



**ENG 373/SOC 350**

**Reading and Writing the City: Literature and Social Justice in Chicago**

Block 2-2015

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Due to the off-campus component of this course, class meeting times will vary. Consult the additional course schedule. While in Chicago, we will check in regularly about possible schedule changes due to unexpected opportunities for adventure. While on campus, we will meet in Cole Library 216 unless otherwise noted.

**Course Description:**

The city of Chicago has a harried history of inequality and a rich history of social and literary activism. The city has always been home to writers involved in social justice movements, and it produced the Chicago School of sociological thinking, some of the earliest social science research on the structures of urban life. Using Chicago as a backdrop, this interdisciplinary course will question the relationship between literature and society. Through shared readings, archival research, and visits to local organizations, students will explore the social construction of inequality; the challenges and constraints faced by individuals and groups seeking social justice; the rhetoric and methods used by individual authors, researchers, and by organizations seeking social change; the role of literature in reform movements; and the significance of context in addressing social problems. Many of our readings will focus on the history of social movements in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America, the “Age of Reform.” Authors of this time period saw writing as a way to change the world, and texts themselves were believed to be agents of reform. The class will examine issues of race and socio-economic class, the settlement movement, immigration, and labor movements in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Our major texts will be Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* – a harrowing novel about living and working conditions for immigrants in turn-of-the-century Chicago – and Jane Addams’s *Twenty Years at Hull House* – a memoir about the Chicago Settlement House movement. Students will interrogate authors’ theories about the functions of literature in relation to civic reform as well as the specific reform movements they wrote from within. We will also engage in sociological investigation of the broader issues, situating these books within specific historical contexts and exploring contemporary social action related to a similar causes. By connecting literature to context and to practice, students will investigate the complex web among writers, researchers, communities, social issues, and social change. A significant portion of the course takes place at the McLennan Center in Chicago. We will visit historic sites such as

Hull House and the Haymarket Memorial, contemporary neighborhoods where activists are working for social change, and sites of literary and social importance. We will also meet with several contemporary writers and literary organizations.

**Course Objectives:** Through readings, discussions, site visits, and assignments, students will:

- apply both literary criticism and sociological thinking in analyses of texts;
- analyze race/ethnicity, poverty, and immigration as central to social justice;
- investigate the symbiotic relationships between individual/micro level reform and structural, systemic change;
- read the city as a text to connect theory and practice through application of course readings to experiential learning activities;
- think beyond the confines of a particular discipline in their understanding of the relationship between writing and activism, art and social change, research and social justice;
- construct a collaborative, digital project that explains Chicago's social and literary activism for the public;
- develop critical thinking, oral communication, and writing skills which strengthen our ability to understand, integrate, analyze, and communicate complex ideas across diverse audiences.

*This course supports the Educational Priorities and Outcomes of Cornell College with emphases on Knowledge, Inquiry, Communication, Intercultural Literacy, Citizenship, and Vocation.*

**Course Expectations:** This seminar class is designed to promote interaction and exchange. We expect everyone to contribute to discussion—which requires that you read carefully and think about the assigned material before every class. No one—neither professor nor student—can participate effectively without having completed and contemplated the course readings. Be an informed participant; your comments should be related to the course material and should add to the topic being discussed. We also expect people to listen to one another, which requires patience, empathy, and mutual respect. You should be willing to share your ideas and be open to opposing perspectives. It is possible to disagree and still interact respectfully. Listening carefully, asking questions, and responding to what people have said demonstrate respectful engagement. On the other hand, inattention, sleeping, talking to neighbors, being distracted by computers and cell phones, and rude or disconnected responses all show a lack of respect for the members of this class and for your own intellect. Remember, each of you are responsible, not only for your own learning in this course, but also for the collective learning that will take place. We expect everyone to contribute to our site visits and class discussion, especially given our small class size. This requires you to read carefully and think critically and analytically about the information presented both in our readings and at our sites. Do your best to keep up with the reading, while also exploring the city and really immersing yourself in city life.

**Off-Campus Component:** Travel-seminar courses require a high level of self-directed learning. Class members are expected to complete all course readings, attend all class meetings and course activities, to arrive at meetings and destinations on time, honor the needs of the larger

group, treat all class members with respect and consideration, and show respect for the individuals, organizations, and communities with whom we interact. Completing the readings for the day assigned provides you with background information for the visits. Students are expected to fully and actively participate in all scheduled and unscheduled activities (e.g., through being alert, attentive, and prepared, asking questions and making observations, facilitating interactions, illustrating leadership and teamwork skills). Finally, Cornell students are also expected to abide by the McLennan Center rules and also respect the educational policies and codes of conduct of Cornell College. Peer and self-assessments of participation may be requested. Failure to conduct oneself in a considerate, respectful manner at any point while we are off-campus may result in earning a failing grade for the class and/or removal from the course.

