

CEP 301: THE IDEA OF COMMUNITY
Fall 2020

<https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1396197>

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Sections A&B Meet: MW 8:30-10:20, online

Office Hours: by appointment (just e-mail me!)

Introduction

What is a community? Why do people form communities? What is a good community? What is a bad one?

This course is the “community class” in the CEP curriculum. There are lots of ways to explore this vast and important topic. In this class, we will examine several different artistic representations of community: one philosophical play, and four dystopian novels. Each of these works imaginatively conjures a community for us to experience. After reading them, we will reflect, separately and together, on our reactions to the communities we have experienced. We will ask ourselves what our reactions teach us about what *we* think the good community is. Our goal this quarter will be to use the course materials and discussions to critically challenge, expand, and clarify our own thinking about community and its place in our lives today.

In addition to this intense encounter with artistic representations of community, we will also learn about community as a lived experience, by creating and practicing it among ourselves. This aspect of the course will involve learning to work together and develop a sense of shared purpose and connection within CEP. Our goal is not conformity or unanimity, but rather to create a mutually supportive group that we can all rely on as we make our way through this class and the CEP major.

In this class, as is common in CEP, we engage in a particular form of learning practice. We call this “community-based learning,” and at its core is the notion that we are all responsible for the quality of the learning that takes place in the classroom. All of us will participate in producing understanding through reading, writing, discussion, facilitating class sessions, and defining and upholding the standards of participation and performance for the class and for ourselves as individual learners. This style of learning may be different from what you are used to. It will require working together to master a set of practical skills – discussing, listening actively, making decisions collectively, facilitating, planning, assessing, etc. – and embracing a level of accountability to yourself and the class that is higher than most other classes. Our approach to learning gives you an unusual degree of freedom to define the character of the class discussions. But with freedom also comes responsibility. To a significant degree, how well this class goes will be up to you.

You will be responsible for a lot of reading this quarter. But I hope (fervently) that you will see the reading not as a chore, but as a pleasure. I hope you will let yourself get *lost* in the worlds these

artists have created. Let them carry you away. And then let your reactions flow – to the story, to the characters, to the dramatic situations they find themselves in. If you do that, the reading will be a pleasure, not a chore. Your reactions will be much more vivid, and we will have more to talk about in discussion. The more deeply felt your reactions are, and the more lively our discussions are, the more we all will gain from the class. What you will gain, I hope, is some exceptionally useful intellectual and emotional tools related to the idea of community that will be invaluable for your success in CEP over the next two years.

Course Goals

- Develop your understanding of some key concepts surrounding the idea of community.
- Develop your ability to perceive, analyze, and critically compare key themes in the artistic works we are experiencing.
- Develop your understanding of, and your ability to advocate for, your *own* values concerning community.
- Develop your reading, writing, and analytic skills.
- Develop your ability to contribute to group discussions by actively listening, describing, evaluating, synthesizing, applying, and questioning in a manner that advances group understanding.
- Develop productive relationships with other members of the class.

Student Responsibilities

In CEP, students have significant responsibilities, and the success of the course depends heavily on how well they are met. Your first responsibility is to one another and to one another's education. In this class, and in this major, you and your classmates will be full participants in generating knowledge through discussion. In order for the class to be successful, you must be an active participant in both teaching and learning. In class, each of you will participate by contributing to discussion, listening, taking notes, analyzing the material, and expressing your reactions to it. Outside of class, each of you will participate by reading the material, carefully completing the assignments, and otherwise ensuring that you are well prepared for class. In short, our goal in this first quarter of CEP is to establish a strong *culture of excellence*, one that each of you holds yourself and your peers to, and one that will last throughout your two years in the major.

You are also responsible for the following, more specific tasks:

1. Contribute to each day's discussion and work; add related information from other courses, reading, and personal experience; and understand, reflect on, and form your own views on the works we examine.
2. Complete all assignments on time and ensure that your work meets a high standard. No late work will be accepted for credit. (Although please know that I am always happy to read and give feedback on late work to help you in your effort to understand the material.)
3. Help develop a CEP community of learners, and be responsible to and respectful of your peers.

