**ENGLISH 176: LOS ANGELES: THE CITY, THE NOVEL, THE MOVIE**

Summer 2021 T, Th 9:00-12:20, Online through Zoom

Professor Thomas Gustafson

Office: THH 402C, E-mail: Thomasg@usc.edu;

Office Hours: T, Th 2:00-3:00, and by appt.

Phone: 310-722-8447

Teaching Assistants:

T 1-1:50: Stephanie Horvath, [shorvath@usc.edu](mailto:shorvath@usc.edu)

T 2-2:50 Tisha Reichle-Aguilera, [tmreichl@usc.edu](mailto:tmreichl@usc.edu)

Th 1-1:50 Missy Rogers, [rogersmj@usc.edu](mailto:rogersmj@usc.edu)

Th 2-2:50 Sam Teets, [teets@usc.edu](mailto:teets@usc.edu)

**Course Description**:

Los Angeles has been mocked as a city 500 miles wide and two inches deep. It is famous for its movies and music, but critics claim that it lacks cultural depth. This course seeks to prove otherwise. The region of Southern California has a remarkably rich literary heritage extending deep into its past, and over the past three decades Los Angeles has become a pre-eminent center of literary creativity in the United States, the home of a new generation of writers whose works address questions and concerns of special significance as we confront the problems of 21st century urban America arising from divisions of social class, the injustices of racism and xenophobia, inequalities of economic opportunity, predatory capitalism, failures of empathy and the too often sensational and reductive media portrayal of these issues. Los Angeles is a storyteller to the world through its music and films, and this course will argue that the best stories told in these mediums—as well as in the arts of fiction and poetry—offer us something much more than mere escape and entertainment: they can be acts of engagement with our pressing social issues. Study of the literature of this region can also help perform one of the crucial roles of education in a democracy and in this urban region famous for its fragmentation and the powerful allure of the image: It can teach us to listen more carefully to the rich mix of voices that compose the *vox populi* of Los Angeles, and thus it can help create a deeper, broader sense of our common ground.

So often LA is represented in our movies and our music as a place of superficial, self-absorbed people: on our freeways, we pass each other by, silently, wordlessly, insulated in our cars, or we are stuck in the same jam, our mobility a dream, or we crash into each other, carelessly or in rage. Our cars and the freeways, once the means for connecting us more quickly to each other, are now our source of congestion, pollution, gridlock. The literature of Los Angeles at its best gets us out of these jams and off our freeways, away from the tourist sites, taking us below the shallow, into the deep end. It lets us know that Los Angeles is more than the pathologies represented by its trademark crime fiction, and it offers us a street-wise sense of our neighborhoods, a slow and careful means to study our cultural geography. It gives us a special topography that includes not just the clichéd high and lows—the Beverly Hills of 90210, the beach cities of Baywatch, the South LA of “Menace II Society.” It is also a literature that can dig at us, making us more aware of our own foundations, our own connections to our common ground and the mix of migrations and dispossessions, exploitations and entrepreneurship, boosterism and boondoggles that have transformed it from *El Pueblo* *de la Nuestra Senora Reina de Los Angeles* to an L.A. crowned as the entertainment capital of the world and the capital of the Pacific Rim.

Los Angeles is a place dominated by in our imaginations by the look, the eye, the gaze of the camera, the representations of our visual culture. F. Scott Fitzgerald, when he lived and worked in Hollywood in the 1930s, expressed fear and loathing that the novel was being supplanted by the film as the pre-eminent medium of American art. But this fear that Los Angeles would be the death of the creative word is just another false apocalyptic scenario for this city that so embraces apocalypse. It has long been the home of remarkably creative words, a place where Shakespeare, Austen and Bible stories and the classics of Western culture have been continually resurrected and reconfigured to tell parables for a new day and age, and where new classics (an oxymoron befitting Los Angeles) have been created by its writers who have found a voice and inspiration here. We will also see how and why writers in this city have re-invoked biblical parables and lessons from the classics (such as those taught by Socrates in *The Republic*) to pronounce about the soul of LA or prophesy its fate or they have composed new sermons and dramatic dialogues to save us from the cave of delusion so our gaze will not settle on shadows on the wall but be redirected onto its streets and inside ourselves.