**Life in the City:** Living in Chicago is quite different from life in the Cornell bubble. Please be responsible: use common sense when out and keep the McLennan Center secure. Some general guidelines for life in Chicago: ALWAYS let someone know where you are going. We encourage you to travel collectively when exploring beyond Lakeview/Wrigleyville at night.

**Course Accommodations:** College Policy regarding students with disabilities: Students who need accommodations for learning disabilities must provide documentation from a professional qualified to diagnose learning disabilities. For more information see: [cornellcollege.edu/disabilities/documentation/index.shtml](http://cornellcollege.edu/disabilities/documentation/index.shtml)124

Students requesting services may schedule a meeting with the disabilities services coordinator as early as possible to discuss their needs and develop an individualized accommodation plan. Ideally, this meeting would take place well before the start of classes. At the beginning of each course, the student must notify the instructor within the first three days of the term of any accommodations needed for the duration of the course. I would appreciate hearing from anyone in this class who has a particular need related to this course. If you would like to request course accommodations for any reason, see us after the first class.

**Academic Integrity:** Cornell College expects all members of the community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. Any student in this course who is involved in academic dishonesty (portraying another person's work or ideas as his or her own, submitting the same or similar papers in more than one course without permission from the course instructors, facilitating plagiarism, etc.) will not earn credit for the relevant assignments, may be formally charged with academic dishonesty, and may receive a failing grade for the course. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in *The Compass*, our student handbook, under the heading "Academic Policies – Honesty in Academic Work."

## Course Requirements:

### Assignments:

Participation	15%
Field Journal	15%
Visual Scholarship Essays (2)	30%
Literature in Context Story Map Project	40%

A note about all assignments: due to the collaborative nature of this class, we will not accept late work. If you feel an extension is needed, consult with us prior to the assignment deadline.

**Course Participation (15%):** Students will be evaluated based on the quality of their presence in the classroom and “in the field.” “Quality” is defined as informed, engaged, and respectful participation. The quality of your participation is highly dependent on completing the reading, coming to class meetings and activities prepared to engage the course materials and settings, and interacting respectfully with others at all times. Your grade will not be based on how often you talk but on the quality of your contributions and how well your presence facilitates interactive learning. This means not only speaking constructively but also refraining from activities that inhibit learning. Whether on- or off-campus, you are expected to be alert, attentive, prepared, considerate, and respectful. Sleeping, facebooking, or texting during course activities is not acceptable. Tardiness or disregarding the needs of the larger group, disrespectful behavior towards classmates, the professor, or speakers, organizations, and communal spaces will negatively impact your participation grade. You are responsible for all assignments, activities, and material covered in class meetings and events, whether or not you attend and regardless of the reasons for any absence. We will encourage and support your participation, but the final responsibility is yours.

**Field Journal (15%)** Each student is required to keep a journal about the readings and the site visits while off campus. We will provide you with a field journal and with several prompts that require you to connect theory and practice. You will *analyze*, *explain*, and *reflect* on our field trips, speakers, and experiences within the context of our course readings. Note, these responses should not be simple descriptions of field trips, summaries of readings, or your feelings about the experiences. In short, field journals must demonstrate critical thinking in response to the prompts, but you may also include observations and information from the site visits that connect to our readings, or your literature in context project when relevant. You must complete 12 field journal entries over the 16 days we are in Chicago. Some days we will allocate time for you to write; other times you will need to find time to write on your own. We will collect your notebooks intermittently. A list of field journal prompts will be posted on Moodle.

### Visual Scholarship Essays (30% total, 15% each)

Using an original photo and a specific passage from *The Jungle* as your framework, construct a 4-5 page essay that explains how your experiential learning in Chicago has shaped your

understanding of that passage. Be sure to analyze the social context of the particular issue addressed in the passage.

Using an original photo and a specific passage from *Twenty Years at Hull-House* as your framework, construct a 4-5 page essay that explains how your experiential learning in Chicago has shaped your understanding of that passage. Be sure to analyze the social context of the particular issue addressed in the passage.

### **Literature in Context Story Map (40%)**

This course will culminate in a public resource: a story map that explains literature, social structure, and social justice in Chicago. As part of the process, each student should also answer the questions: What is literary activism and public sociology? How can you combine these two perspectives in your future efforts to support social justice?

As a class, you will serve as a team of editors in charge of this narrative and interactive map. You will need to develop a “call to action” or sense of purpose for the project to help guide your editorial decisions. Think holistically about the course: where are the intersections of literature and social justice and how can they be best represented? What are the social structures that contributed to the social problems and reform efforts addressed? What social purpose can the map serve? What content is necessary to support this purpose? It will be up to you as a team of editors to make decisions about locations mapped; images, videos, and links; and accompanying narratives – as well as which students will be responsible for which tasks. The writing assignments completed while we are in Chicago will feed into this project.

Brooke Bergantzel will be assisting with the technology of Story Maps. We will meet with her both before and after our trip. Aim to have a full outline of your content when you meet with her upon our return, so that the bulk of week four can be spent building the map.

On the final day of the block, the Story Map will “go live” online and on the OC so that your work can be shared with the larger community.