12:00pm-2:50pm Room: Covel Commons
Instructor: Ifeanyi Dike Jr
Cluster 21 – “We need to talk about America: How (old) modern thought informs our thinking here and now.”
Syllabus – Spring 2019
Office hours - 12:00PM - 2:00PM &

“We need to talk about America: How (old) modern thought informs our thinking here and now.”

**Seminar Description:**

A consideration of representation in America through film, television, art, music and media. Study offers framework to question western conceptions of gender, gender-roles, sex, marginalization, race and intersectionality through exploration of selected classical readings and modern pop-culture material.

Examination and consideration of statements about such topics as feminism and consent as well as the influence of pop-culture on hot button issues. In addition, a consideration of theoretical and political stakes and implications of explored material.

Class meetings will consist of discussions and film screenings, and, along with assigned readings, homework, group projects and home viewings of films, music, art and media will serve as research and analysis for class discussions, written assignments, presentations and the final paper.

**Learning goals:**

Students will, during the course, draw modern time (contemporary as in within the last two decades) parallels to the ideas we have learnt in the past two quarters. Students will find areas where past and present ideas converge and diverge and why they might.

Students will continue to explore philosophical ideas but taking into account, cultural diversity, media variety. For example, expanding materials to include film, television, music, art and perspectives or topics that are inclusive of marginalized people.

This class is designed to encourage students to build their confidence by asking students to also source material relevant to the topics each week and bring them in because their voice too is relevant.

This class will work closely with students to encourage students to find their voice when writing think pieces or responding to prompts that call for their opinion directly or indirectly.
Students, at the end of this course should be able to engage subjects they feel they aren’t qualified to via their writing. For example men writing about feminism.

**Week 1: We need to talk about Monogamy.**
Introduction to class - syllabus and overview.

**Goal/Questions:**
The history of monogamy. Where does the idea of monogamy come from? Why is it the norm? Is technology ruining ideas about monogamy and relationships?
To rethink infidelity in a modern age. Is it possible to love more than one person at a time?
To reconsider fast food relationships, why it’s more rampant than ever.

**Materials**
Visual Album
Beyonce’s Lemonade

Ted Talk
Esther Perel - Rethinking infidelity
Helen Fischer - Technology hasn’t changed love

**Readings**
Excerpts from a Gwyneth Paltrow Interview on conscious uncoupling - (Instructor will provide via CCLE)

**Week 2: We need to talk about feminism**

**Goal**
Discussing first, second, third and fourth wave feminism. How they are all connected and why people keep fighting over them.
How to be a feminist ally if you are not a woman.

**Material**
Readings
Patu Antj Schrupp - A Brief History of Feminism
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie - Dear Ijeawele, a feminist manifesto in fifteen suggestions.

Ted Talk
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie - We should all be feminist.
Roxanne Gay - Confessions of a bad feminist
Week 3: We need to talk about Isolation

Goals/Questions

What are the types of loneliness and why they matter.
Why are we getting increasingly lonely despite having the world in apps at our fingertips?
When is isolation a bad thing?
Is social isolation the worst?
Individualistic vs Collective societies.

Material

Film
Cast away by Robert Zemeckis
Her directed by Spike Jonze

Readings
Daniel Dafoe - Robinson Crusoe (Selected pages)
Frank T Andrew - The Perils of Social Isolation
New York Times - How Social Isolation is Killing us

Week 4: We need to talk about Racism

Goals/Question:
Recognising implicit bias.
Recognising microaggression.
So you want to be Woke? How to talk about race in America.

Material

Readings
Eugene O'neill - Emperor Jones

Film
The Help by Tate Taylor
Selma directed by Ava Duvernay
Get Out by Jordan Peele
Schindler’s List by Steven Spielberg
Dear White People by Justin Simien

Ted Talk
Playlist - 9 talks to help you understand racism in America.

**Week 5: We need to talk about Immigration**

**Goals/Questions**
The history of immigration.
Legal vs illegal immigrants.
Why did people migrate. Why do people migrate?
Per Brexit and The Wall, why is immigration such a problem now? How is immigration harmful?
How is immigration beneficial?
Are illegal immigrants taking American jobs?
How about emigration? Why are westerners in less developed countries referred to expatriates?

**Material**
**Film**
Babel by Alejandro Gonzalez

**Readings**
TBD

**Ted Talk**
Timothy Graf - We don't need immigration caps, we need minimums

**Week 6: We need to talk about Consent**

**Goals/Questions**
The history of consent.
What is the acceptable definition of consent especially considering the 4th wave of feminism?
How to navigate consent without fear.
Does consent go both ways?
What responsibility do we have to always talk about consent especially in colleges.
The concept of revenge porn and assault online.

