points):

Since we are a community of growing scholars, this means attendance and participation is paramount for yourself and for your peers to participate in discussions. Attendance will be taken using iClicker and will count as 10% of your grade. If you have any campus events (athletic, theater, holidays, etc.,) of which you are aware ahead of time and do not want to miss any in-class assignments, please notify me and your closest peers to see if we can set up any accommodations. If you have tested positive for COVID-19, please do not come to class, follow MSU's COVID-19 guidelines, and inform me of your absence and diagnosis. You may also schedule office hours with me to discuss any work missed. Please always check for quizzes and assignments posted on the schedule or on D2L while absent to avoid missing credit. You have 3 excused absences so use them wisely. Alternatively, perfect attendance will add 10 points to your attendance grade.

Discussion Questions (10% or 100 points)

We are a community of growing scholars, and the majority of class time will be tailored to in-depth discussion and group collaboration. Discussion questions will be hosted in class unless otherwise announced. Participation in these discussions will be monitored and will count as 20% of your grade. Some discussions are constructed as a group in a google doc uploaded to D2L while others are individual discussion forums on D2L. Failure to have a record of your *individual* contribution in a *group* discussion results in a 0 for your part in the assignment. These discussions are assessed based on cultural understanding, recognition of diverse citizenship, integrated reasoning, and critical thinking. An excellent grade will incorporate insight, multifaceted views on an issue, and careful consideration. A good grade will provide an insight or logically sound argument. Satisfactory may demonstrate a gap in the argument's logic or an oversight. Any incomplete assignment will result in a 0.

Quizzes (2% or 20 points each; total of 20% or 200 points)

Quizzes will be unannounced and used to gauge whether you have done the reading for that class or are actively participating in class. This means that a pop quiz can be given during any class period, even if we have not finished a reading or a discussion.

Project #1: Profiles (10% or 100 points) Due Friday, Sept. 30th

Using the free platform, Piktochart, you will create a multifaceted profile of yourself. The profile should include a collage of single stories that compose your identity. You must complete a google search of yourself and interview friends, family members, coworkers, teammates, neighbors, etc., to get a robust image of what "society" thinks of you. Finally, compose a "narrative" of how you view yourself as a political individual. Was there anything left out or surprising? What did you learn about your position in society? Assessment will be based on task completion, style, depth (critical thinking) and integrated reasoning (avenues of inquiry), and your cultural understanding and recognition of societal issues and institutional structures. To submit your profile, download your profile as a PDF. Label your PDF's file name with your LastName.FirstInitial.Profile.pdf and upload to the appropriate D2L dropbox.

Precis (5% or 50 points each; total of 10% or 100 points). Due Oct. 14th & Nov. 18th

You will create a short, 150-word precis on D2L's discussion thread regarding any class lecture, discussion, or reading up until this date. This doesn't mean you must stick to *one* lecture, but use this time to concisely discuss any information you found interesting, relatable, challenging, problematic, etc. In short, use this assignment to show you are actively paying attention, thinking critically, and asking questions. Once due, you have 24 hours to professionally reply to one other person's precis (worth 10 points of your grade). Please note, the professor will not respond to these posts but will be a bystander. Language, conversation, and response will be assessed. Any inflammatory, derogatory, or unprofessional language by either party will result in a 0 for the assignment. This does not mean the precis should be obsequious or the response should be superficial. Full credit will be a post that engages with a very specific topic, either anecdotally, inquisitively, analytically, personally, etc., and a response that surpasses "I agree" and contributes insight or inquiry to the original post.

*Please note, the second precis must address content discussed *after* the due date of the first.

Proposals for second and final project: (5% or 50 points each: total of 10% or 100 points). Due Oct. 21st and Nov. 25th

Submit a 1-page, double spaced proposal explaining what your group plans to articulate in your project to the appropriate D2L dropbox, filed with your GroupNumber.[Proposal#].docx. This proposal should include a working "thesis" grounded in evidence you have collected, and thus outline the main point of your project. Your language may be relaxed but concise. At the end of your proposal, include a list of allocated duties for each group member to ensure that all work is distributed evenly and fairly. Example: [Person A] will provide and edit article passages, [Person B] will write script, [Person C] will be in charge of design, etc. Not performing your allocated duties and forcing your teammates to fill in will result in a 0 for your grade.

