

Who Rules? Elite Power and Counterpower in Contemporary US
ANTH 150-02: Freshman Writing Seminar

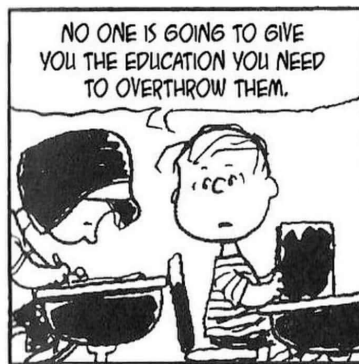
The object of the educational system, taken as a whole, is not to produce hands for industry or to teach the young how to make a living. It is to produce responsible citizens.

—Robert Maynard Hutchins

Spring 2025; 4 Credits (N.B.: 4 credits are awarded because the workload exceeds that of a 3-credit course)

Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:30 – 10:50 am

Washington Hall, room 312



Instructor: William H. Fisher
Office location: Washington 123
Contact: whfish@wm.edu; 221-1068
Office Hours: Tuesday 2:00–3:00 pm & Thursday 11–12 am; & by appointment

Course Description:

If you feel that you have not learned enough (or anything at all) about the labor movement in the United States. If you find the robotic boilerplate appeals to “democracy” by heritage media and educational institutions to be decoupled from any concrete initiative. If you wonder at the way US education has been reconfigured in recent decades to promote conformity of opinion while embracing ostensible efforts to “diversify.” If you want to form your own opinions about issues over which consensus seems to brook no dissenting views. If you wonder why we are being forced to shape our lives around “technology” and the job market. If you wish to understand which issues and points of view are off the table in places of polite discussion, then maybe this course is for you! In any case, the course will be interesting for people who feel these issues to be relevant to their own futures.

The WM on-line catalog states, "The Freshman Seminar requirement provides first-year students with a substantive seminar experience that is reading, writing and discussion-intensive. The goal of freshman seminars is to initiate students into the culture of critical thinking and independent inquiry that is at the core of the undergraduate program."

The focuses on history and current events, as well as social science findings to assess whether a US ruling class exists. We will also review some instances of grassroots pressure to expand democracy in the 20th and 21st century. We will look at the intertwining of the labor and civil rights movement, the militarization of US society, and the emergence of neoliberal ideology and policies. Above all, we will engage with evidence-based discussions of issues. While the instructor holds his own views, the seminar is a place to explore differences of opinion, respectful dialog, and consistently demanding factual support for our perspectives. We will write and talk in order to figure things out, our own values and perspectives. In short, the rationale for undertaking the seminar is to enlarge our own capacity to think for ourselves and to effectively share our thinking with others.

Unlike many other academic subjects with which you may be more familiar, anthropology does not seek to produce normative expectations about "what works best." Nor does anthropology put any stock in American Exceptionalism as something to be celebrated. Nor does anthropology consider democracy to be a set of rules or procedures. Anthropological research shows that many societies in the present and past have had elite rulers at their head and others do not. However, the US is considered to be a socially stratified society. Anthropologists focus on describing what people do and say in context and finding ways to burrow below the commonsense justifications of social life to look at deeper structures of meaning and causality. The seminar is purposely kept to a small size to promote learning through discussion and a portion of learning activity will be devoted to student peer review and feedback of one another's work.

Course Objectives:

The course has been organized to expand student competency in communication, information gathering and analysis and hopefully to motivate students to more fully commit to these endeavors as citizens participating in a democracy.

By the course's end, I hope that you will have greater competence to:

Interact in a seminar learning situation engaging in transactional listening.

Know the difference between a good discussion question and a question aimed to collect factual support, clarity, background or context. Your writing should aim to engage arguable premises.

Identify the reference tools and handbooks, including on-line resources, that can be consulted for guidelines and suggestions regarding grammar, punctuation, and style. Maybe you'll have chosen a favorite resource to which you will return throughout your writing career.

Discover new points of view implicit in your own thinking as you craft an argument.

Develop criteria to evaluate the reliability of information

Become accustomed to discussing your own and others' writing in an objective and mutually supportive give-and-take manner and explore alternative means of expression and organization by using peer review, conferences with the instructor, and visits to the writing center.

List key moments of 20th century labor and civil rights history.

Identify how key tenets of government and public higher education emerged and have changed since the 1930s and some of the reasons these changes can be located in broader changes in society.

Know critical data about wealth inequality, electoral outcomes, poverty, military spending, and austerity in the contemporary US.