**Material**
**Readings**
Williams Shakespeare - Measure for Measure

Secondary reading material to be provided by students.
Week 7: We need to talk about mental health

Goal/Question
Destigmatizing mental health
Are we the age of depression? Why?
Do we all have a mental illness?
The romanticism of mental health illness in the modern age?
How to talk about mental health.

Material
Film
Silver Linings Playbook by David O’ Russell
We Need to Talk About Kevin by Lynne Ramsay
A Beautiful Mind by Ron Howard
Inside Out - Pixar

Reading
Foucault - Madness and Civilization
Supplementary reading to be provided by students.

Week 8: We need to talk about Queerness
*Final paper assigned

Goal?Questions
All the waves and history of queerness.
Understanding the difference between sexuality, sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity.
Reconciling queerness with religion?

Materials
Film
Moonlight by Barry Jenkins
Call me by your name by Luca Guadagnino
Carol by Todd Haynes
The Favourite by Yorgos Lanthimos
The Shape of Water by Guillermo Del Toro
Pose by Ryan Murphy

Visual
Janelle Monae - Dirty Computer
Reading
Giovanni’s Room by James Baldwin

Ted Talk
What the bible says about homosexuality by Kristin Saylor
Homosexuality, it’s about survival - not sex by James O’ Keefe

Week 9: We need to talk about environment
*Final paper rough draft due

Goals/Questions
The validity of global warming, myth vs fact.
The effects of humans on the environment.
Why we need to act fast, if at all we need to.
What is at stake and what can we do about it?

Material

Film
An Inconvenient Truth by Al Gore

Reading
Six Degrees by Mark Lynas
This Changes Everything by Naomi Klein
The Sixth Extinction by Elizabeth Kolbert
Secondary reading material to be provided by students.

Week 10: We need to talk about everything.
Wrap up of remaining class business, discuss an overview of the class this quarter.
*Final Paper final draft due today at beginning of class.
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Additional Information:
Grading: Your final grade will be calculated as follows:
Writings: 30%
Group Presentation: 15%
Homework: 15% TBD
Final Paper: 40%
All grades are final.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS: Homework papers and presentation assignments that are late are
marked down a letter grade – one full letter grade per day late beginning one minute after the due time. Hard copies of all assignments are required.

PLAGIARISM: To avoid plagiarism on essays and papers, please add footnotes when appropriate. Papers with stolen material will not be tolerated and will be given a failed grade. Electronic papers and/or submission to Turnitin.com may be required to protect against plagiarism.

UCLA UNDERGRADUATE WRITING CENTER (UWC): The UWC is a free resource that offers UCLA undergraduates one-on-one sessions on their writing. They can be contacted by phone at 310-206-1320 and by email at wcenter@ucla.edu, while appointments can be made online at www.wp.ucla.edu/uwc.

FILM SCREENINGS: Treat this opportunity with appreciation and respect. There will be no electronic devices allowed during film screenings. This includes no laptops.

HOMEWORK SCREENINGS: TBD

POP WRITING: There will be four pop writings in class. These writings may be given unannounced at any time during class at the discretion of the Instructor. Questions will include topics covered during lecture as well as questions about materials screened in class.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is required.

CLASS CONFLICTS: If there is a scheduled time conflict between this class and another class it is your choice whether or not to stay in this class, but please understand that you will not be able to make up group presentations as a result of the conflict. Conflicts may include overlapping of class starting and/or ending times or midterms and finals given by other classes that overlap with our class time. Ensure to discuss any such conflicts with me ahead of time.

GROUP PRESENTATION (Week 2 - Week 8): All students must participate in the group project. Students who aren't present during the group's presentation will not receive a grade on the project. Each student will be divided into groups of three (this will be posted in the first week of class). Each group will prepare a 30 - 40 minute presentation based on the class topic every week. Groups presenting must meet with instructor a few days before class to go over their material.

CELL PHONES: Please turn off cell phones in class. This includes all texting and phone calls, which will result in your removal from the classroom.

COMPUTERS: No computers will be allowed during film screenings or discussions.

CONTACT
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Office hour visits can be made by appointment. Time: Thursdays - 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM  
Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) at (310) 825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255. When possible, students should contact the CAE within the first two weeks of the term as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. For more information visit www.cae.ucla.edu.  
Schedule, assignments and other information on this syllabus are subject to change.