

## Reading Contemporary Cultures in English I

Class Time: 9:10-12:00 Tuesday

Classroom: B103 Humanities and Social Sciences Building II

Instructor: Shu-Ling Chen

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Tel.: 890-5309

Office Hours: 2:00-4:00 p.m. Tuesday

### Books Used:

Ackley, Katherine Anne, ed. *Essays from Contemporary Culture*. 5th edition. Boston: Thomson Heinle, 2004.

Berger, Jonah. *Magic Words: What to Say to Get Your Way*. New York: HarperCollins, 2023.

Bloom, Paul. *Psych: The Story of Human Mind*. New York: HarperCollins, 2023.

Desmond, Matthew. *Poverty, By America*. New York: Penguin, 2023.

Diamandis, Peter H. & Steven Kotler. *The Future Is Faster Than You Think*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020.

Epstein, David. *Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2019.

Foroohar, Rana. *Homecoming: The Path to Prosperity in a Post-Global World*. New York: Crown, 2022.

Grant, Adam. *Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know*. New York: Viking, 2021.

Huang, Laura. *Edge: Turning Adversity into Advantage*. New York: Penguin, 2020.

Sinek, Simon. *The Infinite Game*. Portfolio/ Penguin, 2019.

Stephens-Davidowitz, Seth. *Don't Trust Your Gut*. New York: HarperCollins, 2023.

Sunstein, Ass R. *Conformity: The Power of Social Influences*. New York: New York University Press, 2021.

### Course Description:

This course aims to increase students' English reading comprehension and strengthen their ability to use English efficiently. Students will also learn how to read and think critically. We will study chapters from eleven books published in recent years on topics such as learning, rethinking, magic words, success, bias, values, poverty, business, technology, and the future. We will also read various articles from *The New York Times*, *Time*, *OpenDemocracy*, *Al Jazeera*, and *Foreign Policy* on many current global issues, for example, Russia, Ukraine war, Japan's releasing wastewater, Iran's strict hijab laws, mental health, gender gap, BRICS's & Latin America's growing influence, Barbie, global food & debt crises, coups in Africa, globalization, ChatGP, AI, Maui wildfires, and climate crisis. We will read the selected chapters and articles critically and discuss them cross-culturally. Students need to give two group presentations on the texts and another on the world. In addition, to enhance their critical thinking and presentation skills, students have to make three short individual presentations on the issues studied in this class. They are expected to attend class prepared and participate vigorously in English in class discussions.

### Schedule:

Week 1. 9/12/23: Introduction

- Week 2. 9/19: **Reading and Thinking Critically:** “Reading Critically”, “Critical Reading”, “Critical Thinking”, “Michelle Yeoh’s 2023 Harvard Commencement Speech”, ““Stay loose, Be Smart, and Go with Love... and Then Leap. And Then Leap Again. And Then Leap Again”” & “It’s Simone Biles’s Most Daring Move — and You Can Do It, Too”
- Week 3. 9/26: **Learning & Rethinking:** (1) Epstein: Ch. 7 “Flirting with Your Possible Selves”, (2) “What Prigozhin's Death Reveals About Putin's Power in Russia” & “Europe Keeps Acting like It Can’t Defend Itself against Russia”
- Week 4. 10/3: (3) Grant: Ch. 1 “A Preacher, a Prosecutor, a Politician, and a Scientist Walk into Your Mind”, (4) “Brazil Is Ukraine’s Best Bet for Peace” & “Our Global Culture of War Means Guaranteed Profits for the Arms Industry”
- Week 5. 10/10: Holiday, No Class
- Week 6. 10/17: **Magic Words:** (5) Berger: Ch. 4 “Leverage Concreteness”, (6) “Japan Is Releasing Wastewater into the Pacific: What to Know about Radioactivity and Seafood”, “Iran Is about to Make Its Hijab Laws Even Stricter” & “How Podcasts Became a Symbol of China's Gen Z Feminist Movement”
- Week 7. 10/24: **Success:** (7) Bloom: Ch. 15 “The Good Life”, (8) “Why Does Everyone Feel So Insecure All the Time?” & “The Struggle to Explain the ‘Gender Well-Being Gap’”
- Week 8. 10/31: (9) Stephens-Davidowitz: Ch. 5 “The Long, Boring Slog of Success”, (10) “Can BRICS Create a New World Order?” & “EU Talks Show Latin America’s Growing Influence in Global Politics”
- Week 9. 11/7: **Midterm Examination**
- Week 10. 11/14: **Bias:** (11) Huang: “Introduction” & Ch. 10 “Turning Biases and Stereotypes in Your Favor”, (12) “Barbie Has Never Been a Great Symbol, but She’s an Excellent Mirror” & “It’s Not a Barbie World”
- Week 11. 11/21: **Values:** (13) Sunstein: Ch. 3 “Group Polarization”, (14) “Is a Global Food Crisis the New Normal?” & “How to Avoid Another Global Debt Crisis”
- Week 12. 11/28: **Poverty:** (15) Desmond: Ch. 1 “The Kind of Problem Poverty Is”, (16) “Season of Putsch: Why Have Coups Become Popular in Africa?” & “How Africa Can Avoid Getting Scrambled”
- Week 13. 12/5: **Business & Technology:** (17) Sinek: Ch. 1 “Finite and Infinite Games”, (18) “Zero-Sum Game” & “Ban or Embrace? Colleges Wrestle with A.I.-Generated Admissions Essays”
- Week 14. 12/12: (19) Foroohar: Ch. 14 “Digital Power to the People”, (20) “AI Poses Doomsday Risks— but That Doesn’t Mean We Shouldn’t Talk about Present Harms Too” & “The Heated Debate over Who Should Control Access to AI”
- Week 15. 12/19: **The Future:** (21) Diamandis & Kotler: Ch. 13 “Threats and Solutions”, (22) “After the Hottest Month in History, We Need to Do More”, “The Climate Crisis and Colonialism Destroyed My Maui Home. Where We Must Go from Here” & “Why the Climate Crisis Is a Care Crisis—And How We Can Avert It”
- Week 16. 12/26: Presentations on the World
- Week 17. 1/2/24: **Final Examination**
- Week 18. 1/9: Questions and Answers

### Grading Policy:

Attendance: 10%

Participation: 15%

Two Group Presentations: 20%

Group Presentation on the World: 5%

Three Individual Presentations: 5%

Midterm Examination + Final Examination: 45%

### Two Rules:

If you miss class over 3 times, you will get 0 for Attendance unless you have a good reason.

Please be on time. Being late 3 times equals 1 absence.