

CEP 301: THE IDEA OF COMMUNITY

Fall 2019

<https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1318560>

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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. We start with this course because community is at the heart of the major. In CEP, community is an object of study, a lived experience we intentionally foster and share, and a pedagogical approach that defines our unique form of learning. Our goal this quarter is to simultaneously explore all three of these facets of community.

To explore community as an object of study, we will examine several different artistic representations of community: one philosophical play, three dystopian novels, and two or three films. Each of these works imaginatively conjures a community for us to experience. After reading or viewing them, we will then 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 we engage in a particular form of pedagogical approach, or 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. We will all participate in producing understanding through 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. The best way to handle that responsibility is this: get *lost* in the worlds these artists create for you. Let yourself become immersed. 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 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 your ability to create an effective lesson plan and facilitate class discussion with a peer.
- Develop constructive relationships with other members of the class.
- Critically assess your performance at the end of the quarter (the successes and the failures) and identify strategies to improve in the quarters to come.

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 important 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, and analyzing the material. Outside of class, each of you will participate by reading (or viewing) 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. As the professor, I will work hard to ensure this process goes well by providing ongoing intellectual and pedagogical guidance, as well as a course structure that allows you to discover and create knowledge in a supportive class environment.

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. Write a narrative evaluation of your performance in the course at the quarter's end. 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

I play several key roles in the class. I will work hard to:

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. As a community, the class should maintain these standards by regulating itself, but if a student feels these standards are not being met then I encourage him or her to speak to me so that we can 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, I will file a numerical grade with the registrar. For Credit/No Credit students, I will file either CR or NC with the registrar.

Course Readings and Films

You should buy the books wherever you prefer. The films are available on the course canvas site (on the page “films”). Editions for the readings are as follows:

- Plato (2008) *The Republic*. Translated by T. Griffith. New York, Cambridge University Press.
- Zamyatin, E. (1993) *We*. Penguin Classics.
- Orwell, G. (1961) *1984*. Signet Classics.
- Atwood, M. (2017) *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Anchor Books.
- Haynes, T. (2002) *Far From Heaven*.
- Harris, O. “San Junipero,” Season 3, Episode 4 of *Black Mirror*.

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	30
Discussion Facilitation	15
Final Essay	30

(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 honesty

The University takes the offenses of cheating and plagiarism very seriously, and so do I. Cheating is taking advantage of the work of others dishonestly. Plagiarism is representing the work of others as your own without giving appropriate credit. If you are unsure what is OK or not OK, make sure to ask!

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1

Wednesday
September 25

Topic: Introductions, the syllabus, getting ready for Plato
Readings: None
Assignments: None

Week 2

Monday
September 30

Author: Plato
Readings: *The Republic*, pp. 1-70 [Books I & II]
Assignments: Reading Assignment #1

Wednesday
October 2

Author: Plato
Readings: *The Republic*, pp. 71-185 [Books III-V]
Assignments: Reading Assignment #2

Week 3

Monday
October 7

Author: Plato
Readings: *The Republic*, pp. 186-251 [Books VI-VII]
Assignment: Reading Assignment #3

Wednesday
October 9

Author: Plato
Readings: *The Republic*, pp. 252-345 [Books VIII-X]
Assignments: Reading Assignment #4

Week 4

Monday
October 14

Author: Zamyatin
Readings: *We*, first ¼ (pp. 3-58)
Assignments: Reading Assignment #5

Wednesday
October 16

Author: Zamyatin
Reading: *We*, second ¼ (pp. 59-113)
Assignments: Reading Assignment #6

Week 5

Monday
October 21

Author: Zamyatin
Reading: *We*, third ¼ (pp. 114-170)
Assignments: Reading Assignment #7