4. At the end of the quarter, write a narrative evaluation of your performance in the course. It should critically assesses your performance (both successes and failures) and identify strategies to improve in the quarters to come. This requirement applies to all students, whether they are taking the course for a numerical grade or P/NP.
5. In order to meet the above requirements, of course, you must attend and participate fully in every class. Attendance will be noted at all scheduled meeting times. Part of attending means **arriving on time**. This means *at or before 8:30*, not *around 8:30*.
6. If you are unable to attend class for any reason, it is your responsibility to check in with me and with your peers regarding missed material, announcements, or due dates. Absences will be excused for significant illness (with doctor's documentation), family emergencies, religious holidays (of your religion), or UW-required travel. Absences or lateness will not be excused for missed buses, ineffective alarm clocks, personal travel dates, employment schedules, slow printers, events or assignments associated with other classes, or any of the many other aspects of life that might interfere with CEP 301 class time.

Instructor Responsibilities

As the professor, I will work hard to provide ongoing intellectual and pedagogical guidance, as well as a course structure that allows you to discover and create knowledge in a supportive class environment. I play several key roles in the class:

1. Ensure an effective and safe learning context: My first job is to develop the learning context for the course. That means outlining the structure of the course and putting in place the basic elements (calendar, readings, assignments) that will help you learn. While you play a big role through discussion, I will also play an active role in making sure class sessions are productive, which is to say they effectively help everyone to understand and analyze the material. Developing the context also means that I will do my best to ensure that the learning environment is a safe and respectful environment for everyone. CEP's goal is for the community to maintain these standards by regulating itself, but anyone who feels these standards are not being met should not hesitate to let me know so I can help find ways to resolve the problem.
2. Give timely feedback on course assignments and other course requirements: It is important to have timely feedback on all course assignments. I will be responsible for grading your assignments and providing feedback. I will also be available to answer questions, provide advice and information, and otherwise help you in your learning.
3. Assigning final credit for the course: I am responsible for assigning final course credit, either a standard numerical grade or Credit/No Credit. For standard-grade students (Section A), I will file a numerical grade with the registrar. For Credit/No Credit students (Section B), I will file either CR or NC with the registrar.

Course Readings

You should buy the books wherever you prefer. However, make sure to *get these particular editions*, so we can all be on the same page, literally. This is especially important for the translated books, since the actual text will vary greatly.

- Plato (2008) *The Republic*. Translated by T. Griffith. Cambridge University Press.
- Zamyatin, E. (1993) *We*. Translated by C. Brown. Penguin Classics.
- Orwell, G. (1961) *1984*. Signet Classics.
- Atwood, M. (2017) *The Handmaid's Tale*. Anchor Books.
- Coates, T. (2019) *The Water Dancer*. One World.

Assessment

Your final grade in this course will be based on your performance on the following:

<i>Item</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Class Participation	25
Reading Assignments	40
Final Essay	35

(There are information sheets below that describe each element in more detail.)

For those of you taking the course for a standard numerical grade:

I will follow all university guidelines, and that process will result in a numerical grade.

For those of you taking the course Credit/No Credit:

University guidelines state that for a course graded CR/NC the instructor must determine the minimum performance level that can earn a grade of credit. In this course, the minimum level is 75 percent. In other words, if you earn between 75-100 percent of the total points in the class, you will receive a grade of “credit.” If you earn less than 75 percent you will receive a grade of “no credit.”

Academic Misconduct

The University takes academic misconduct – cheating and plagiarism – very seriously. So do I. Both are violations of the university’s Student Conduct Code, and so I am required to report them immediately to the university’s office of Community Standards & Student Conduct. Such violations are less common in CEP, but they do happen, and they are reported.

Cheating is using the work or ideas of others to write your assignments instead of doing the work yourself. Plagiarism is representing the work of others as your own without giving appropriate credit. If you are unsure what is OK or not OK, don't hesitate to ask!