What is a "COLL 150?" This writing-intensive seminar worth 4-credit hours is designed for first-year college students. A grade of "C-" or better in this course satisfies the lower division writing requirement in Arts & Sciences curriculum. (Later in your undergraduate career you will be required to fulfill writing requirements for your major.) Attendance is mandatory, and students will not receive credit for classroom activities and assignments for which they are not present. The final course grade will be lowered by one full grade (e.g., from B to C) for each two unexcused absences recorded during the term. Excuses for absence must be sought in advance of the class in which you will be absent.

The activities we undertake in the classroom will vary in accordance with the day's learning objectives. Sometimes you will be required to prepare a specific bit of work to

share. Some of time we will pair off or work in small groups to give one another feedback. You will always be expected to have completed the assigned readings. If you advise me beforehand, I can grant two "quiet days" when you will not be expected to contribute to the discussion, although you will be required to interact with other students if small group activities or peer feedback is on the agenda.

Although some people tend to speak up more than others the classroom activities, I assume that everyone has something unique to contribute and that learning how to contribute to the effort of the class constitutes part of the learning process. For some of you it will be a challenge to step back to allow those who have not spoken to contribute. For others you will have to work hard to come to class with something to contribute or to speak up when others appear more knowledgeable or passionate.

Policy on AI Generated Content

The use or incorporation of any AI-generated content (from ChatGPT, Dall-e, etc.) in assignments is not allowed. Submitted work may be reviewed, as needed, for AI-generated content.

The only book required is an open-access text on writing, available through the Blackboard site:

Sue Guphill (author) *Writing in College: from Competence to Excellence*.
<https://milnepublishing.geneseo.edu/writing-in-college-from-competence-to-excellence/> see BB link

Also recommended to purchase on-line as a used paperback: Michael Harvey (2003) *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing (can be had for a few bucks); Christopher Lasch (2002) *Plain Style: A Guide to Written English*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press. (about \$20)

The W & M Writing and Communication Center has a useful site of curated links on writing. It can be found on the Blackboard "Assist" link on its main menu or at:
<https://www.wm.edu/as/wcc/newresources/>

The W&M History Department also has a writing center with useful resources:
<<https://www.wm.edu/as/history/undergraduateprogram/hwrc/handouts/>>

The following sources on writing are available as free, open education resources [OER]:

Purdue Online Writing Lab. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/> see WEBLINKS

American Psychological Association style. <<https://apastyle.apa.org/blog>>

Grading Procedures and Percentages:

- a. Participation: includes attendance, ungraded written assignments with each class, participation in discussion, and small group work. Seminar-appropriate conduct, including laptop and phone etiquette will also be noted. Unauthorized use of computers or phones can result in being marked absent for the session. A full letter grade will be deducted from participation for every two unexcused absences. 20%
- b. First Paper (ca. 800–1000 words) 15%
- c. Second Paper (include one draft; ca. 1200 words) 25%
- d. Research Paper 35% grade (ca. 2000-3000 words), will include one draft version that will be discussed in individual conference with professor on either May 1 or May 3
- e. Discussion leaders: prepare class with a partner based on assigned reading, identify and distribute questions for discussion; lead class discussion (at least 20 minutes) 5%

Rubrics will be distributed along with the paper assignments.

Student presentations will be scheduled for February 18, 20; March 4, 20, 27; April 1, 3, & 8

Academic Integrity

Honor Code: The pledge of the W&M Honor code states “As a member of the William and Mary community, I pledge on my honor not to lie, cheat, or steal, either in my academic or personal life. I understand that such acts violate the Honor Code and undermine the community of trust, of which we are all stewards.” I expect you to uphold this pledge in your classwork.

Student Accessibility Services (SAS)

It is the policy of William & Mary to accommodate students with disabilities and qualifying diagnosed conditions in accordance with federal and state laws. Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a learning, psychiatric, physical, or chronic health diagnosis should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Students will also need to contact Student Accessibility Services staff to determine if accommodations are warranted and to obtain an official letter of

accommodation. For more information: www.wm.edu/sas, 757-221-2509, or sas@wm.edu.

Mental and Physical Well-Being:

William & Mary recognizes that students juggle different responsibilities and can face challenges that make learning difficult. There are many resources available at W&M to help students navigate emotional/psychological, physical/medical, material/accessibility concerns, including:

The W&M Counseling Center at (757) 221-3620. Services are free and confidential.

The W&M Health Center at (757) 221-4386.

For additional support or resources & questions,

Contact the Dean of Students at 757-221-2510.

For other resources available to students, see <https://tinyurl.com/wmmmentalhealth> or:

Course Schedule

Note Major Assignment Due Dates:

February 25: First Paper Due

March 7: Topical Draft Second Paper Due

March 28: Final Second Paper Due

April 27: Research Paper Draft Due

April 29 & May 1: Conference on Research Paper Draft

May 6 at 5:00pm: Final Paper Due

January 23, 2023

Introductions; Outline of course; Sign up for Newspaper Subscriptions

< <https://libraries.wm.edu/databases/newspaper-subscriptions> >

January 28

New 1st class—getting off the ground; introduce syllabus

In-class assignment: best learning experience paragraph.