Los Angeles has its genesis in exodus: People looking for opportunity, a new start, a new Eden, a garden world, a Promised land, moved here from elsewhere. The consequence: Here at the end of the road is where we all met. Here is where we have become a vast and varied—and often divisive--intersection of peoples: a new dangerous-- yet often beautiful--crossroads. We will focus on the past, present and future of such

collisions and mergers. And we will wonder: What does Los Angeles literature ask of us now? Can we all get along? Can we learn how to merge rather than crash? Can we overcome the perils of Babel? Can our humanities challenge our inhumanities? Can we cure a willful amnesia about our past? Can the sharing of our LA stories connect us together across borders of time and space? At the end of the course, you tell me.

**Course Objectives**:

(1) To develop critical skills for studying literary texts (and the various forms of Hollywood entertainment);

(2) To develop students' historical perspective on the events, issues, conflicts and traditions that have shaped the image and history of L.A.;

(3) To develop each student's voice in writing and their capacity to listen to and learn from the rich mix of voices that composes Southern California;

(4) To appreciate various works of Los Angeles literature and culture as complex responses to visions of this city as a locus of hope, freedom, justice, and of the good life;

(5) To gain a better sense of the importance of place and region in shaping who we are;

(6) To become more at home in this city and more curious about it by studying its literature, culture, and history;

(7) To take joy and insight in recognizing the power of the word and the resources of the literary imagination unaccompanied by picture or sound;

(8) To recognize that the real world is not just the world denominated by terms such as SAT, GPA, MCAT, GDP and NYSE, but the worlds of our imagination and emotions.

**Electronic Texts**:

Anna Deavere Smith, *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992 (also available on Blackboard)*

Walter Mosley, *Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned*

Budd Schulberg, *What Makes Sammy Run?*

Nathanael West, *The Day of the Locust*

Youtube Playlist:

[most viewings listed in the syllabus are on this playlist except for full length movies]

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL_Rt8y_yTqAckDyTS2lr5kkIBL1Gy-HKG>

**Keynotes:**

Italo Calvino, from *Invisible Cities* (1972): “Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears….”

Jonathan Raban, from *Soft City* (1988): “The city as we imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate on maps in statistics, in monographs on urban sociology an demography and architecture….. The city…is soft, amenable to a dazzling libidinous variety of lives, dreams, interpretations.”

We tell stories, and stories make us human. We use them to tell us what should be, what could be, and the human truth of what now is. We collect them over centuries, tell them to our children, and they define us as cultures. We change our stories, start new ones, rethink old ones and experiment as we shift our sense of who we are and what we value. Take away our stories, and there is not much left of us. Study in English is a way of knowing our stories, and at USC we approach them critically and creatively. (Department of English, Website)

**Course Schedule**

I. PREVIEW: LOS ANGELES GENESIS--SALES PITCHES, SCRIPTS, SERMONS, AND OTHER ACTS OF VERBAL CREATION (In the Beginning is the Word)

Th 7/1 Luis Rodriguez, “Love Poem to Los Angeles” (2016) (Blackboard) (YouTube)

Charles Lummis, excerpt from *Letters from the Southwest* (1885) (Blackboard)

Mary Austin, excerpt from *Earth Horizons* (1888) (Blackboard)

Dana W. Bartlett, excerpt from *The Better City* (1907) (Blackboard)

Paul Jordan, excerpt from “Ballyhooers in Heaven” (1925) (Blackboard)

Christopher Isherwood, excerpt from "Los Angeles" [aka ‘California is a

tragic country’] (1947) (Blackboard)

Mayor Villaraigosa, excerpts from “Inaugural Address” (2005) Blackboard)

General Questions for Literary Analysis and Advice for Reading

Literature (Blackboard)

Principles of STEM Analysis for Humanistic Inquiry (Blackboard)

Viewing:

“Glasses of Empathy” (YouTube Clip)

Kurt Vonnegut, “The Shape of Stories” (YouTube clip)

School of Life, “Why Study Literature?” (YouTube clip)

Listening: Frank Sinatra, “LA is My Lady”

The Doors, “LA Woman”

Randy Newman, “I Love LA”

Ozomatli, “City of Angels”

Guns N’ Roses, “Welcome to the Jungle”

X, “Los Angeles”

Tupac, “To Live and Die in LA”

Snoop Dogg, “El Lay”

Red Hot Chili Peppers, “Under the Bridge”

Quetzal, “My Home”

Dumbfounded, “24 KTOWN”

30 Seconds to Mars, “City of Angels”

Thurz, “Los Angeles”

Thurz, “’Rodney King’ Evolution”

Viewing: “Los Angeles: City of Destiny” (excerpt)

“L.A. Confidential” (1997) (excerpt)