Class Schedule

Week 1	
Wednesday September 30	<u>Topic:</u> Introductions, the syllabus, getting ready for zoom, and for Plato <u>Readings:</u> None <u>Assignments:</u> None
Week 2	
Monday October 5	<u>Author:</u> Plato <u>Readings:</u> <i>The Republic</i> , pp. 1-70 [Books I & II] <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #1
Wednesday October 7	<u>Author:</u> Plato <u>Readings:</u> <i>The Republic</i> , pp. 71-185 [Books III-V] <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #2
Week 3	
Monday October 12	<u>Author:</u> Plato <u>Readings:</u> <i>The Republic</i> , pp. 186-251 [Books VI-VII] <u>Assignment:</u> Reading Assignment #3
Wednesday October 14	<u>Author:</u> Plato <u>Readings:</u> <i>The Republic</i> , pp. 252-345 [Books VIII-X] <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #4
Week 4	
Monday October 19	<u>Author:</u> Zamyatin <u>Readings:</u> <i>We</i> , first third (pp. 3-74) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #5
Wednesday October 21	<u>Author:</u> Zamyatin <u>Reading:</u> <i>We</i> , second third (pp. 75-153) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #6
Week 5	

Monday October 26	<u>Author:</u> Zamyatin <u>Reading:</u> <i>We</i> , third third (pp. 154-end) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #7
Wednesday October 28	<u>Author:</u> Orwell <u>Reading:</u> <i>1984</i> , first ¼ (pp. 1-81) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #8
Week 6	
Monday November 2	<u>Author:</u> Orwell <u>Reading:</u> <i>1984</i> , second ¼ (pp. 81-156) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #9
Wednesday November 4	<u>Author:</u> Orwell <u>Reading:</u> <i>1984</i> , third ¼ (pp. 156-224) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #10
Week 7	
Monday November 9	<u>Author:</u> Orwell <u>Reading:</u> <i>1984</i> , fourth ¼ (pp. 225-312) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #11
Wednesday November 11	<u>NO CLASS, VETERANS DAY</u>
Week 8	
Monday November 16	<u>Author:</u> Atwood <u>Reading:</u> <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> , first ¼ (pp. xiii-xix and 1-75) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #12
Wednesday November 18	<u>Author:</u> Atwood <u>Reading:</u> <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> , second ¼ (pp. 79-147) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #13
Week 9	
Monday November 23	<u>Author:</u> Atwood <u>Reading:</u> <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> , third ¼ (pp. 151-223) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #14

Wednesday November 25	<u>Author:</u> Atwood <u>Reading:</u> <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> , fourth ¼ (pp. 224-end) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #15
Week 10	
Monday November 30	<u>Author:</u> Coates <u>Reading:</u> <i>The Water Dancer</i> , first ¼ (pp. 3-107) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #16
Wednesday December 2	<u>Author:</u> Coates <u>Reading:</u> <i>The Water Dancer</i> , second ¼ (pp. 108-211) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #17
Week 11	
Monday December 7	<u>Author:</u> Coates <u>Reading:</u> <i>The Water Dancer</i> , third ¼ (pp. 212-306) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #18
Wednesday December 9	<u>Author:</u> Coates <u>Reading:</u> <i>The Water Dancer</i> , fourth ¼ (pp. 307-end) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #19
Exam Week	
Tuesday, December 15, 8:30-10:20	<u>Topic:</u> Retrospective <u>Reading:</u> none <u>Assignments:</u> Final Essay! Note: we do not have an exam during this period. We do, however, have <i>class</i> , probably our most important class, in which we try to make sense of the overall lessons we have learned about community.

