

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

Office: A407 Humanities and Social Sciences Building I

E-mail: slchen@gms.ndhu.edu.tw

Tel.: 890-5309

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

Books Used:

Ackley, Katherine Anne, ed. *Essays from Contemporary Culture*. 5th edition. 2004.

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

Desmond, Matthew. *Poverty, By America*. 2023.

Diamandis, Peter H. & Steven Kotler. *The Future Is Faster Than You Think*. 2020.

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

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

Hasan, Mehdi. *Win Every Argument: The Art of Debating, Persuading, and Public Speaking*. 2023.

Kakutani, Michiko. *The Great Wave: The Era of Radical Disruption and the Rise of the Outsider*. 2024.

Parrish, Shane. *Clear Thinking: Turning Ordinary Moments into Extraordinary Results*. 2023.

Rose, Todd. *Collective Illusions: Conformity, Complicity and the Science of Why We Make Bad Decisions*. 2022.

Sharma, Robin. *The Wealth Money Can't Buy: The 8 Hidden Habits to Live Your Richest Life*. 2024.

Stephens-Davidowitz, Seth. *Don't Trust Your Gut: Using Data to Get What You Really Want in Life*. 2023.

Varol, Ozan. *Awaken Your Genius: Escape Conformity, Ignite Creativity & Become Extraordinary*. 2023.

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 twelve books published in recent years on topics such as rethinking, winning arguments, success, values, poverty, technology, and coping with global crises, etc. We will also read various articles from *The New York Times*, *Time*, *Al Jazeera*, and *CNN* on many current global issues. For example, Israel-Palestine conflict, Russia-Ukraine war, Modi's influence in the world, labor-related issues, Britain's riots, the E.U. elections, the Olympic women's boxing gender controversy, mental health, American economy and politics, Afrophobia, A.I., Google's monopoly ruling, Bangladesh's future, Mexico's first female president, and the climate crisis, etc. 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. 9/10/24: Introduction

Week 2. 9/17: Holiday, No Class

Week 3. 9/24: **Reading and Thinking Critically:** “Reading Critically”, “Critical Reading”, “Critical Thinking”, “Melinda French Gates’ Speech at 2024 Stanford Commencement” & Sharma: Ch. 6-Ch. 8 (18-24)

Week 4. 10/1: **Thinking & Rethinking:** (1) Parrish: Part 5 “Wanting What Matters”, (2) “Gaza Is the Fate of Humanity” & “Solidarity with Palestine Must Be about Decolonisation, Not Just Ceasefire”

Week 5. 10/8: (3) Grant: Ch. 1 “A Preacher, a Prosecutor, a Politician, and a Scientist Walk into Your Mind”, (4) “Ukraine Steps up Strikes into Russia as Moscow Pushes Ahead in the East” & “What Modi 3.0 Means for the World”

Week 6. 10/15: **Win Arguments:** (5) Hasan: Ch. 5 “Listen, Don’t (Just) Speak”, (6) “Britain’s Violent Riots: What We Know” & “‘The Center Did Hold.’ Key Takeaways from the E.U. Elections”

Week 7. 10/22: **Success:** (7) Varol: Ch. 10 “Look Where Others Don’t Look”, (8) “Japan Needs Foreign Workers. It’s Just Not Sure It Wants Them to Stay.” & “Some Countries Are Trying a Four-Day Workweek. Greece Wants a Six-Day One.”

Week 8. 10/29: (9) Stephens-Davidowitz: Ch. 5 “The Long, Boring Slog of Success”, (10) “Questions and Answers: The Olympic Women’s Boxing Gender Controversy” & “Imane Khelif and Western Delusions of White Innocence”

Week 9. 11/5: **Midterm Examination**

Week 10. 11/12: **Values:** (11) Bloom: Ch. 15 “The Good Life”, (12) “You’re Only as Smart as Your Emotions” & “Childhood Trauma Damages Society – Why Aren’t Our Leaders Recognising It?”

Week 11. 11/19: (13) Rose: Ch. 9 “Living in Truth”, (14) “America Needs a New Economic Model” & “The Right-Wing Lurch of X under Elon Musk”

Week 12. 11/26: **Poverty:** (15) Desmond: Ch. 1 “The Kind of Problem Poverty Is”, (16) “Afrophobia Is Destroying the African Dream” & “How a Sugar Industry Stamp of Approval Hid Coerced Hysterectomies”

Week 13. 12/3: **Technology:** (17) Foroohar: Ch. 14 “Digital Power to the People”, (18) “A.I. May Save Us or May Construct Viruses to Kill Us” & “Google Has an Illegal Monopoly on Search, Judge Rules. Here’s What’s Next”

Week 14. 12/10: **Coping with Crises:** (19) Kakutani: Ch. 9 “Resilience in the VUCA-Verse: Coping with Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity”, (20) “After Hasina: Cautious Optimism for Bangladesh’s Future” & “The Meaning of Mexico’s First Female President”

Week 15. 12/17: (21) Diamandis & Kotler: Ch. 13 “Threats and Solutions”, (22) “How to Avoid a Climate Backlash”

Week 16. 12/24: Presentations on the World

Week 17. 12/31: **Final Examination**

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.