

Dr. Comer ([kcomer@rice.edu](mailto:kcomer@rice.edu))  
Office: Herring Hall 317, x3207  
Spring 2018

Class: M/W 2-3:15p, HUMA 119  
Office Hours: M/W 3:30-4:45 + appt.

## **ENGLISH 389/SWGS 389** **Youth Studies: Issues of Access**

Missy Elliott. Intertribal youth water projects. Brown Girl Surf and Project Wahine. What do these 21<sup>st</sup> century cultural expressions have in common, and how do they relate to checking out Houston bayous via kayak? This course brings them together through the concept of “access” and introduces students along the way to the fields of Youth Studies and Public Humanities.

Access suggests governmental initiatives – i.e. policies for access to public beaches or transportation systems that make getting to beaches and bayous possible. Access alerts us to indigenous governance claims – i.e. the competing sacred and historic claims of indigenous people to lands that today are occupied by settler citizens. Access suggests realms of imagination and art. Film and music, as much as public policies, create new understandings of the self and community as well as of space and place. A path-breaking film or song or popular story can alter cultural meanings of a place or a practice, make it more accessible to people who could not inhabit it previously.

Making use of “issues of access” as an analytic and practical point of departure, the course will think about youth culture as it offers English majors a chance to engage with issues beyond the classroom. One of our tasks is to put earlier youth cultures (of the 50s, of 1968, and then of Generation X) into conversation with Millennials. To do this we’ll study film, literature, history, theories of pop culture and political economy. Students will also be invited to contribute important start-up writing to the “Institute Gulf Coast,” a new initiative sponsored by the Institute for Women Surfers, directed by Dr. Comer. To train for the Institute Gulf Coast, we focus on the significance of healthy waterways for Houston as a bayou city. The south Texas coastal region (including lakes, bayous, estuaries, and bays) consists of massive tracts of undeveloped wild country. Yet few people know much about Houston waterways. One or two (optional) kayak excursions develop beginning water knowledge, and help us ask how we, as Rice university community members, can use water knowledge to create new cultures and advance policies appropriate to a post-Harvey urban future.

This course satisfies the non-canonical requirement for the English major and the critical race requirement for SWGS. Students should expect extended considerations of issues of cultural politics, race, indigeneity, sexuality, and gender. Students develop skills of close reading, critical thinking, and analytic writing, while deepening literary, historical, sociological, and theoretical knowledges. We also engage the question of producing humanities knowledges, and analytic writing, for the public.

### **Literature (at bookstore)**

Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963)  
Coupland, *Generation X* (1991)

### **Films**

*Rebel Without a Cause* (dir. Ray) 1955  
*West Side Story* (dir. Robbins) 1961

### **Films continued (on CANVAS \*)**

*1968 with Brokaw*, PBS 1968  
*Endless Summer* (dir. Brown) 1966  
*Big Wednesday* (dir. Milius) 1977  
*Reality Bites* (dir. Stiller) 1994  
*It Ain't Pretty* (dir. Soul) 2016  
SeaLevel TV (dir. O'Rourke)

### **Kayak Field Trip or Alternative Port of Houston Tour**

- Kayak fieldwork for Institute Gulf Coast – date is TBA (but later in the semester).
- KAYAK activities will take place on Green Bayou, outfitting by Bayou City Adventurers <http://bayoucityadventures.org/tours/index.html>
- Plan for 5 hours on a weekend, likely Saturday or Sunday morning. All equipment is provided and free. No experience needed. See me if you do not wish to do kayaking.
- Alternatively, do a Port of Houston tour in the Ship Channel, free, allow 2.5 hours, weekend schedules, advance reservations required. <http://porthouston.com/sam-houston-boat-tour/>

**Readings/Handouts:** All readings/films are required and should be done by the day the material is discussed. You will see on CANVAS additional material for students wanting to learn more on certain topics (as examples: surveillance, middle school, DACA, new media, youth activism, youth entrepreneurship, mental health, specific franchise events like *Harry Potter* or *Hunger Games*, and so on). I also have posted handouts on CANVAS, including tips for Reading Responses, essays, as well as brief “cheat sheets” about select theoretical readings.

**Assignments:** Summaries of reading, midterm, two shorter essays. Course participation.

- Reading Responses (1-2 pages, 3 responses). See handout on CANVAS (15% of grade).
- One shorter essay (6-7 pages), due Friday, February 16 (20% of grade).
- Take-home midterm exam on course conceptual materials, due March 9 (20% of grade).
- Final essay (30% of grade), two options: a) synthesize Gulf Institute materials and produce a submission of writing for the IWS website; b) addresses other topics. NOTE: Drafts of writing for Gulf Institute due last day of class, I will comment and return, and final revision due May 2. Other final essays due May 2.
- Class participation and attendance (15%).
- I will hand out prompts for all assignments at least a week in advance of due date.