Wednesday October 23	<u>Author:</u> Zamyatin <u>Reading:</u> <i>We</i> , fourth ¼ (pp. 171-end) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #8
Week 6	
Monday October 28	<u>Author:</u> Orwell <u>Reading:</u> <i>1984</i> , first ¼ (pp. 1-81) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #9
Wednesday October 30	<u>Author:</u> Orwell <u>Reading:</u> <i>1984</i> , second ¼ (pp. 81-156) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #10
Week 7	
Monday November 4	<u>Author:</u> Orwell <u>Reading:</u> <i>1984</i> , third ¼ (pp. 156-224) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #11
Wednesday November 6	<u>Author:</u> Orwell <u>Reading:</u> <i>1984</i> , fourth ¼ (pp. 225-end) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #12
Week 8	
Monday November 11	<u>NO CLASS, VETERANS DAY</u>
Wednesday November 13	<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 #13
Week 9	
Monday 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 #14

Wednesday November 20	<u>Author:</u> Atwood <u>Reading:</u> <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> , third ¼ (pp. 151-223) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #15
Week 10	
Monday 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 #16
Wednesday November 27	<u>Topic:</u> The suburbs as dystopia <u>Reading:</u> Watch <i>Far From Heaven</i> (2002) <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #17
Week 11	
Monday December 2	<u>Topic:</u> How should we live in the era of big data and big tech? <u>Reading:</u> Watch <i>Black Mirror</i> , San Junipero <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #18
Wednesday December 4	<u>Topic:</u> Film: TBA, community choice <u>Reading:</u> Watch Film <u>Assignments:</u> Reading Assignment #18
Exam Week	
Tuesday, December 10, 8:30-10:20	<u>Topic:</u> Retrospective, Evaluations, Turn in Final Essay <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...really 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 30 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. The collaboration we do will come during class discussions.

No late work will be accepted for credit, but 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 in class (either on paper or on a device).

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 are this quarter.

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 shooting 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, or as you work on the final essay at the end of the quarter. (For the final essay 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 come see or e-mail us so we can think of ways to make it more comfortable. I stand ready to help you find ways to speak, 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 a lot on it, and a large portion of your grade depends a lot on it.

Discussion Facilitation

Summary

The idea of the discussion facilitators is to have one or two students who serve as facilitators of the discussion. There will be student facilitators for most of the classes that involve discussions of readings. Each of you will facilitate discussion twice during the quarter. You can sign up for the classes you want to facilitate on the facilitation sign-up sheet, which is on the course canvas site, on the “Collaborations” tab.

Specifics

Facilitators should begin each session by briefly letting everyone know (on the board and/or orally) what the plan is for discussion. Then, the discussion facilitators will get the class going on its exploration of the important ideas in the readings. Facilitators have some freedom to decide on the format of the class exploration. A few possibilities are sketched on the following page. *The facilitators' job is **not** to talk, **not** to stand in front of the class and lecture, **not** to lead the group around by the nose.* Their job is to get *everyone else* to engage in an energetic exchange of reactions, ideas, and opinions. I will help the facilitators by providing a set of questions for discussion, available on the course website in the “Pages” tab on the page “Questions to Guide Reading.” These are not an exhaustive list; they are merely some core questions for you to consider. Others are possible as well. Remember also facilitators have everyone’s reading assignments as a source to draw on.

In preparing their material, the facilitators should complete the readings well in advance and then meet to formulate the structure of the discussion they intend. Again, I will give you an idea of some major themes from the readings, but you should develop your own plan for how to get the class talking about those themes. The idea is for the discussion facilitators to inspire everyone to explore the reading in insightful ways. In preparing the questions you will use to prompt discussion, it is a good idea to refer to the section on “good discussion questions” below.

I also encourage facilitators to consult with me in developing your plan. Everyone should sign up early and spend lots of time preparing your class. In general, the more preparation facilitators do, the better the discussion goes.

The Rest of You

The existence of the discussion facilitators is **in no way** an opportunity for the rest of the class to take it easy. The discussion facilitators *guide* the discussion; they should by no means do most of the talking. Their role is to help *you* engage in an insightful discussion. Thus, the rest of the class should digest the reading as usual and come prepared to participate fully along the lines laid out by the facilitation group.

