

Public Policy and Community Service, 450  
The Senior Seminar  
Place, Identity, Policy, and Justice: The Politics of Community Building  
Spring Semester, 2011

Tal Stanley  
Appalachian Center  
(W) ext. 6900  
(H) 944.3859  
[tastanle@ehc.edu](mailto:tastanle@ehc.edu)  
Office Hours: M-F 8:00—4:00, and by appointment

The Senior Seminar in Public Policy and Community Service is the capstone of years of learning and work for students in the Public Policy and Community Service degree program. Like all PPCS courses, students are encouraged to understand this undertaking as a semester-long conversation. In part, coming as it does at the end of students' undergraduate academic program, the Senior Seminar serves as a summation, a wrapping up, of what we have done and learned together. Questions and issues of place, identity, culture, conflict, race, gender, service and charity, citizenship, problem-solving education, social capital, justice, democracy, socio-economic class, poverty, empowerment, leadership, and many others run through this course. Students come to the capstone seminar having worked as volunteers in direct service delivery, community organizers, staff members in agencies and organizations, program planners, researchers, among others. More than a wrapping up of students' academic and community work in the PPCS program, this course is also a time of questioning about vocation and future direction. In this way, this part of the years-long conversation can also be understood as the next step of a long journey.

Central to this journey in which you have been engaged these recent years is knowing that your work in classrooms and in communities has come to express who you are. Along the way, you have discerned the ways in which "who you are" is given voice and expression in what you aspire and the world that you dream to inhabit. Coming as it does at the summation, the wrapping up, of your academic career at Emory & Henry, this conversation, this point in your journey, is about understanding your story of who you are in this place, just now. However, and more fundamentally, it is about understanding, articulating perhaps for the first time who it is that you are becoming and why. Less a completion than an embarking, the work required of us at this point in the journey is careful reflection, acceptance of the most difficult and enduring questions, openness and empathy with others and ourselves, and a courageous honesty that does not flinch before either the known or the unknown.

The specific focus for our conversation this semester is to question what it is that constitutes a community in a place, and, drawing on Daniel Quinn's insights, whether we, individually and collectively, are leavers or takers in the communities of our lives. Throughout the tenure of study in Public Policy and Community Service classes, students struggle with, discuss, and consider what it means for persons to be in community together in a place. This semester-long conversation provides opportunities for you, soon to graduate, to draw on all you have learned and experienced and thought and written, from the sum total of why you are, to think critically and systematically about the community you wish to inhabit, the nature of the communities you are called to build, both in your private and public life. One of the goals of the PPCS program is to equip persons with the tools to build strong communities. This conversation, our last together in the sequence of PPCS classes, asks you to struggle with the very difficult questions of the interrelationship between your identity and the processes of community building.

Our conversations and reflections, your writing will focus on six questions, and the integration of those questions with your service work.

1. What are the myths, understandings, assumptions, and whisperings that have constituted your life? Are you a Taker or a Leaver? Why? Do you want to change? What would be a way of doing that? (Quinn)
2. What constitutes a community? What do you bring to the work of community building? What is the relationship of community to place? (Naylor)
3. With what voice does your place speak? What does it say to you about who you are? How does your place shape your values and your politics? (Pancake)
4. What are your webs? What do you do with the webs of your life? Are you and Aaron or a Blair? (Willis)
5. What is your membership? What is the membership to which you belong? What is the membership to which you are working to belong? (Berry)
6. What are the necessary relationships for you in your place? What would it mean to exist by virtue of those relationships? What does this say about justice? (Theobald)

The goals for this course are:

1. Use what students have learned in a major project/s with a community organization or agency. Individual projects will be related to that student's focus area.
2. Students will make connections between their own lives, their local community service-learning work, and national and global issues, institutions, and events.
3. Students will better understand how they can use their knowledge of public policy and community service in the places where they will reside after graduation and throughout their lives.
4. Students will better understand the operation and adequacy of economic, cultural, and political arrangements in the United States and the world; will think critically about and begin to envision the type of society in which they wish to live; and think about how political change occurs.
5. Students will articulate their own vision for a healthy community, drawing on the intersection of place, identity, policy, and justice, as well as building on key concepts in the PPCS curriculum, such as social capital, mediating structures, hegemony, ideology, culture.

Learning objectives for the course are:

1. Successful completion of the project with a thorough written evaluation of the work and what was learned in the work.
2. Effective demonstration and articulation of an understanding of the connections between local and personal issues and questions and national and global issues, institutions, and events—both in their lives and in the project.
3. Students will write an autobiography that in part expresses their knowledge of the links between public policy and community service and the major themes and issues examined throughout the PPCS program.
4. Students will formulate a statement of their vision for a community and how they might begin to help bring that vision to reality, including the values, ideas, alignments, and skills that will be required to bring that community into being.