January 30: The College Ecosystem and Writing

Assignment: Guptill, Ch. 1; Howard and Barton, Intro, Ch. 1–2 (BB)

1st paper prompt distributed

[January 31: Last day of add/drop period]

Civil & Labor Rights and US Political Economy since 1914

February 4: Formulating an argument regarding wealth and power: Sachs on corruption and military industrial complex; Howard and Barton, Ch. 3 (BB); Guptill, Ch. 2 (BB)

February 6: Overview of Library Organization & Resources; Libraries and Democracy, meet at Swem Research Room, 1st Floor, Swem Library.

Assignment: Dewey on Democracy (BB)

February 11: War and Peace; Free Speech & Repression, World War I

Assignment: Eugene Debs Film (BB)

February 13: The Legal Justification for Workers' Rights in US

Assignment: National Labor Relations Act of 1935 (BB links)

*February 18: Livelihood and Community

Assignment: "The Uprising of '34" film on the strike of cotton mill workers in the American South (Alexander Street database on Swem site)

*February 20: Civil Rights and Labor Rights in the US

Assignment: "A Phillip Randolph: For Jobs and Freedom" (Films on Demand database on Swem site); 7 July 1918 edition of *The Messenger* (BB links)

February 25: Democracy and US Imperialism

Assignment: Smedley Butler "War is a Racket" (BB)

First Writing Assignment Due

February 27: New Deal Reforms and Social Solidarity

Assignment: Touré Reed; Chomsky, pp. 65–7 (BB); Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" speech BB links

[WWII, Bretton Woods & global realignment]

*March 4: WWII, Japanese Internment, the Smith Act, Breton Woods and Anticommunism

Assignment: Ellen Schrecker, Labor and the Cold war: The Legacy of McCarthyism

March 6: WW II aftermath: Military-Industrial Complex

Assignment: Eisenhower speeches in Folder in BB READINGS (also can skim Monthly Review, "Where we Stand" and "Recent Developments in American Capitalism")

Second Writing Assignment Due March 7

March 8–16: Spring Break

March 18: Writing Resources Workshop (to be confirmed)

Dubois speech on war

*March 20: Freedom Budget & 1963 March on Washington.

Assignment: Rustin (BB link)

March 25: Research Day at Swem/Introduction to Databases, etc.

*March 27: Taming the Campus Reaction to US Militarization and Civil Rights Movement

Chomsky, pp. 17–31 (BB); Powell Memorandum BB link; (also can skim “Unkoch my Campus” BB link)

March 28: Third Writing Assignment Due [Revised Second Essay]

[The Neoliberal Era]

*April 1: Neoliberalism—Continuity or change?

Assignment: Watch Requiem for the American Dream film (available on different platforms and as DVD on reserve at Swem.

*April 3: What is Poverty in US?

Assignment: Alston (BB)

*April 8: Financialization and the “New Normal”

Assignment: Hanauer & Rolf BB link (Also skim Price & Edwards and Center on Budget Policy Priorities BB link)

April 10: Elections and Social Change: Empirical Findings

Assignment: Gilens & Page, Perspectives on Politics (BB Readings): Gilens & Page answer critics (BB link)

April 15: Social Mobility in US

Assignment: Isaacs; skim Chetty et al.

April 17: Assessing missing facts and counter-perspectives of argument; formulate and recap argument

Assignment: Choose and read a poem by Carl Sandburg; submit title, date, and your reaction.

April 22: Writing as Critique, Writing as Responsibility
Assignment: George Orwell, Language and Politics

April 24: Independent workday & peer review

April 29: Conferences

May 1: Conferences

May 6: Research Paper due by 5:00pm (Fifth Writing Assignment)

Articles, Chapters, and Documents Accessible on the course Blackboard site (under Readings or BB link):

AFL-CIO. N. d. 1892 "Homestead Strike." <<https://aflcio.org/about/history/labor-history-events/1892-homestead-strike>>. Consulted 23 January 2023. BB link

Alston, Philip. 2018. Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights on his Mission to the United States of America. 4 May 2018. United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council. A/HRC/38/33/Add.1, 20pp.

Chetty, Raj, Will S. Dobbi, Benjamin Goldman, Soya Porter & Crystal Yan. 2024. Changing Opportunity: Sociological Mechanisms Underlying Growing Class Gaps and Shrinking Race Gaps in Economic Mobility. National Bureau of Economic Research. NBER Working Paper Series, n° 32697. [Http://www.nber.org/papers/w32697](http://www.nber.org/papers/w32697).