Reading Assignments

For each class discussion, you will prepare a reading assignment that has at least one component and possibly two:

- 1) The *first component* is **required**. This is an opportunity for you to develop your critical understanding of the work we are examining, under my guidance. For this component you will answer a question (or questions) that I pose. These questions will be tailored to the specific reading. In answering this component, *you should not write more than 200 words*. The idea is for you to do a lot of thinking about the question, and then to include in your answer only the information that is *really necessary* to answer the question. I don't want you to dump every possible answer you can think of into your response, hoping one of them says something I want to hear. I want you to develop your ability to read closely and then to judge what is central and what is marginal to question being asked. Therefore, while I do not expect verbose responses, I *do* expect insightful and high-quality ones, ones that are the result of you thinking a lot about the question and formulating an incisive answer. The questions for this component are available on the course canvas site, on the "Assignments" tab.
- 2) The *second component* is **optional**. Here I leave you alone (finally) to develop your understanding in whatever direction you find productive. You might pose questions you have about the reading that you want to ask the group, or you might articulate aspects of the reading you found enlightening, or inspiring, or infuriating, or confusing, or particularly useful for your own work, or you might begin exploring possible arguments for your final essay. There is a great range of possible things you could write about here. This component depends on you, on the reading, and on how those two things interact. The length of this component is also up to you, but I will give you an optional maximum of 300 words.

Collectively the reading assignments are worth 40 percent of your grade. Each reading assignment will be scored on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). Your score will be based entirely on the content of the first component.

These assignments should be *entirely your own work*. This is not a collaborative assignment. No outside sources may be used.

No late work will be accepted for credit. That said, I am always happy to read and give feedback on late work to help you in your effort to understand the material, so don't hesitate to turn an assignment in if you have completed it but it is after the deadline.

Format

The reading assignments must be turned in electronically on the course website before the time/date they are due. If you do both components, make sure to clearly label each. Make sure your **name** and the **assignment number** is on the page.

The assignment for a particular reading is due at the start of class on the day we discuss the reading. Although you will turn these in online, you will want access to your assignment in class during discussion, so make sure to have a plan to access it during class (either on paper or on a device).

Discussion Participation

Participation makes up a significant portion of your course grade. It is important. And there is no way around participating. As I say above, each of you has a *responsibility* to others in the class to share your reactions, ideas, and insights. The main way that happens is when you participate in class discussions. If you do not actively listen and orally share your questions and ideas with everyone, they can't benefit from what you have to offer. Each of you has important questions and ideas to share that we can all learn from. I say this from experience. I have taught many courses and many thousands of students, and I have rarely encountered a student who did not have something valuable to offer the rest of the class. Therefore, since you have something important to contribute, you have a responsibility to contribute it.

You will be graded on participation class-by-class. Effective participation is not necessarily measured by amount. If you make a few thoughtful and genuine contributions to the class, contributions you really *mean*, you will receive a good score for that class. If you make many thoughtful and honest contributions to the class, you will receive a good score for that class. If you consistently share your ideas and questions and concerns in an honest effort to explore the material in the spirit of intellectual curiosity, you will receive a good grade for participation.

So, the strategy for participation is this: prepare for class, and then do not hesitate to share your thoughts. Do not think that they have to be fully formed and 100% defensible before you offer them. Do not think that they have to be brilliant or dazzling. Do not think that you can't contribute until you've read the book that guy who talks all the time just said he read in his Social Anthropology course. Do not think you should remain quiet because you have different ideas about a topic than most others in the class (that's when we need you most). And do not think that you have to *know* before you speak. Honest questions and true struggles within yourself are excellent ways to contribute, especially when we are engaging with artistic works like we do in this class.

Remember also that *listening* is as important as speaking. Asking *genuine* questions (for which you have not already decided on an answer) is a good way to listen. If you ask a question that you do not already have an answer for, you will genuinely want to *hear* what your classmates have to say. The worst thing for discussion is a series of unrelated monologues. What we are trying for are true *dialogues* in which you engage the comments and questions of others rather than following them with unrelated comments and questions. Be curious about and listen to what others have to say.

And lastly, *writing* is as important as talking and listening. It is important to take notes, to record things we are saying in class. These notes will allow you to keep a record of your thoughts during discussion, so you can refer back to them during discussion. These will also be a great resource for your final essay, for which you will want to remember as much of our class discussions as possible.