To help us with to help us with this good but difficult work, we turn to a range of writings, listening to people from a range of backgrounds tell the stories of who they are and the kinds of communities they wish to inhabit. Our conversation begins from the premise that autobiography and story are central to the work of the sociological imagination, linking our stories and self-understandings to issues and questions that are global in scope. While they may not do so explicitly, all of these writings offer a way of talking about culture, hegemony, ideology, internalized oppression, privilege, and the host of other issues of justice. We begin our conversation by re-reading a text that we read in the first PPCS course, C. Wright Mills' *Sociological Imagination*. Daniel Quinn's *Ishmael* offers defining themes, questions, and structure for this conversation. More pointedly, Quinn asks of us if we are prepared to resist the messages "mother culture" whispers into our ears. Quinn lays out a choice whether we will be leavers or takers. This question will follow us throughout the semester. Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* narrates through individual lives, the intersections, triumphs, and failures of a community of persons in a neighborhood in Brooklyn. Naylor but adds the layer of gender and how it works against and for community in a world damaged and diminished through racism and the forces of class. Ann Pancake's new novel, *Strange as this Weather Has Been* is perhaps the most powerful novel written about Appalachia, place, class, and politics since Denise Giardina's *Storming Heaven* was published nearly eighteen years ago. Pancake provides many opportunities for us to examine the intersection of place with class, gender, and social activism. Meredith Sue Willis' autobiographical novel, *Trespassers*, is about a young West Virginia woman's search for identity, selfhood, independence, freedom, and place, but the finding and discerning of all that in the most unexpected places among the most unexpected of communities. Willis's novel raises many of the same questions first raised in PPCS 100 when we read Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams* about our vision for service and its connection to our own identity and citizenship. Willis also asks us to consider how we can become native to a place that is not the place of our birth, suggesting the defining force place can have for personal identity and political activism. Wendell Berry's *Hannah Coulter* is also a story of place, but importantly of membership in a place and the community forged from that membership. The last text we shall read is Paul Theobald's *Teaching the Commons*. Neither autobiography or fiction, this text offers us insight into what it might be to undertake work that joins place with an understanding of justice and what might be involved in that work.

There is much here to read and discuss, in addition to the daily conversations about projects and community work, as well as insights and reflections that individuals will bring to our twice-weekly gathering. I ask that you put forth your best effort to address all the material that is before us, and to utilize this opportunity to its fullest potential. I ask for your honesty, patience, flexibility, understanding, hard work, best effort, and diligence.

This conversation will require much of you because you have much to offer. All of us around this table will be challenged, pushed to learn and grow and think in ways that we might have once thought we were not capable. We come together to learn, to think, to continue to build a community among us, to chart a course for service, to tell our stories, to celebrate who we are and who we are becoming, and to build a vision for our life's work in all the places of our lives. Welcome to this conversation. Welcome to this journey.



### Readings

Berry, Wendell Hannah Coulter. Washington, D.C.: Shoemaker & Hoard, 2004 **(B)**

Berry, Wendell. *Inverting the Economic Order*.

Mills, C. Wright. *The Promise of the Sociological Imagination*. **(Mills Handout)**

Naylor, Gloria. *The Women of Brewster Place*. New York: Viking Press, 1982. **(N)**

Oliver, Mary. *The Journey*. **(Oliver Handout)**

Oriah Mountain Dreamer. *The Invitation*. **(Mountain Dreamer Handout)**

Pancake, Ann. *Strange as this Weather Has Been*. Washington, D.C.: Shoemaker & Hoard, 2007. **(P)**

Quinn, Daniel. *Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit*. New York: Bantam, 1992, 1995. **(Q)**

Reason, Peter. *Justice, Sustainability, and Participation*.