“How the West Was Won” (1962) (excerpt)

Natalie Merchant, “San Andreas Fault” (1995)

“Malcolm X” (1992) (excerpt)

Trailer: “Let it Fall: Los Angeles 1982-1992” (2017)

II. APOCALYPSE AND REVELATIONS: THE FIRE THIS TIME (LA 1992)

T 7/6 **Anna Deavere Smith, *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*****(begin with Time**

**Line at the end and then read the Introduction and pp. 1-118, 156-**

**256)** [Sorry: Pagination on Blackboard posted edition is messy]

Anna Deavere Smith, excerpt from *Talk to Me* (2002) (Blackboard)

Elaine Kim, excerpt from “Home is Where the Han is: A Korean American

Perspective” (1994) (Blackboard)

Paul Yung, “Who is My Neighbor?” [last paragraph especially] (1992) (Blackboard)

[For Your Curiosity: Optional. Maps of LA drawn by Former English 176 students]

Viewing: Link to PBS Film Version of *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*

[Watch especially 0-23:00, 56:30-1:25]

<https://www.pbs.org/video/great-performances-twilight-los-angeles-1/>

Viewing (YouTube):

“Uprising: Hip Hop and the LA Riots” (2012)

“Clash of Colors: The 1992 Riots from the Korean American Perspective”

(2013) (view especially after 103.00 to end)

“2 Pac Talks on LA Riots” (1992)

“Dumbfounded Spits Verse on Racism and Koreatown Upbringing” (2016)

Trailer: “LA is Burning: The LA Riots 25 Years After” (A&E) (2017)

Th 7/8 **Joseph Wambaugh, excerpt from *Hollywood Station* (2006)**

Richard Rodriguez, “Horizontal City” (1992) (Blackboard)

Bill Bradley, “The Real Lesson of LA” (1992) (Blackboard)

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, excerpts on LA 1992 from “How Do We Change

America?” (2020) (Blackboard)

Joseph Wambaugh, Interview with the LA Times: “What the LAPD

Needs is Women to Combat the Testosterone Level” (July 1991)

(Blackboard)

Voices in Harmony with Anna Deavere Smith: An Anthology of Voices on

Empathy (Blackboard)

Viewing: Scenes from:

“Falling Down” (1992)

“Menace II Society” (1992)

“Rush Hour” (1996)

“American History X” (1998)

“Bulworth” (1998)

“Strange Days” (1996)

Trailer, “Crash” (2004)

**M 7/12 Interview Project Due by 9 am. Submit through Turnitin.**

Ps. For a beautiful example of an Interview Project modeled on Smith’s *Twilight* completed by a student in English 176 in Summer 2017, cut and paste in:

http://jennytypes.com/postcards.pdf

III. NO JUSTICE, NO PEACE? A SOCRATIC INQUIRY IN THE

REPUBLIC OF LOS ANGELES

T 7/13 **Walter Mosley, *Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned*** (1997)

Walter Mosley, “Workin’ on the Chain Gang” (2000), Interview Responses

about *Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned,”* Profile of Alfred Ligon

and Aquarian Bookstore (model for The Capricorn Bookstore in “History”

story), plus short excerpts from two other novels by Mosley about uprisings in LA.

Walter Mosley, “The Realization of a Writer” (2006) (Blackboard)

Viewing: “Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned” (1998) (YouTube)

IV. BITING THE APPLE: SNAKES IN THE GARDEN, OR THE FIRES LAST TIME

Th 7/15 S**onora McKeller, "Watts--Little Rome" (1966) (Blackboard)**

Joseph Wambaugh, excerpt from *The New Centurions* (1970) (Blackboard)

Walter Mosley, “What We Forget about Watts” (2005) (Blackboard)

Robin D. G. Kelley, “Watts: Remember What They Built, Not What They

Burned” (2015) (Blackboard)

Al Waxman, “The Zoot Suit Riot” (1943) (Blackboard)

John Weaver, "War on the Zoot-Suiters" (1943) (Blackboard)

P.S. Dorney, "Lynching the Chinese" (1871) (Blackboard)

Cecilia Rasmussen, “Early Developer’s Monument” [on Robert P.