I understand that oral participation in class is a struggle for some. I am willing to explore any and all ways to help you participate. If you feel uncomfortable with speaking in class, you should let me know so we can think of ways to make it more comfortable. I stand ready to help you find ways to participate, but the responsibility for participating is yours. Again, the structure of the class means

there is no way around participation. The quality of learning in the class depends on it, and a large portion of your grade depends on it.

Discussion Facilitation

Usually in university courses discussion is facilitated by the professor. In CEP, however, there is a tradition that students facilitate discussion. Usually a student or team of students is responsible for facilitation. Over and over in evaluations, however, students report being dissatisfied with the quality of this facilitation, and they ask for alternatives.

So, in this class we take advantage of an idea developed by students in my CEP 461 course. The idea is to use an “organic” model in which *everyone* facilitates each discussion collectively. For each class, the whole group is responsible for initiating discussion, for asking questions to keep the discussion going, and for getting the discussing back on track when it wanders.

So what does it mean to facilitate? It does not mean talking a lot. “Facilitate” means “to make easy.” To make discussion easy, think about interventions you can make that will get the group talking about the book. Ask questions, especially “open-ended” ones that have a complex answer or a range of possible answers. Also, ask *genuine* questions. That means you have not already made up your mind what the answer is. For example if you ask, “Does Socrates believe people are fundamentally good?” and you really have not made up your mind if he does or not, then your question is genuine. You are really *asking* others what they think about the issue. If, on the other hand, you ask, “Socrates can’t really think people are such goodie-goodies, can he?!” you have made up your mind that he believes they are goodie-goodies, and that he is wrong. And that everyone in the class who thinks he is right is wrong. You are really *telling*, not asking. Good discussion questions *ask*, they don’t *tell*.

Good, genuine questions can be *descriptive*. These ask about what actually is happening in the reading, or in the world. Examples: “Why does Socrates never just come out and say what he thinks?” or “Do you think freedom or happiness is more important to D-503?” Good, genuine questions can also be *prescriptive*. Prescriptive questions ask what *should be* going on in the reading, or in the world. For example, a classic prescriptive question is, “Should a community enforce particular kinds of behavior, or should it let people decide for themselves how to behave?” Prescriptive questions open up the issue of values, of what people think the world *should be* like. Both descriptive and prescriptive questions are appropriate in facilitating discussion.

Final Essay

The purpose of this essay is to allow you to bring the communities in the books (and our discussions of them) into conversation with your *own* ideas of community.

We will encounter several communities this quarter:

- Socrates' *Kallipolis*
- D-503's OneState
- Winston Smith's Oceania
- Offred's Gilead
- Hiram's Virginia (and Philadelphia)

For this essay, think about the times you had strong reactions to one (or more) of these communities. What was your reaction? What were the specific attributes of the community you were reacting to? Why did you have *that* reaction? What does this reaction tell you about *your* idea of what the good community is?

In addition to analyzing these issues, you should also make an *argument* for your idea of the good community. You should, in other words, try to convince the reader to join your side, to agree with your idea of the good community.

Specifics

The essay should be no more than 2,500 words. It is due on December 15 at 8:30 am (at the start of the scheduled exam period). It should be typed, double-spaced, have 1" margins and 12-point font. The pages should be numbered.

This essay should be entirely your own work. This is not a collaborative assignment.

Strategies for Success

The default schedule for your work here would seem to be to start writing the essay on December 9, after we finish the last book, and then turn it in on December 15.

But don't do that. You should be working on the essay throughout the quarter. When you are reading each book, think about your reactions. When you have strong ones, come back to this handout, think about the essay assignment, and think about how your reactions might develop into your essay. If it seems like you have something that could work for the essay, start writing some ideas, or an outline, or an abstract, that you think could become your essay. Feel free to share these notes/ideas with me, to get feedback.

This essay is a big project, one that counts a lot toward your final grade. So treat it that way. Keep it always in your mind. Work on it all the way through the quarter. Think about the essay each time you sit down to read during the quarter. Talk to me about it. Talk to your classmates about it. Don't wait until December 9.