Project #2: A Comic or Vine (10% or 100 points). Due Friday Nov. 4th by end of class

As a group of approx. 6 persons, you will create a vine (a vine is a satirical pamphlet) or a comic book (no more than 6 pages) introducing your Utopia." This will be a collective effort and so some compromise and negotiation will be necessary to create or incorporate at least one thing from everyone's ideal society. Feel free to incorporate these discussions into your vine as you set up your imaginary government or coda. You do not have to be an amazing artist. You can craft your vine or comic book with images you find from magazines, the web, newspaper articles, etc. Questions you may want to focus on may include but are not limited to:

How will [food, resources, shelter] be harnessed and distributed?
What is your trade and economic policy?
What recreations are allowed?
What does authority and the legal system look like?
How does marriage and familial structures function?

Be sure to answer the "so-what?" (thesis), how (details), and why (reason) in your vine or comic. You are not limited by these topics. They are guidelines to the kind of issues for which I will be searching. Keep in mind, I will be assessing depth of an issue rather than quantity, so choose sparingly. Finally, you are not building a fantasy world. Disease, mortality, and other biological issues still exist and if they do not, you will have to explain why and how (which will most likely take the form of your thesis). *This is your only non-digital project and will be submitted in-person by the end of class. Make sure **all contributors' names** are included on the back page.*

Final presentation: (20% or 200 points) Due by the end of final exam

This course may have left residual feelings of cynicism and hopelessness. However, like culture, society is dynamic and can be changed by every individual. Remember, and as I loosely quote from Wright Mills, "by the fact of [your] living, [you] contribute, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of its history." Therefore, this final project is meant to combat feelings of helplessness and passiveness and instead foster agency, action, and potential solutions (not to be confused with closures). As a group (no larger than ten members), you will create a "multipage" website that we will learn to build together using simple HTML and a bootstrap template to be hosted on Github. The first page will discuss a sociological problem, dilemma, or issue, with which you as a group are dissatisfied. The second page will outline two or more examples of why this is a problem that needs to be addressed. Are their historical events to which you can turn? Newspaper articles? Videos? Personal events you are willing to share?

Etc. (Please keep in mind, I am a mandatory reporter, and the class will be witnessing this site.) The third page will propose an alternative, however ideal or realistic, but do try to lean toward the latter because the fourth page will provide an example of why this alternative will be more successful (however you define success). In other words, success can be measured by enhanced inclusion, diversity, accessibility, equality, visibility, representation, etc. What will this solution achieve or how will it address the problem? The final page will invite your audience to do something about making this society a reality by adding links and directions on what they can do about it. Examples can be calling local representatives, attaching links to organizations to which you can volunteer your time to work toward this goal, joining memberships, local groups, tweaking habits, implementing dialogue, etc. These should be direct and legible. It should give your audience hope and answer the question, "So what can I do about it?" You will make your website available to the class by adding a link in the appropriate discussion thread. Here, each group must comment on another group's website within 24 hours, either with constructive criticism, specific accolades, relatability, or with a question. This must be a dialogue (question and response). Finally, you will submit the link to the appropriate dropbox on D2L for final assessment.

Important due dates:
Project 1: Friday, Sept. 30th
Precis 1: Friday, October 14th at 11:59 pm
Proposal 1: Friday, October 21st at 11:59 pm
Project 2: Friday, Nov. 4th at 11:59 pm
Precis 2: Friday, Nov. 18th at 11:59 pm
Proposal 2: Friday, Nov. 25th at 11:59 pm
Final: Mon. Dec. 12th at 7:45-9:45 am

Course Schedule:

Week 1
Introduction

Week 2
Aristotle's *The Politics*

Week 3
Thomas More's *Utopia*

Week 4
Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric*

Week 5
Citizenship, Naming, and Single Stories

Week 6
Society, Race, and Stereotypes

Week 7
To Be Other-Than-Human in Society

Week 8
Ecocritical Adaptations of Social Networks

Week 9
Disability in Society and Pop Culture

Week 10
Mid-term

Week 11
How Race Impacts Disability in American Medicine and Society

Week 12
Colonization and Indigeneity

Week 13
Sex, Gender, and Indigenous Sexualities

Week 14
Queer Studies

Week 15
Version Control, Github, HTML

Final Exam: Monday, Dec. 12th at 7:45-9:45 am

Grading:

For the sake of clarity and transparency throughout the course, I use a point system totaling 1000 points. See grade breakdown below to track your progress throughout the course. All grades will be uploaded into grade book on D2L once completed. It may take me up to 2 weeks to submit grades due to volume. Go to D2L's "Assessments" in upper toolbar, then drop down to "Grades".