Widney] (Blackboard)

Cecelia Rasmussen, “Forgotten Hero from a Night of Disgrace” [on

Emil Harris] (Blackboard)

Scott Zesch, “Prologue” from *The Chinatown War: Chinese Los*

*Angeles and the Massacre of 1871* (2012) (Blackboard)

Cecilia Rasmussen, "Shaman and Freedom Fighters Led Indian Mission

Revolt" (Blackboard)

Viewing: Scenes from:

“O.J.: Made in America,” Part 1

“Zoot Suit” (2002) (excerpt from documentary)

“Zoot Suit” (1981) (excerpt from film version of play by L. Valdez)

“American Me” (1992) (excerpt)

“New Centurions” (1972)

Playlist: Mothers of Invention, “Trouble Every Day”

Dorothy Morrison, “Black California”

Watts Prophets, “Listen” and other selected clips

Phil Ochs, “The World Began in Eden and Ended in Los Angeles”

V. FAULT-LINES: THE FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN LOS ANGELES

ANGELES

T 7/20 **Dana Johnson, “The Story of Biddy Mason,” from *In the Not Quiet Dark***

**(2016)** (Blackboard)

Upton Sinclair, “The Ride,” from *Oil!* (1927) (Blackboard)

Chester Himes, *If He Hollers, Let Him Go,* Chapter 2(1945) (Blackboard)

Chester Himes, “Lunching at the Ritzmore” (1942) (Blackboard)

Kevin Starr, excerpt from *Material Dreams: Southern California*

*in the 1920s* (1990) (Blackboard)

Frances Dinkelspiel, excerpt from *Towers of Gold* (2008) (on Isaias

Hellman) (Blackboard)

J. P. Widney, excerpt from *The Three Americas* (1935) (Blackboard)

J. Alexander Somerville, excerpt from *Man of Color: An Autobiography of*

*J. Alexander Somerville* (1949) (Blackboard)

Excerpt from *Memories of Chicano History: The Life and* Narrative

*of Bert Corona* (1994) (Blackboard)

Steven B. Sample, excerpt from “The University of Southern California

at 125: Inventing the Future Since 1880” (2005) (Blackboard)

Kevin Starr, Introduction to Cecilia Rasmussen’s *LA Unconventional: The*

*Men and Women who Did L.A. Their Way* (1998) (Blackboard)

Viewing: “Chinatown” (1974)

VI. METAMORPHOSIS: LOS ANGLES AS CRUCIBLE

Th 7/22 Robert Towne, “Preface and Postscript to ‘Chinatown’” (1994) (Blackboard)

How’d We Get Here (A Timeline of LA History) (Blackboard)

Perspectives on Los Angeles: A Chronology of Verbal Images of the

City and Region (Blackboard)

Carey McWilliams, excerpt from *Southern California: Island on the*

*Land* (1946) (Blackboard)

Ray Bradbury, excerpt from "Los Angeles is the Best Place in America"

(1972) (Blackboard)

Jimmy Santiago Baca, excerpt from “LA, Ese,” (1992) (Blackboard)

Wanda Coleman, "L.A.: Love Cry" (1996) (Blackboard)

Mike Davis, "Why L.A. is a Synonym for Disaster" (1990) (Blackboard)

**Lynell George, excerpt from “Native to the Place” (2001) (Blackboard) +**

**D. J. Waldie, “L.A. Literature**” (2004)

[Required Paragraph Response to Boldfaced text should include comment

on both the essays by George and Waldie above]

John Rechy, Sure, L.A. is Cliché—Let Us Count the Ways” (2001)

(Blackboard)

Viewing: Excerpt from “LA Plays Itself” (2014)

Playlist: Nels Cline with Devin Sarno, “Buried on Bunker Hill”

Missing Persons, “Walking in LA”

**F 7/23 Research Project Due by 4 pm (Submit through Turnitin)**

VII. HOLLYWOOD BABYLON: BURN HOLLYWOOD, BURN

T 7/27 **Budd Schulberg, Chapters 1-6 *What Makes Sammy Run?* (1941)**

Michael Tolkin, excerpt from Chapter 4 of *The Player* (1988) (Blackboard)

Anthology: Los Angeles Artists on Art (Blackboard)

Viewing: Excerpts from “Sullivan’s Travels” (1941) and “Purple Rose of

Cairo” (1985)

Th 7/29 **Budd Schulberg, Chapters 7-12 *What Makes Sammy Run?*** (1941)

Morris Dickstein, LA Times Op-Ed, “Moved by Art” (2009)

Budd Schulberg, excerpt from “The Writer in Hollywood” (1959)

Viewing: Excerpt from “What Makes Sammy Run?”

