

Reading Contemporary Cultures in English (II)

Class Time: 9:10-12:00 Tuesday

Classroom: B103 Humanities and Social Sciences Building II

Instructor: Shu-Ling Chen

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Phone: 890-5309

Office Hours: 2:00-4:00 Tuesday

Books Used:

Amen, Daniel G. *You, Happier: The 7 Neuroscience Secrets of Feeling Good Based on Your Brain Type*. 2022.

Brooks, Arthur C. & Oprah Winfrey. *Build the Life You Want: The Art and Science of Getting Happier*. 2023.

Brooks, David. *How to Know a Person: The Art of Seeing Others Deeply and Being Deeply Seen*. 2023.

Conway, Ed. *Material World: A Substantial Story of Our Past and Future*. 2023.

Edmondson, Amy. *Right Kind of Wrong: The Science of Failing Well*. 2023.

Goshgarian, Gary, ed. *The Contemporary Reader*. 11th ed. 2013.

Grant, Adam. *Hidden Potential: The Science of Achieving Greater Things*. 2023.

Harari, Yuval Noah. *Nexus: A Brief History of Information Networks from the Stone Age to AI*. 2024.

Hari, Johann. *Stolen Focus: Why You Can't Pay Attention—and How to Think Deeply Again*. 2022.

Housel, Morgan. *Same as Ever: A Guide to What Never Changes*. 2023.

Kahn, Jeremy. *Mastering AI: A Survival Guide to Our Superpowered Future*. 2024.

Mlodinow, Leonard. *Emotional: How Feelings Shape Our Thinking*. 2022.

Suleyman, Mustafa & Michael Bhaskar. *The Coming Wave: Technology, Power, and the 21st Century's Greatest Dilemma*. 2023.

Course Description:

This course is designed to help students better understand various aspects of contemporary cultures and further strengthen their critical reading and thinking skills. After learning how to read critically, we will study chapters from 11 books published in recent years, along with over 20 articles chosen by both the students and me from sources such as *The New York Times*, *BBC*, *CNN*, *The Guardian*, *Al Jazeera*, *WSJ*, and *DW*, among others. These chapters and articles cover a wide range of topics, including hidden potential, happiness, emotions, communication, AI, technology, gender issues, California wildfires, Syria, South Korea, France, the space race, climate change, and Trump's policies on immigration, Gaza, and U.S. A.I.D., etc. We will read and discuss these chapters and articles critically. Students will be required to give two group presentations on the texts, as well as another presentation introducing Taiwan to the world. In addition, to enhance their critical thinking and presentation skills, students must make three short individual presentations on the issues covered in this course. Students are expected to come to class prepared and participate in class discussions in English.

Schedule:

Week 1. 2/18/25: Introduction

Week 2. 2/25: Goshgarian, "Introduction: How to Read and Write Critically" (1-23), Housel, "Best Story Wins" & "Harder Than It Looks and Not as Fun as It Seems" (56-66, 159-163)

- Week 3. 3/4: (1) Grant, Chapter 2: “Human Sponges” (43-60, 251-253), (2) “We Australians Have Learned from Our Bushfires. Can Californians?” & “What Did the World Learn from Syria?”
- Week 4. 3/11: (3) Brooks, Chapter 1: “Happiness Is Not the Goal, and Unhappiness Is Not the Enemy” (1-23, 209-212), (4) “A Man’s Suicide Leads to Clamour around India’s Dowry Law” & “What Are Wind Phones, and How Do They Help with Grief?”
- Week 5. 3/18: (5) Amen, Chapter 1: “The Seven Secrets to Happiness No One Is Talking About” (3-23, 313-314), (6) “How Will Weight-Loss Drugs Change Our Relationship with Food?” & “‘It’s Like a Secret’: Why Do the Leguminati Want to Change the Way We Eat?”
- Week 6. 3/25: (7) Mlodinow, Chapter 9: “Managing Emotions” (183-202, 228-230), (8) “South Korea Plane Crash Kills 179 with Investigation into Cause under Way” & “Why South Korea Has Been Gripped by Political Instability?”
- Week 7. 4/1: (9) Hari, Chapter 2: “Cause Two: The Crippling of Our Flow States” (46-62, 300-301), (10) “The 5-Hour Rule: How to Turn a Wasted Day into a Successful One” & “Hello Kitty at 50: The Mouthless Face That Launched an \$80 Billion Empire”
- Week 8. 4/8: (11) Brooks, Chapter 6: “Good Talks” & Chapter 7: “The Right Questions” (71-93, 280-281), (12) “How China-Taiwan Same-Sex Marriages Get Caught in Politics” & “When the Supreme Court Overturned Roe v. Wade, It Opened the Floodgates for Abortion-Related Lawsuits”
- Week 9. 4/15: **Midterm Examination**
- Week 10. 4/22: (13) Edmondson, Chapter 1: “Chasing the Right Kind of Wrong” (23-48, 301-304), (14) “The U.S. A.I.D. Chaos Already Has Dire Effects” & “What’s Most Frightening about Trump’s Gaza Ravings”
- Week 11. 4/29: (15) Conway, Chapter 17: “Jelly Rolls” (397-412, 459), (16) “Mining the Pacific – Future Proofing or Fool’s Gold?” & “Trump Again Vows to Block Japanese Firm’s Controversial Takeover of US Steel”
- Week 12. 5/6: (17) Kahn, Chapter 2: “The Voice Inside Your Head” (39-55, 260-262), (18) “‘We’d Rather Perish’: Protests Roil South Korean Women’s University over Plan to Admit Male Students” & “France Is in a Deep, Deep Hole”
- Week 13. 5/13: (19) Harari, Chapter 10: “Totalitarianism: All Power to the Algorithms?” (348-360, 467-468), (20) “US Supreme Court to Hear TikTok Challenge to Potential Ban” & “Big Tech Is Powering Trump’s Immigration Crackdown”
- Week 14. 5/20: Learning Culture from a Movie
- Week 15. 5/27: (21) Suleyman, Chapter 12: “The Dilemma” (205-222, 312-313), (22) “With Dreams of a Lunar Outpost, China Takes New Risks in Space Race with U. S.” & “Where Are the US and China on Addressing Climate Change?”
- Week 16. 6/3: Group Presentations: Presenting Taiwan to the World
- Week 17. 6/10: **Final Examination**

Grading Policy:

Attendance: 10%

Participation: 15%

Midterm + Final Examinations: 45%

Two Group Presentations: 20%

Three Individual Presentations: 5%

Group Presentation on Taiwan: 5% (Evaluated by the Whole Class)

Two Rules:

If you miss class more than 3 times, you will receive a 0 for Attendance unless you have a valid reason.

Please be on time. Being late to class three times counts as one absence.