**Office Hours:** Please note office hours on page 1. I have scheduled times that should accommodate most students. If you want to talk about the class, your writing, an assignment, the Gulf Institute project, the English or SWGS majors, or some other matter, please visit. Sooner is usually better than later if you need help or have questions.

**Policy on Electronic Devices in the Classroom:** Refrain from all electronic activities unrelated to our class while the class is in session. I take this policy seriously since our focused time together is a privilege and a group commitment. Individuals who violate the policy will be penalized by a reduction in participation grade. The policy intent is to allow laptops in the classroom but to ensure their use is exclusively educational.

**Policy on attendance and late arrival: ALWAYS COME TO CLASS.** It’s always best to come to class, even if you are tired, late, or underprepared. You will always do better in this or any class if you attend regularly. This is especially true during the most hectic parts of the semester.

**Disability Accommodation:** Rice University is committed to equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities. In keeping with the university's mission to provide an unsurpassed education, Disability Support Services (DSS) provides accommodations and support services. If you have a registered need, please see me and I will accommodate you; also be sure to visit DSS.

**Honor Code:** University policy requires Rice faculty to report suspected violations of the Honor Code to the Honor Council. Be sure to cite any source you use, to paraphrase any material you borrow that is not directly quoted, and to take special care to cite materials drawn from the Internet.

## Part I: Critical/Historical Toolkits

### WEEK 1

#### Jan 8 Introduction

Youth as Category of Analysis/Youth Studies  
Issues of Access  
Institute Gulf Coast & Public Humanities

Missy Elliott, "The Rain (Supa Dupa Fly)" 1997

(For more info: <http://www.dazeddigital.com/music/article/29353/1/why-missy-elliott-s-feminist-legacy-is-criminally-underrated>)

#### Jan 10 The Social Organization of Age

Austin & Willard, "Introduction" to *Generations of Youth* (1998) 1-20\*

Adulthood, Wiki\*

Adulthood, Parenting for Social Change\*

Maira & Soep, "Introduction," from *Youthscapes* (2005) xv-xxxv \*

THREE VOLUNTEERS: bring example of youth as "social formation" (Austin & Willard term)

### WEEK 2

#### Jan 15 M Martin Luther King Day

#### Jan 17 W Thinking Race/Youth/Geography (Chicago + New Orleans/Gulf + San Francisco)

Cathy Cohen, Chapters 1 & 2 from *Democracy Remixed: Black Youth and the Future of American Politics*

Krista Comer, Beaches as Spaces of Democracy: Center Hosts Women Surfers Conference (2017)

<https://west.stanford.edu/news/beaches-spaces-democracy-center-hosts-women-surfers-conference>

In class: Olivia VanDamme, City Surf Project. "More Love, More Waves, More Raditude" (2017)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zL7UYW\\_D5M&feature=share](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zL7UYW_D5M&feature=share) (7 min)

**Jan 19 FRIDAY: READING RESPONSE DUE (hard copy to Herring Hall, box on 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> floor)**

### WEEK 3

#### Jan 22 M Placing Indigenous Youth in Settler States

Patrick Wolfe, "Comparing Colonial and Racial Regimes," (2013) YouTube, 45 min\*\*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwj5bcLG8ic>

Native Like Water Intertribal Youth Organization <http://www.nativelikewater.org/>  
Video Shorts: <http://www.nativelikewater.org/videos/>

Dustinn Craig (Apache), "4wheelwarpony" (2008) experimental video/performance art  
<https://vimeo.com/1776390> (8 min)

#### Jan 24 W Historical Interventions: Myths of "the 50s Family"

Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, Intro & Chapter One (2000)\*\*

### WEEK 4

#### Jan 29 M Classic East Coast "Youth Problem" Film Statement, #1.

*West Side Story* (dir. Robbins) 1961\*

#### Jan 31 W Classic West Coast "Youth Problem" Film Statement, #2.

*Rebel Without a Cause* (dir. Ray) 1955\*

### READING RESPONSE DUE

### WEEK 5

#### Feb 5 M The Problem with No Name (East Coast Sexism)

Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963)

#### Feb 7 W Continue *The Bell Jar*

### WEEK 6

#### Feb 12 M Finish *The Bell Jar*

#### Feb 14 W Youth & 1968

Didion, "Slouching Towards Bethlehem" (1968)\*

*1968 With Tom Brokaw* (2008)\*

## Part II: West Coast ~~~~~ Gulf Coast

### WEEK 7

#### Feb 19 M Representing the Gulf Coast: Challenges & Possibilities

Existing Repertoire: Houston in Cinema, Literature

Our knowledge of Civil Rights history, environmental justice history?