“Sullivan’s Travels” or “The Purple Rose of Cairo”

T 8/3 **Nathanael West, *The Day of the Locust* (1939)**

**“**The Best L.A. Novel Ever? Day of the Locust vs. What Makes

Sammy Run? From *The LA Weekly* (2013)

Excerpts from Budd Schulberg’s Introduction to *From the Ashes:*

*The Voices of Watts* (1967) [on “the burning of LA” in fiction and fact

and the role of the writer]

Viewing: Scenes from

“A Star is Born”(1937)

“The Day of the Locust” (1975)

“Singin’ in the Rain” (1952)

“Grand Canyon” (1991)

“Nightcrawler” (2014)

Playlist: Red Hot Chili Peppers, “Californication”

Bad Religion, “LA is Burning”

Public Enemy, “Burn Hollywood Burn”

Green Day, “Boulevard of Broken Dreams”

VIII. BACK TO A BROWNER LOS ANGELES

Th 8/5 **Luis Rodriguez, “My Ride, My Revolution,” “Oiga,” and “Sometimes You**

**Dance with Watermelons” from** ***Republic of East LA* (2002)** (Blackboard)

Father Greg Boyle, selections from *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of*

*Boundless Compassion* (2010) (Blackboard)

Viewing: “Quinceanera” (2006)

Father Greg Boyle, “Keynote Address,” Durfee Foundation,

(YouTube)

Excerpt, “Born in East LA” (1987)

Excerpt, “Blade Runner” (1982)

Excerpt, “Escape from LA” (1996)

Excerpt, “Crazy/Beautiful” (2001)

Playlist: War, “East LA”

Quetzal, “This is My Home”

“Nuestro Himno”

**F 8/6 Critical Essay on Artists on Art (5 pages) + Personal Essay (1 page) on Art (due by**

**11 pm)**

IX. LOS ANGELES: RE-GENESIS FROM EXODUS

T 8/10 Laleh Khadivi, *The Walking (2013),* chapters “Paths, Deposits” and

“Ecumenopolis” (Blackboard)

**Karen Yamashita, “Orange” (1992) and Chapter 2, “Koreatown,” from *The***

***Tropic of Orange* (1997) (Blackboard)**

**Link to excerpt from Chapter 2, “Koreatown”**

<https://books.google.com/books?id=Ys91DwAAQBAJ&pg=PT6&source=gbs_selected_pages&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=Ys91DwAAQBAJ&pg=PT6&source=gbs_selected_pages&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Octavia Butler, “Speech Sounds,” from *Bloodchild and Other Stories*

(2002) (Blackboard)

From *LA Times*, An Anthology of LA Writers on LA Literature (1999)

(Blackboard)

Theodore Zeldin, “The Future of Networking” (2005) (Blackboard)

For Your Curiosity: William Cronon, “Only Connect: The Goals of a Liberal Arts

Education” (1998) (Blackboard)

Viewing: “What’s Cooking” (2006)

Playlist: From *LaLa Land,* “Another Day of Sun”

Red Hot Chili Peppers, “Under the Bridge”

**Th 8/12 Take Home Final Due by 10 am**

**Grading Breakdown Points:**

16/48Interview Project [+ 1 point extra for A+)

14/42 Research Project (Scavenger Hunt) + 1 page Essay

16/48 Critical Essay + 1 Page Personal Essay ) [+1 point extra for A+]

9/27 Take Home Final

12/36 Discussion Section Attendance and Participation

33/99 Two Paragraph Responses Per Class with Response to Question for the Day

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

100/300

On Turnitin, we will assign a possible total of 300 points. We will then divide your total points by 3 in order to get a point scale from 1-100.

Note: Very exceptional, outstanding work for any of the above could receive a point of extra credit.

**Grading Scale:**

A 92-100

A- 87-91

B+ 82-86

B 80-81

B- 77-79

C+ 73-76

C 70-72

C- 67-69

D+ 65-66

D 63-64

D- 60-62

F 0-59

THREE OR MORE UNEXCUSED ABSENCES FROM LECTURE AND DISCUSSION SECTION MEETINGS (measured by failure to turn in paragraph responses or be credited for attendance in discussion by the TA) COULD RESULT IN A FAILURE FOR THE COURSE REGARDLESS OF THE STUDENT'S PERFORMANCE ON PAPERS AND EXAMS

FAILURE TO COMPLETE ANY OF THE PRIMARY ASSIGNMENTS (Interview project, Research Project, Critical Essay) OR FAILURE TO COMPLETE THE TAKEHOME FINAL WILL RESULT IN AN F FOR THE COURSE.

PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT STUDENT CONDUCT CODES REGARDING PLAGIARISM AS EXPLAINED IN SCAMPUS (P. 75, article 11.11) WILL BE RIGOROUSLY ADHERED TO IN THIS COURSE

**Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11,

*Behavior Violating University Standards*<https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academicdishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>.

This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

## **Support Systems**

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* <http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html>provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/>will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

**ENGLISH 176**

**Course Practices and Policies**

**1. Please be patient (and even somewhat forgiving) as I teach this class through Zoom.**

Teaching such a large class of students through Zoom has its challenges. This will be my second time doing it for this summer course. I ask for your patience for glitches that may happen for technical reasons (e.g., breakdowns in connectivity) or any mistakes I might make managing Zoom and Screen Share.

I want to experiment on using Chat in a large lecture to make the class more interactive. We will see how that goes.

I plan to show some full-length movies as well as many YouTube clips from class. I will miss feeling the energy of a large class as students watch the movies en masse rather than separately by themselves.

Please also feel encouraged to watch movies with friends or family and explore the offerings in the YouTube Playlist for this course. This Playlist offers a great way to do something of a self-study of the history, literature, film and music of Los Angeles. I will screen in class less than half of the materials on the Playlist. You are only responsible for watching films, film clips, and YouTube screenings I show during class time.

Confession: I am rather old school. I like to use a Blackboard. I’m not keen on Power Point lectures. In the past, I have screened material for this course that I only have on VHS, and I bring my own combination DVD/VHS player to do this. I’ve tried to convert to Streaming

all movies and videos. Glitches may happen.

I want to experiment on using Chat in a large lecture to make the class more interactive. We will see how that goes. I will also experiment with using the Whiteboard on occasion. (I like drawing a map of LA on the board and then placing the locations of each story we read on this

map, and I will ask you at the beginning and again at the end of the course to draw your own personalized map of LA.)

I plan to show some full-length movies as well as many YouTube clips from class. I will miss feeling the energy of a large class as students watch the movies en masse rather than separately by themselves. I strongly encourage you to watch the full-length movies on this syllabus on your own for better reception (and in the company of friends). Please also feel encouraged to explore

offerings in the YouTube Playlist for this course. This Playlist offers a great way to do something of a self-study of the history, literature, film and music of Los Angeles.

**2. The materials for this course are not organized in a strict chronological order**

Unlike many courses in the humanities, the course materials for English 176 are not arranged in a strict, chronological order, which may strike you as confusing. But this course emphasizes seeing deep patterns and reoccurring themes in culture and history, so it will often juxtapose readings from much different time periods in the same class or classes.

**3. This course satisfies the Humanistic Inquiry category of the GE program, and it is my challenge to suggest how a course in humanistic inquiry may be of value even to students who see this category as irrelevant to their major and their professional goals.**

Just as English majors may find a science requirement in USC's GE program or a quantitative reasoning requirement irrelevant to their major and their professional goals, some students will find this course and the GE category Humanistic Inquiry irrelevant to their major or their professional goals**.** My challenge, which I welcome, is to try to show how readings in the humanities--e.g, literature, history, film, music—can help develop an intelligence that is now recognized as important for personal happiness as well as professional success: EQ, or emotional intelligence, including especially the ability to listen to voices different from your own with empathy and deep understanding.

**4. This course is not designed first and foremost to test an ability to memorize facts. Its method is to develop your capacity for empathetic understanding and a form of critical thinking that I call "democratic thinking": the ability to see and understand a subject from multiple points of view, especially perspectives that differ from your own beliefs and opinions.**

This course is not a course in light reading or easy listening. This course instead tries to teach what I call "uneasy listening": the ability to listen to a rich mix of voices that may challenge a "confirmation bias" or offer "cognitive dissonance" or a "contra-diction" to what you believe or know or value. The course will also emphasize what has been called "generous listening": listening to other voices with curiosity, passion, interest, and disinterest.

**5. By reading and listening to stories told about Los Angeles in literature, politics and history, this course seeks to enhance our appreciation of storytelling and its powers as well as our ability to cross-examine and judge the stories by different criteria.**

The key part of your learning in this course will come from engaging the readings, viewings, and listenings for the course and doing the research and thinking and writing required to complete the assignments. I do provide Study Guides for many of the readings as well as examples of the final quiz. The lectures are designed to serve as a guide for interpreting the stories about Los Angeles to be found in a range of texts: works of fiction, non-fiction essays, dramatic films, documentaries, films and songs.