Theobald, Paul. *Teaching the Commons*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997. **(T)**

Willis, Meredith Sue. *Trespassers*. Maplewood, New Jersey: Hamilton Stone Editions, 1997. **(W)**

### Class Schedule and Readings Assignments

<b>Class</b>	<b>Readings and Assignments</b>
Tu 01.11	Introduction
Th 01.13	Mills
Tu 01.18	Q pages 3-75; <b>Service Contracts Due</b>
Th 01.20	Q pages 79-148
Tu 01.25	Q pages 151-207
Th 01.27	Q pages 211-263
Tu 02.01	N pages 1-74
Th 02.03	N pages 75-127
Tu 02.08	N pages 129-192
Th 02.10	P pages 1-99
Tu 02.15	P pages 100-180
Th 02.18	P pages 181-259
Tu 02.22	P pages 260-357
Th 02.24	Reason and Berry handouts: <i>Justice, Sustainability, and Participation; Inverting the Economic Order</i>
Th 02.24	<b>LYCEUM: BROTHER TOWNS (REQUIRED)</b>
Tu 03.01	W pages 1-69
Th 03.03	W pages 70-141; <b>CLA Testing, McGowan Room, Kelly Library: Required</b>
Tu 03.15	W pages 142-212
Th 03.17	<b>Autobiographies due, class circle</b>
Tu 03.22	W pages 213-274
Th 03.24	B pages 1-72
Tu 03.29	B pages 73-134
Th 03.31	B pages 135-186
Tu 04.05	T Introduction, Chapter 1
Th 04.07	T Chapters 2-3
Tu 04.12	T Chapters 4-5
Th 04.14	T Chapters 6-7
Tu 04.19	T Chapters 8-9
Th 04.21	The Sociological Imagination, revisited
Tu 04.26	<b>Journals Due; Project Essay Due</b>

Course Requirements

Grading System		Grading Scale	Letter Grade	Percentage
Quiz	120	600-552	A	100-92
Participation	80	551-540	A-	91-90
Autobiography	100	539-528	B+	89-88
Journal	100	527-492	B	87-82
Project	100	491-480	B-	81-80
Exam	100	479-468	C+	79-78
		467-432	C	77-72
Total	600	431-420	C-	71-70
		419-408	D+	69-68
		407-372	D	67-62
		371-360	D-	61-60
		359—	F	59—

**Quizzes**

There will be 14 unannounced 10-point quizzes on the reading material. The lowest two grades will be dropped. There will be no make-up quizzes. If the student misses class and hence a quiz because of a college-sponsored and announced event (sports team travel) or if the student is ill and misses class and hence a quiz, the student may make that quiz up. However, the student must do this within three days of the absence and on the student's own initiative; the instructor will not take responsibility for asking the student to take the make up quiz. Moreover, should a student arrive late to class, hence missing a quiz, and it is a tardiness not related to either of the outlined reasons, the student may not make up that quiz.

**Final Exam**

Format will be discussed in class.

**Autobiography**

As part of this semester-long conversation, and as a continuation of the essay students write in preparation for the senior capstone work, students will write an autobiography. The working out of this autobiographical essay will incorporate service work, class readings, and discussion over the student's tenure in the PPCS program, and personal insights. The details for this essay will be discussed in the first weeks of class.

**Class Participation**

Students are expected to come prepared to discuss the assigned reading and their senior projects each class session. You will be graded on (a) the seriousness of your effort (i.e., whether or not you come to class prepared,

and whether or not you are physically, emotionally, and intellectually present); (b) the nature of your interaction with other class members (i.e., whether you listen carefully and respectfully to what others say, your willingness to challenge others and defend your points of view, and whether you provide opportunity and encouragement for others to participate); (c) your willingness to interact thoughtfully with guest speakers; (d) your willingness to share experiences related to your senior project; (e) your participation in any formal oral presentations related to your project and/or various assigned topics; (f) successful completion of various assessment instruments used in the seminar; and (g) the quality of your overall effort. **Part of effective class participation also means that all cell phones and paging devices will be turned off. Students who are observed using cell phones, texting, utilizing other social networking programs or devices, or employing laptops during class will find their class participation grade significantly and adversely affected.**

### **Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all classes and the Lyceum on February 24. You will be penalized for more than one absence (**5 points will be deducted from the final grade for each absence over one**).

### **Senior Project**

The nature, expectations, responsibilities, learning goals, and deadlines of each student's senior project will be determined through conversations involving the student, site supervisor, and the course instructor. After an understanding has been reached, a contract will be drawn up to be signed by all participating parties. This will occur during the first two weeks of class.

Senior project grades will be based on (a) faithfulness in meeting all deadlines and commitments set forth in the project contract; (b) the quality of the reflection writing related to the project throughout the semester; (c) quality of the final project essay; (d) willingness to maintain an open and honest dialogue with all parties associated with the project; and, most importantly, (e) successful completion and the quality of the project as determined by the nature of the feedback from the project site supervisor and the instructor's assessment.

The final project essay is the student's final reflection on the semester's place-based work, focusing on lessons learned, mistakes made, successes, thoughts raised, questions, issues, growth, etc.... The details for the essay will be addressed in the first weeks of the semester.