Good Discussion Questions

Good discussion questions are “open-ended.” That is, they have a complex answer and/or a range of possible answers. They are usually not “closed-ended,” meaning that there is a single, discrete, right answer. Good discussion questions are also *genuine*. 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, your question is genuine. You are really *asking*. 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. 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: “Does Socrates mean to say...?” 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. You can ask either descriptive or prescriptive questions in your facilitation (and during class discussions more generally).

In formulating good discussion questions for your facilitation, you should try for the heart of the matter. That is, try to come up with questions that are central to the reading's main themes and concerns, rather than questions about something that is clearly tangential.

Techniques for Planning a Discussion

These are just *some* possible structures. You should feel free to invent new ones as you like. Remember, though, the goal is to focus the class on a productive discussion of the readings. Don’t let a too-elaborate structure – with complicated activities, and markers, model-building, props, etc. – interfere with that primary goal.

Whole group—everyone engages in discussion together at one time. This is good because you can get a greater range of ideas and opinions with a larger group. Large groups are sometimes tricky to manage well though, so having a good set of stimulating questions is important so you can shape the discussion to move in insightful directions that you have thought out beforehand. Large-group can also be a more intimidating setting for participants to speak in.

Small-group discussion—the class is broken up into small groups to discuss. They can have the same topic to discuss, or they can have different topics. In **jigsaw**, the groups each discuss different aspects of a larger topic, and then they rejoin into a whole group to see how each group’s issues/conclusions fit together.

Rotate—each facilitator develops questions on a particular sub-topic of the day’s topic. The class is divided up into small groups so that there is the same number of small groups as there are discussion facilitators. Then, the facilitators move in shifts from group to group so that each leader has a

chance to lead each group. That way, each group gets a chance to discuss each aspect of the day's topic. At the end, you can bring the group back into whole-group to share insights.

Structured debates—two sides of a specific issue are pitted against each other, usually given roles to play, and their debate is moderated by a moderator.

Four-square—the facilitators set aside four corners labeled “agree,” “tend to agree,” “tend to disagree,” and “disagree.” They then make a statement, for example: “rationalism is a good thing.” Then each person in the class goes to the corner they decide best describes their reaction to the statement. The group in each corner discusses for a while why they agree or disagree with the statement. The class then can go back into large group to discuss the issue. At the end, the facilitators often ask if anyone would like to change corners. Those that do are asked to share why their position changed during the debate.

Brainstorming—the facilitators ask the class to come up with ideas about a given topic (say, “things you find appealing about D-503's life” and “things you find unappealing about D-503's life”). The product of that brainstorming (usually written on the board) can then serve as the basis for discussion, or it can be a way to sum up a discussion.

Fishbowl—here one small-group engages in discussion and the rest of the class observes their discussion. People then rotate into the fishbowl, usually by tapping someone else, until *everyone* has had a turn.

Role-playing—is a general technique that can be applied to any of the above methods. A person or group is given a role to play (rather than playing themselves), which gives them a certain point of view to argue from. This is particularly helpful when there is an issue you think most people (when playing themselves) will agree on; you can have people play roles that are in opposition to the common opinion (like defending Socrates's desire for censorship).

Each of these can be used in combination, or alone. Of course this list is not exhaustive—there are other possible techniques.

Also, be aware that there are several books in Megan's office on facilitation techniques that students are welcome to review or borrow. See Megan for more details.

Final Essay

The purpose of this exercise is to allow you to bring the material from the course (the texts/films and our discussions of them) into conversation with your *own* ideas of community.

We have encountered several communities this quarter:

- Socrates' *Kallipolis*
- D-503's OneState
- Winston Smith's Oceania
- Offred's Gilead
- *Far From Heaven*'s suburban Connecticut in the late 1950s
- San Junipero from *Black Mirror*

For this essay, think about the times you had strong reactions to one (or more) of these communities. What was your reaction? What about the community were you 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 discussing 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 2,000 words. It is due on December 10 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.