**6. The course is not light in its reading or in its writing assignments.**

The USC formula is that for every hour of class time, there should be two hours of homework. This course is 3 hours long. The amount of time to complete the readings and responses for each class may sometimes be as much as 6 hours (depending on the material and how fast you read.)

Estimated Time for each major assignment:

Interview Project: 6-8 hours to complete

Research project: 6-8 hours to complete.

5 page critical essay + 1 page personal statement on art: 8-10 hours

**7. The course contains reading and viewing of some materials from history as well as works of the imagination that involve stuff that is ugly, violent, unjust, cruel, and painful.**

Some of the material presented in the readings and viewings and lectures may upset or offend some students for various reasons. I welcome you to contact me about any material that troubles you or you find inappropriate and difficult or impossible to read or view. I will accept your

reason for not completing the reading or viewing without question or debate.

**8. Studies suggest that students in the classroom pay most attention during the first 15-20 minutes of a class and the last 5-10 minutes. The class time is 200 minutes. I will often try to present key points in the first 20 minutes and the last 10 minutes. I try to split the class up into parts, providing breaks. Generally, the first 60-75 minutes will be lecture. Then after a break, the second half of the course will involve watching complete movies or film clips or YouTube clips or listening to songs. The last 30 minutes of the class will often be discussion about the viewings**

The course tries to examine Los Angeles history and culture through different disciplines (historical, political, and literary analysis) and through different media (film and music as well as primary texts from history and literature). A 200 minute class will test every student’s patience.

**9. Some of the materials to be taught will be in books that are required to be purchased for the course. You are welcome to purchase electronic texts or hard copies. Many materials will be found in Blackboard postings. (I apologize that some pages need to be rotated to be viewed.)**

**10. Except in cases of significant emergency, I insist that any request for an extension on an assignment be addressed to me in a text message or email appointment before the assignment is due. I also require a personal phone call as a follow up to any such request.**

**11. When submitting assignments, please remember to include your TA name.**

Note: Google Chrome is best to use (rather than Safari) as your browser for Turnitin submissions.

**12. If there are personal reasons that result in a number of missed classes or missed assignments, please email me about them during your absence. Please do not wait until classes end or past the time of the final exam to inform me about any such situation.**

**13. There is no need to inform me ahead of time in an email or text message of any class you need to miss because of sickness or a compelling personal reason or any legitimate excuse.**

In each class, I will also ask a "Question of the Day" for you to respond to preferably on the same page as your paragraph response for the following class. Responses to the Question of the

Day can also be submitted in one document at the end of the semester.

I DO NOT NEED any doctor’s note to explain an absence. I take students at their word

**14. Students taking the course Pass/Fail must complete all the assignments to receive credit for the course, including the final quiz and 11 paragraph responses.**

**15. Rewarding Attendance and Engagement with the Reading.**

My policy of asking for paragraph responses to the readings for each class is designed to reward consistent engagement with the reading.

The Questions of the Day are an attempt to reward attendance in class.

The 2 points awarded to attendance in each Discussion session emphasizes importance

I place on these discussions and the exchange of viewpoints with each other as a way to learn.

Let me add: I consider it very easy to judge the care and curiosity students give to the materials for the course solely on the basis of their paragraph responses. Experience has taught me that students who give care and curiosity to these responses will almost always be deserving of an A, as they give the same care and curiosity to each assignment. The quality of your paragraph responses will also be very much on my mind when it comes to deciding your final grade. It can be its own form of tacit extra credit, if you will.

I will also keep in my mind students who respond to questions asked in lecture or through Chat function on Zoom

**16. Office Hours and Response to Text Messages or Emails**

I welcome the chance to conduct officer hour meetings with you through Zoom. We can make Zoom meeting appointment during my official hour, and I am also very willing to arrange other times for a Zoom meeting. I am also willing to review any grades you get for assignments for the course. I am also willing, when possible, to review a draft of an assignment to give advice.

I try to respond promptly to text messages and emails. Sometimes it can be more difficult to me to do that than at other times. I generally try to respond within at least 24 hours. But it is often easier to answer some questions in person rather than in a text message. I welcome both methods to contact me, but the more complex the question, the more I prefer to answer it in person

**17. Consider Using Tablet or Cell Phone during Class as a 2nd Device for Accessing Materials**

I find it easier to use a second device for accessing materials on Blackboard or in an Ebook or on YouTube rather than splitting a Zoom screen to access such readings. You may too.