## **Journal**

### What Journals Are Not

Journals are not to be confused with diaries, notebooks, or class notes. Diaries usually do little more than log external events ("My parents came to visit this weekend...") with occasional personal comments regarding those events, ("I wish they would come more often..."). Notebooks usually do little more than summarize readings ("The author concluded that..."). Class notes do little more than reflect activities and discussions, which have taken place in class.

### What Journals Are

Journals frequently resemble diaries, notebooks, and class notes because the writer of a journal sometimes responds to external events, or reacts to the reading, or reflects on something that has been said in class.

Journals, however, represent a distinctive kind of writing. First, they articulate intellectual pilgrimage and autobiography. Students engaged in writing journals find out very quickly that they are putting a very real part of themselves down on paper. To reveal something of one's thoughts and feelings is a very personal activity. It is such a personal activity that some students attempt to stay on a fairly objective level by "reporting" what they have read and thought (but still keeping an academic cocoon securely around them). Other students find out, however, that writing a journal becomes a more authentic enterprise when the writer does not pretend toward objectivity but allows "the self" speak as well.

Second, journals provide an occasion for insights. Insights are those perceptions where an idea or fact integrates other materials or explains personal experience. The "light" suddenly dawns, and the pieces of a puzzle fall together for the first time! Insights may integrate intellectual understanding or personal experiences. The quest for and the articulation of such insights provide much of the excitement of keeping a journal.

Journals also provide an occasion to raise questions. Journals offer an opportunity to record questions, to speculate on how to answer them, and to understand why the question has come about in the first place. Questions



may document ignorance or curiosity, but when one knows why a question is important and what precisely one does not know, then there exists a significant kind of awareness.

Third, journals represent a tether, which binds a student to the subject matter of a class. By means of the journal, a student has an ongoing opportunity to respond to class activities, react to assigned readings and outside speakers, reflect on the service experience, engage in "dialogue" with comments the instructor has made, and explore various perspectives on the subject matter of the class as these appear in newspapers, magazines, and on film. In contrast to a research paper, which may be done in a short period of time, a journal provides a semester-long format for interacting with the subject matter of a particular class.

### The Contents of a Journal

The contents of a journal are limited only by the subject matter of the course and the writer's creativity, imagination, and breadth of experience. As a result, a journal often includes a variety of materials: personal reflection; comments on class discussions; reactions to films, tapes, newspaper and magazine articles; insights gained from readings and the service experience; personal work, cartoons and poetry; extended statements on issues of personal conscience.

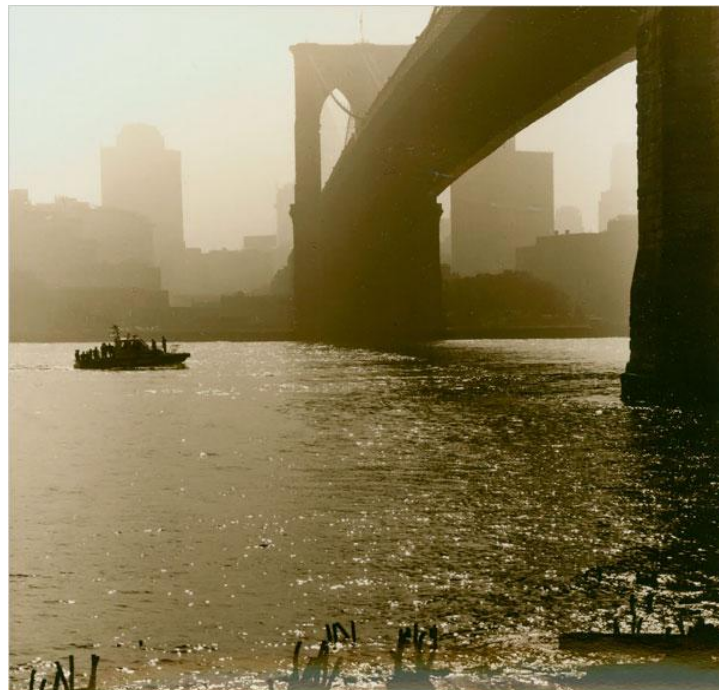
### Guidelines for Journals

1. Journals are to be kept in a folder for loose sheets of paper.
2. Make frequent entries in your journal. Productive journals contain entries made through the semester, with an average of three (3) to four (4) entries per week (minimum of three [3] a week). You should come to each class session with a journal entry related to the assigned reading for the day. At the beginning of each of these entries, you should write at least three complete thoughts, ideas, or reflections from the reading that you would be willing to share with the class. These thoughts could take the form of (a) an idea or passage in the reading you want to discuss; (b) a question about the reading; (c) a disagreement with some point in the reading; or (d) a response to an assigned question. Following these three items, you should write in depth on a particular aspect of the reading. Whenever possible, relate the reading to your senior project, past service experiences, your own life experience, and/or readings and discussions from other courses you have taken at E&H.