“Ken Kesey’s Houston Acid Test,” <http://theragblog.blogspot.com/2010/11/ivan-koop-kuper-ken-keseys-houston-acid.html>

TSU Sit-in at Weingarten Supermarket Lunch Counter on Almeda, 1960

<http://abc13.com/news/civil-rights-protests-in-houston/1164468/>

Houston Civil Rights Movement

Part I (there are also Parts II, III) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A565aWT-5Pk> (6 min)

Houston activists selling tickets to March on Washington (1963)

<http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Houstonians-reflect-on-key-moment-in-civil-rights-4758985.php>

Brown, Black, and White in Texas, from Behken’s *Fighting Their Own Battles*

<https://southernspaces.org/2012/brown-black-and-white-texas>

National Women’s Conference 1977, Houston host

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1977\\_National\\_Women%27s\\_Conference](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1977_National_Women%27s_Conference)

feminist “Sisters of 1977” <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/sistersof77/conference.html>

Dr. Robert Bullard, TSU, Father of Environmental Justice <http://drrobertbullard.com/>

**Feb 21 W Cowboys, Option #1 for Representing Houston: The Famous Gilley’s**

*Urban Cowboy* (dir. Bridges) 1980

**Week 8**

**Feb 26 M Yuppie Xrs, Option #2 for Representing Houston: Remake of Linklater’s Classic *Slacker***

*Reality Bites* (dir. Stiller) 1994

**Feb 28 W West Coasts (Vancouver, LA, Baja): Generation X**

Douglas Coupland, *Generation X: Tales of an Accelerated Culture* (1991)

**Week 9**

**March 5 M** Continue Coupland + Postmodernity Reading

Ryan Moore, “‘And Tomorrow Is Just Another Crazy Scam’: Postmodernity, Youth, and the Downward Mobility of the Middle Class,” 253-271, in *Generations of Youth*, Austin & Willard.\*

**March 7 W Reading the Letter Inside**

Finish Coupland

**FRIDAY MARCH 9 TAKE HOME MIDTERM DUE (my box in Herring Hall)**

**Week 10**

March 12 & 14 – Spring Recess

**Week 11**

March 19 M **Exporting California Dreams**

*Endless Summer* (dir Brown) 1966\*

**March 21 W The Call of Water (anything but “moving inland”)**

*Big Wednesday* (dir. Milius) 1978\*

**Week 12**

**March 26 M Feminist Interventions**

*It Ain't Pretty* (dir. Soul) 2016

Harris, “Introduction” + Chapter One, from *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-First Century* (2003)

“Inside the Mind of Sachi Cunningham,” from SaltWater Daughter Series, SeaLevelTV (2015) (8 min)

**March 28 W Institute Gulf Coast Workshop**

Guest Lecturer, Eric Granquist. Kayaks & Water Knowledge

John R. Gillis, “The Blue Humanities” (2013)

<https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2013/mayjune/feature/the-blue-humanities>

Jack Davis, from *Gulf: The Making of an American Sea* (2017)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-sFKNMqeQM>

**READING RESPONSE DUE**

**Week 13**

April 2 M **Harvey, Petroculture, Hurricanes**

Roy Scranton, “When the Next Hurricane Hits Texas,” NYT (2016)

[https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/09/opinion/sunday/when-the-hurricane-hits-texas.html?\\_r=0&mtrref=www.google.com&assetType=opinion](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/09/opinion/sunday/when-the-hurricane-hits-texas.html?_r=0&mtrref=www.google.com&assetType=opinion)

Jim Blackburn, “A Texas Plan for the Texas Coast,” PBS 2017

<http://www.pbs.org/video/jim-blackburn-a-texas-plan-for-the-texas-coast-d9rmb/>

“Harvey’s Aftermath: Jim Blackburn” Rice University Cultures of Energy Podcast August 2017

<http://culturesofenergy.com/ep-88-harveys-aftermath-feat-jim-blackburn/>

Kevin MacDonnell, "Harvey, Horror, and Hope: Prospects for Gulf Coast Climate Change Mitigation" 2017. Rice University Cultures of Energy Blog.

<http://culturesofenergy.com/harvey-horror-and-hope-prospects-on-gulf-coast-climate-change-mitigation/>

April 4 W Tough Oil, Living Oil

LeManager, "Prologue" + "Introduction" from *Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century*, 1-19 (2015)\*

#### **Week 14**

April 9 M **Millennials**

Millennials, "29 Facts . . . See Millennials Differently," Infographic

<https://www.inc.com/gordon-tredgold/29-facts-that-might-make-you-see-millennials-differently-infographic.html>

Joel Stein, "Millennials, the Me Me Me Generation" *Time* 2013

<http://time.com/247/millennials-the-me-me-me-generation/>

Alex Williams, "Move Over, Millennials, Here Comes Generation Z" *New York Times* 2015

[https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/20/fashion/move-over-millennials-here-comes-generation-z.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/20/fashion/move-over-millennials-here-comes-generation-z.html?_r=0)

"How Youth in California are Expressing Culture and Truth"

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/how-youth-in-california-are-expressing-culture-and\\_us\\_594ffaa8e4b0f078efd982a0](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/how-youth-in-california-are-expressing-culture-and_us_594ffaa8e4b0f078efd982a0)

April 11 W Student Choice

#### **Week 15**

April 16 M Student Choice

April 18 W **Semester in Review**