"Debs, Eugene. 1918. Canton, Ohio Speech," delivered 16 June 1918. <<https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/eugene-debs-canton-ohio/>>. Checked 20 January 2024. BB link.

Eisenhower, Dwight D. 1953. "The Chance for Peace" Address Delivered Before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 16th, 1953. Available at https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/all_about_ike/speeches/chance_for_peace.pdf

Eisenhower, Dwight D. Farewell address, January 17, 1961; Final TV Talk 1/17/61 (1), Box 38, Speech Series, Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower as President, 1953-61, Eisenhower Library; National Archives and Records Administration. See

https://eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/farewell_address.html for more information.

Gilens, Martin and Benjamin I. Page. 2014. Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens. *Perspectives on Politics*. 12 (3): 564-581.

----. 2016. "Critics Argued with our Analysis of U. S. Political Inequality. Here are 5 Ways They're Wrong." 23 May 2016. *Washington Post*.
<<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/05/23/critics-challenge-our-portrait-of-americas-political-inequality-heres-5-ways-they-are-wrong/>>
Consulted 23 January 2023. BB link

Hanauer, Nick and David M. Rolf. 2020. "The Top 1% of Americans Have Taken \$50 Trillion from the Bottom 90%—and That's Made the U. S. Less Secure." *Time* 14 September 2020. <<https://time.com/5888024/50-trillion-income-inequality-america/>>
Consulted 23 January 2023. BB links

Isaacs, Julia B. 2016. International Comparisons of Economic Mobility. Pew/Brookings: Economic Mobility Project, Ch.3

John, Mark. 2023. "Household Wealth Optimism Collapses, Global Survey Shows." Reuters. <<https://www.reuters.com/markets/household-wealth-optimism-collapses-global-survey-shows-2023-01-16/>>. Consulted 23 January 2023. BB lin

National Labor Relations Board. N.d. "National Labor Relations Act."
<<https://www.nlrb.gov/guidance/key-reference-materials/national-labor-relations-act>>.
Consulted 23 January 2023. BB links

National Museum of American History. N.d. "American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith." <<https://americanhistory.si.edu/democracy-exhibition>> Consulted 23 January 2023. BB link

Price, Carter C. and Kathryn A. Edwards. 2020. *Trends in Income from 1975 to 2018*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation. RAND Education and Labor Working Papers. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/working_papers/WRA516-1.html> Consulted 23 January 2023 BB links

Randolph, A. Philip and Chandler Owen (eds). 1918. *The Messenger*. July.

Reed, Touré. 2020. Ch. 1 in *Toward Freedom: The Case Against Race Reductionism*. London: Verso, pp. 20–45.

Roosevelt, Franklin D. 1941. State of the Union Address to Congress, 6 January 1941. Miller Center of the University of Virginia, Presidential Speeches. Sound recording and transcript. <<https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/january-6-1941-state-union-four-freedoms>> Consulted 23 January 2023. BB link.

Rustin, Bayard. 1967. "Firebombs or a Freedom Budget?" <<https://nonsite.org/firebombs-or-a-freedom-budget/>> Consulted 23 January 2023. BB link

Schrecker, Ellen. 2004. Labor and the Cold War: The Legacy of McCarthyism, *In* Cherny, William Issel, and Kieran Walsh Taylor (Eds), *American Labor and the Cold War: Grassroots Politics and Postwar Political Culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Stone, Chad, Danilo Trisi, Arloc Sherman and Jennifer Beltrán. 2020. "A Guide to Statistics on Historical Trends in Income Inequality." Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <<https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/a-guide-to-statistics-on-historical-trends-in-income-inequality>> Consulted 23 January 2023. BB link

Filmography:

Jacobs, Kim and Kyle Travers (producers). 2020. "The Revolutionist: Eugene V. Debs." 56 mins. Public Broadcasting Systems.

James, Dante (director) 1996. "A. Philip Randolph: For Jobs and Freedom." Films Media Group. February 1996. 88 minutes.

Hutchison, Peter, Kelly Nyks, and Jared P. Scott (Directors and Producers). 2015. "Requiem for the American Dream. Noam Chomsky and the Principles of Concentration of Wealth & Power." PF Pictures. 73 minutes.

Stoney, George, Judith Helfand, and Susanne Rostock (Filmmakers). "The Uprising of '34." 1995. Documentary Educational Resources. 88 minutes.

Strom, Yale. 2017. *American Socialist: The Life and Times of Eugene Victor Debs*. 1 hr. 37 minutes. On Kanopy [optional]