

**The Concept of Home:
The Meanings of Domesticity in American Life
(Topics in American Studies: 01:050:300:02)**

Monday/Wednesday, 5:35 – 6:55PM
Hickman Hall 210

Prof. Andy Urban

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Office Hours: 1 – 3PM, Wednesday, or by appointment
Ruth Adams Building 205E

Course Description

This course examines the concept of “home” in the United States, and the competing cultural, political, and economic meanings that have been attached to American domesticity. Historically, the home has occupied a central place in the way that Americans think about gender, sexuality, race, and the organization of labor. The home is a frequent subject of political discourse, legal rulings, and economic planning. Projects of nation-building and national defense often use “home” and “nation” interchangeably. Depictions of domestic life, captured in phrases like the “nuclear family” and “the broken home,” provide the concept of home with further significance. Through an engagement with novels, film, advertising, and landscape and architectural design, this course will explore the importance that Americans have assigned to the concept of home, and why there is (allegedly) “no place like it.”

Learning Goals:

- a) To assess the significance of home and domesticity in American life, and to evaluate in what ways these concepts, themes, and spatial arrangements have exercised a unique role in American politics, nation and empire building, economic organization, fiction and film, and in relationship to the construction of the categories of race, gender, and sexuality
- b) To offer a detailed, nuanced, and sustained analysis of how home has been defined both normatively, and through radical and alternative perspectives
- c) To understand how the concepts of home and domesticity are historical, and have changed over time

Required Readings

- Susan Matt, *Homesickness: An American History* (Oxford University Press, 2011), ISBN: 9780195371857

- K. Tsianina Lomawaima (Editor), Brenda J. Child (Editor), Margaret L. Archuleta (Editor), *Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences, 1879-2000* (Heard Museum, 2000), ISBN: 9780934351621
- Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (Anchor, 1998), ISBN: 038549081X

In addition to the above books, the assigned chapters, articles, and primary sources have been (or will be shortly) posted as .pdf files on the course's SAKAI site, under the heading "Resources."

Readings correspond to the day they will be discussed and need to be completed before class. You are required to bring readings to class with you, since we will refer to the text directly.

Assignment and Grading Overview

Additional information on the assignments will be provided in separate handouts, in the near future.

Blog Posts – 45% (Three, 15% each)

Using prompts and archival sources that I provide, each student will be required to "curate" three blog posts for our class site during the semester. These posts will double as short essay assignments.

Midterm Exam – 15% - Monday, March 10 (in class)

The midterm will consist of identifications and short answer questions.

Final Exam – 20% - Friday, May 9, 4 – 7PM

The final exam is cumulative, and will consist of identifications, short answer questions, and an essay question.

Participation/Attendance – 20%

This is a seminar, and the expectation is that you will both attend all the classes, and regularly participate.

Grading Scale:

92-100=**A**; 87-91=**B+**; 81-86=**B**; 77-80=**C+**; 70-76=**C**; 60-69=**D**; 0-59=**F**

Note: there are no minus grades at Rutgers.

Class Policies

Please make sure that you are receiving and checking SAKAI announcements via email.

I regularly use the site to update class information, assignments, etc. **You are responsible for keeping up-to-date with class information and making sure that you are connected.**

Attendance in the seminar is mandatory.

Each student is allowed one unexcused absence during the semester. Each additional unexcused absence will result in deductions from your participation grade.

Please do not text, use the internet, chat online, etc. during our seminar. If you do you will be marked as absent for that class.

If you have to miss class due to sickness, an emergency, or another excused reason, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.

Unexcused late assignments will receive a deduction.

Special Accommodation Requests

All special accommodation requests must be brought to my attention during the first two weeks of class. Full disability policies and procedures are available for review at: <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>.

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html>

Academic Integrity Policy

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>

Violations include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity.

Honor Pledge:

I pledge on my honor that I will adhere to all aspects of the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy

By accepting this syllabus and enrolling in this course, you assume responsibility for knowing the above policies and the possible penalties – including suspension and expulsion – should you violate the Honor Pledge.

Take an interactive tutorial on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:

<http://sccweb.scc-net.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/Intro.html>

Please see the last page of this syllabus for additional information on plagiarism.

Class Schedule and Assigned Readings

Wednesday, Jan. 22

Introductions & Syllabus

Monday, Jan. 27

- Dolores Hayden, “Housing and American Life,” in *Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work and Family Life* (1984)*

Wednesday, Jan. 29

- Linda Kerber, “The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment – An American Perspective,” *American Quarterly* (1976)*
 - Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* (1966)*
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Monday, Feb. 3

No Reading

Introduction to Blogging and the World of Digital Humanities

Wednesday, Feb. 5

- Matt, *Homesickness*, Introduction – Ch. 2
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Monday, Feb. 10

- Matt, *Homesickness*, Ch. 3

Wednesday, Feb. 12

- Matt, *Homesickness*, Ch. 4
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Monday, Feb. 17

- Matt, *Homesickness*, Ch. 5

Wednesday, Feb. 19

- Amy Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity,” *American Literature* 70 (1998)*
- Margaret Crawford, “The Company Town in an Era of Industrial Expansion,” in *Building the Workingman's Paradise: The Design of American Company Towns* (1996)*