**18. The Syllabus is subject to revision.**

This syllabus is subject to revision, and I will not address in lecture every reading assigned for the course. I will try to notify you in advance of each class the specific readings or chapters that will be the focus for the next class. The Boldfaced readings on the syllabus will always be of primary importance.

**USC’s General Education Statement**

**General Education Requirement GE-B, Humanistic Inquiry**

We all are self-reflective. We try to make sense of what it means to be human and how to relate to one another. We seek to understand ourselves and the world around us, and always we think about how things could be, or should be, or might have been. Humanistic inquiry takes us into realms that lie at the heart of what it means to be a thinking, feeling person, and into realms of interpretation and analysis beyond what facts and figures alone can tell us.

Courses in humanistic inquiry encourage close engagement with works of the imagination—in words, sight, and sound—understanding what it means to live another life and see over the horizon. We explore language as a medium of artistic expression and communication. We study systems of language and thought. We seek to understand traditions that create different cultures—their concepts, values, and events in history—and see them in relation to one another. Our courses emphasize forms of representation and methods of interpretation, adopting broad perspectives that are chronological, disciplinary, and cross-disciplinary. Students immerse themselves in arts and letters to think about their own place in history and in contemporary society, and inquire into our shared futures.

***Learning Objectives***

USC’s Humanistic Inquiry program will introduce you to a broad range of courses and ways of thinking that will take you beyond the specialization of your major and significantly extend your ability to understand the human world and your place in it. The program will help you achieve six principal learning objectives.

In Humanistic Inquiry courses you will:

• Reflect on what it means to be human through close study of human experience throughout time and across diverse cultures;

• Cultivate a critical appreciation for various forms of human expression, including literature, language, philosophy, and the arts, as well as develop an understanding of the contexts from which these forms emerge;

• Engage with lasting ideas and values that have animated humanity throughout the centuries for a more purposeful, more ethical, and intellectually richer life;

• Learn to read and interpret actively and analytically, to think critically and creatively, and to write and speak persuasively;

• Learn to evaluate ideas from multiple perspectives and to formulate informed opinions on complex issues of critical importance in today's global world;

• Learn to collaborate effectively through traditional and new ways of disseminating knowledge.

Having successfully met the learning objectives, you will have acquired both practical skills and more intangible competencies. You will master strategies for finding, reading and understanding relevant information from different genres, for analyzing complex problems, for making and evaluating compelling arguments, and for preparing effective presentations. You will become a clearer thinker and a stronger writer. You will know how to situate current events and ideas in the right historical and cultural context to be able to make better decisions. You will gain new insights and be inspired. You will be ready for a life of learning and creativity.

**Definition of Excellence in Teaching**

**USC Department of English**

All writing is creative, and all civic engagement requires a sophisticated understanding of discourse and interpretation. The USC Department of English is committed to the power of the story, the word, and the image. We analyze and organize complex ideas, evaluate qualitative information, anticipate how real audiences respond to language, and study behaviors of complex characters leading uncertain lives with competing values. We develop critical abilities for a successful life, but our stories tell us why life is worth living.

Excellence in teaching is an active engagement with these commitments, perspectives, and values. A student with a major in **English** should graduate with an appreciation for (1) the relations between representation and the human soul, and (2) the relations between words and ideas. Teachers will encourage this appreciation through their knowledge and conveyance of the subject, the appropriateness of instructional materials, and the quality of their students’ responses. We expect our students to:

* understand the major representations in English discourse from earliest beginnings to the current moment; all literatures exist in conversation with earlier literatures;
* organize and interpret evidence;
* feel the experiences of others, both by engaging in literatures and by their own efforts to create new literatures;
* understand how periods, cultural intentions, and literary genres differ;
* grasp the skills and theories of interpretation, and the history of our own discipline;
* see how interpretive interests shift with time and place;
* attend to linguistic details of semantics, phrasing, and structure;
* assume there are reasonable alternative understandings of a text;
* adjudicate differences through reasoned arguments that honestly engage counter-arguments.

Our students will have lives in very different arenas, but all calling for skills in discourse, empathy, civil argument, and civic engagement. We cannot and should not say what those careers will be; we train students for jobs that have not yet been invented.

English Department students with an interdisciplinary major in **Narrative Studies** should expect instruction that inculcates an appreciation for all of the above, and coordinates with definitions of teaching excellence in USC’s corresponding departments.

The Department of English adheres to the modalities of instruction published in the “USC Definition of Excellence in Teaching.”