Final course grades will be based on the following point/percentage scale:
4.0 = 925 - 1000 points (or 92.5% - 100%)
3.5 = 875 - 924
3.0 = 825 - 874
2.5 = 775 - 824
2.0 = 725 - 774
1.5 = 675 - 724
1.0 = 625 - 674
0.0 = 624 and below

Academic Integrity

Our field burgeons off a community of scholars and the sharing/questioning of ideas. **Always** attribute credit where credit is due. Plagiarism is the submission of another person's work as your own. This includes copying someone's work verbatim, buying a paper, allowing someone else to write your paper, copying from the internet or online journals or forums without properly acknowledging the original source. Plagiarism is liable for instant failure of the course. If you are not sure whether you are plagiarizing, ask me before submitting your paper. Please refer to the *Modern Language Association Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/) for citation instructions. For further questions on MSU's Academic Integrity Policy, please refer to https://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/academic-integrity/plagiarism-policy.html.

Extensions/Late Submission Policy

All assignments must be submitted by their due date on D2L. No email submissions will be accepted unless by prior arrangement. If an email submission is granted, please submit your word on a Word doc and label the file with your last name, first initial, and assignment title. E.g. Burnley.S.Profile. No late submissions will be accepted without prior arrangement discussed at least **one week** before the due date. Extensions will be granted only under extenuating circumstance and at my discretion. *Technology is unreliable! Failure to submit your work due to technological failure or lost files <u>will not be</u> excused.* Frequently backup and save your work through multiple mediums (i.e. servers, flashdrives, external hard drive, etc.). It is my experience that students submit better work during the semester than with an extension. Please exhaust all resources before asking for an extension.

A late submission without a permitted extension will result in a half-letter grade deduction for every day it is late (midnight is the cut off). <u>After one week, your grade will be marked as 0.</u>

Mandatory Reporting

As faculty of MSU, I am a mandatory reporter. This means there are **limits to my confidentiality.** Discussions, responses, and other materials submitted for this class are generally considered confidential pursuant to the University's student record policies. However, students should be aware that University employees, including instructors, may not be able to maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues to protect the health and safety of MSU community members and others. As the instructor, I must report the following information to other University offices (including the Department of Police and Public Safety) if you share it with me, either in a written or vocal form:

--Suspected child abuse/neglect, even if this maltreatment happened when you were a child,

--Allegations of sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, or sexual misconduct when they involve MSU students, faculty, or staff, on campus or under MSU affiliated events.

--Credible threats of harm to oneself or to others.

This does not include public performances or activism (i.e. Take Back the Night)

These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In almost all cases, it will be your decision whether you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting you are encouraged to make an appointment with the MSU Counseling Center.

VISA and RCPD:

Please check in with me to ensure I have received your VISA or inform me of your expectations of receiving a VISA so we can discuss any accommodations within the first week of class. You may do this before or after class time or via this Google Form. Please be prepared to sit down and discuss with me *exactly* what you expect of me so that I may accommodate your needs to the best of my ability. If you have any questions as to what entails a VISA or to see whether you qualify for accommodations, please visit this link: https://www.rcpd.msu.edu.

Student Resources:

MSU Student Food Bank

MSU undergraduate, graduate and professional students who do not have an MSU dining plan and are enrolled in courses in fall or spring semester are eligible to use the Student Food Bank. Students do not need to be enrolled in summer classes in order to use the food bank in the summer. If attending for the first time, please bring proof of enrollment (i.e., bill stub, schedule, etc.) for spring, summer, or fall semester. You must bring your MSU student ID to every distribution.

Counseling and Psychiatric Services

Services include short-term individual counseling, group counseling, medication, referrals to other services and more. Crisis Services are available 24/7. Call 517-355-8270 and press "1" to speak with a crisis counselor at any time.

Office for Civil Rights and Title IX Education and Compliance

MSU treats all reports filed with OIE seriously. Anyone is welcome to file a report with OIE, including students, faculty, staff, and guests. Both reports involving the Anti-Discrimination Policy and Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct and Title IX Policy may be filed online via the Public Incident Reporting Form or by calling OIE at 517-353-3922 between the hours of 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. and 1:00-5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

All Gender and Accessible Restrooms on Campus

This map provides the location of all restrooms on campus designated as single-occupant restrooms.

This syllabus is subject to change. Common changes include readings and discussions. Assignments and due dates rarely change and will remain the same unless specifically announced. I will announce any changes during class time, D2L announcement, and/or via email.