Monday, Feb. 24

- Lomawaima, Child, Archuleta, eds., *Away from Home*, Part One

Wednesday, Feb. 26

- Lomawaima, Child, Archuleta, eds., *Away from Home*, Part Two

Blog post #1 due by noon on Monday, March 3

Monday, March 3

No Reading

In-class screening: *Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples Temple*, dir. Stanley Nelson (2006)

Wednesday, March 5

No Reading

Discussion of Film

Monday, March 10

Midterm Exam

Wednesday, March 12

No Class (substituted for field trip on May 3)

SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS THIS WEEK

Monday, March 24

- Ruth Schwartz Cowan, “The Roads Not Taken: Alternative Social and Technical Approaches to Housework,” in *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Heath to the Microwave* (1983)*
- Elaine Tyler May, “The Commodity Gap: Consumerism and the Modern Home,” in *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (1990)*

Wednesday, March 26

- Ted Steinberg, “The Color of Money,” from *American Green: The Obsessive Quest for the Perfect Lawn* (2007)*

Monday, March 31

The paintings listed below are available as JPEGs on our SAKAI site. Hyperlinks are included to music videos as well; watch these. Please review materials before class.

- Kerry James Marshall, “Bang” (1994) & “Our Town” (1995)*
- Grant Wood, “American Gothic” (1930)*
- Walker Evans, “Bud Fields and His Family at Home” (1935)*
- John Singer Sargent, “The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit” (1882)*
- Lewis Hine, “Flower Making” (1915)*
- Norman Rockwell, “Ours to Fight For...Freedom From Want” (1943)*
- Bill Owens, “Tupperware Party” (1971)*

- Arcade Fire, “Sprawl II (Mountains Beyond Mountains)” (2010)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awHWC0lYQ9o>
- Malvina Williams, “Little Boxes” (1962)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_2lGkEU4Xs
- Jay Z, “Where I’m From” (1997)
<http://rapgenius.com/Jay-z-where-im-from-lyrics>

Wednesday, April 2

No Reading

In-class screening: *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth: An Urban History*, dir. Chad Freidrichs (2011)

Blog Post #2 due by 5:00PM on Friday, April 4

Monday, April 7

- Selections from Yves Marchand, *The Ruins of Detroit* & Andrew Moore, *Detroit Disassembled**

Discussion of Film

Wednesday, April 9

- John M. Payne, “The Paradox of Progress: Three Decades of the Mount Laurel Doctrine,” in *Journal of Planning History* (2006)*
- Nikole Hannah-Jones, “Living Apart: How the Government Betrayed a Landmark Civil Rights Law,” *ProPublica* - please read the article online, and review the accompanying materials (<http://www.propublica.org/article/living-apart-how-the-government-betrayed-a-landmark-civil-rights-law>)

Monday, April 14

- Atwood, *Handmaid’s Tale*, chs. I – IV

Wednesday, April 16

- Atwood, *Handmaid’s Tale*, chs. V – VIII

Monday, April 21

- Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, chs. IX – XII

Wednesday, April 23

- Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, chs. XIII - END

Monday, April 28

In-class screening: *The Queen of Versailles*, dir. Lauren Greenfield (2012)

Wednesday, April 30

No Reading

Discussion of Film

Saturday, May 3

FIELD TRIP TO MERCHANT HOUSE MUSEUM, DETAILS TBA

Monday, May 5

- Ann Cvektovich, "In the Archives of Lesbian Feelings: Documentary and Popular Culture," in *Camera Obscura* (2002)*

Final Exam: Friday, May 9, 4 – 7PM

Blog Post #3 due by 5:00PM on Tuesday, May 13

AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

In this class we will take cheating very seriously. All suspected cases of cheating and plagiarism will be automatically referred to the Office of Judicial Affairs, and we will recommend penalties appropriate to the gravity of the infraction.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the use of another person's words, ideas, or results without giving that person appropriate credit. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and both direct quotation and paraphrasing must be cited properly according to the accepted format for the particular discipline or as required by the instructor

Some common examples of plagiarism are:

- Copying word for word (i.e. quoting directly) from an oral, printed, or electronic source without proper attribution.
- Paraphrasing without proper attribution, i.e., presenting in one's own words another person's written words or ideas as if they were one's own.
- Submitting a purchased or downloaded term paper or other materials to satisfy a course requirement.
- Incorporating into one's work graphs, drawings, photographs, diagrams, tables, spreadsheets, computer programs, or other nontextual material from other sources without proper attribution.

A SPECIAL NOTE: Students often assume that because information is available on the Web it is public information, does not need to be formally referenced, and can be used without attribution. This is a mistake. **All** information and ideas that you derive from other sources, whether written, spoken, or electronic, must be attributed to their original source. Such sources include not just written or electronic materials, but people with whom you may discuss your ideas, such as your roommate, friends, or family members. The more important point: think about what you are basing and argument or assessment on in terms of where it comes from, and how the source must be evaluated. Judgments about plagiarism can be subtle. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask for guidance from your instructor.