Once you have begun work on your senior project, you should write at least one entry a week reflecting on this work. Good ways to reflect on your project experience include asking yourself regularly (a) what you have learned and what your reactions are to what you have learned; (b) does what you have learned fit with other things you have thought about or heard about in classes or elsewhere; (c) and are you learning new things about yourself, about the community, about society. At the end of this outline is a set of questions designed to help you reflect on your work on your senior project.

3. Date your journal entries. Number your pages consecutively. This is helpful if at a later date you want to return to a topic you have previously discussed, or if you want to make a comment about one of your entries.
4. All entries must be **typed**.
5. Do not be reluctant to put your thoughts on paper. I am not interested in unnecessary verbiage, but I am interested in your insights, questions, comments, criticisms, and discoveries.

6. Use the journal as an opportunity for developing your own ideas about the subject matter taken up in class. For example, you may want to have several entries on the same subject to see if your thoughts change at various points during the semester.
7. Periodically during the semester, read your journal entries and write a "summary" entry: see if particular themes have appeared in earlier entries; see if you are able to answer questions you raised earlier in the semester; see if you can arrive at any conclusions based on your previous entries.
8. You must respond in your journal to all my written comments. These responses do not constitute separate entries. From time to time, the instructor may assign a particular journal prompt for your response.
9. The journal is a central part of the course. You must write regularly and follow the guidelines listed above. Bring your journal to class each day. I will collect the journal a number of times during the semester. **Five points will be deducted from the final course grade each time the journal is not up-to-date or satisfactory when I collect it.**
10. The following criteria will be used in grading journals.
  - (a) The seriousness of effort--how regularly you write in the journal; how thorough your entries are; how well you follow the guidelines described above; and how willing you are to engage in dialogue with the instructor by responding thoughtfully and honestly to his comments on and responses to your entries.
  - (b) The quality of the effort--how well you relate your project experience to the reading assignments and concrete questions provided by the instructor; how well you ground all of your responses in what we are reading and discussing in class; originality and diversity of the entries; honesty of the entries; willingness to take risks by tackling tough intellectual and personal issues; willingness to let the "self" speak; and willingness to challenge the instructor and assigned readings when you disagree with them.



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Below are some questions to help guide your reflections related to your senior project. Be sure to respond to the first two questions during the first week after you have begun work on the project.

1. Describe, in detail, your senior project. What does it involve? Describe the agency where you will be doing the project. Who is your project supervisor, and how would you describe your current relationship with him/her? How does your project relate to your Practicum experience and/or your focus area? What is the time line for your project?
2. As you begin your project, what are your major fears? What excites the most about the project? Are you off to a smooth start? If not, what obstacles are you facing? What do you hope to learn from your work on the project?
3. Describe in detail the work have you done this week on your project.
4. How do people see you at your project site? As a staff member? A friend? A student? What do you feel like when you are there? How has this changed over time?
5. What surprised or excited you the most this week while working on your project?
6. What was the best thing that happened to you in relation to your work on your project this week? Was it something someone said or did, something you did not say or do, or a feeling, an insight, and a goal accomplished?
7. What did you like least about your work on your project this week? Why?
8. In what ways, if any, are you finding your commitments related to your project difficult to keep? What is helping you to follow through with these commitments despite the difficulties you encounter?
9. What new skill(s) did you learn this week? What did you do that seemed to be effective or ineffective? What feeling or idea about you seemed especially strong this week?
10. Did you take (or avoid taking) some risk related to your project this week? What were things you wanted to do but didn't?
11. What did you discover about other people during your project work this week? Who was the most interesting person you met this week? Why? How did your feelings about any person change as a result of this week's activities?
12. Stop and assess the progress you have made so far on your project. What have you accomplished? What remains to be done?
13. Did you get an idea this week that would improve your work on the project?
14. How does what you have learned in your courses at E&H and in this seminar relate to and/or help you better understand various aspects of your project?

15. What do you perceive as the underlying cause(s) of the social problem(s) about your project? Elaborate on each. What do you suggest as strategies, policies, and/or programs that could be implemented to try to lessen these problems? Who do you think should take the responsibility for formulating and implementing your suggestions?

16. In what ways are you growing and learning from your project? Is it changing you in any way: your ideas, beliefs, habits, values, or goals?

