Columbia Journey Seminar – Fall 2015 Syllabus

The Columbia Journey Seminar (CJS) is the cornerstone of the Scholars Program. Anchored in the principles of community, exploration, and engagement, this year-long seminar is modeled on core classes and meets weekly for one hour. It brings First-Year Scholars together with Graduate Student Mentors (GSM's) completing their PhDs in different fields as well as faculty, administrators, and representatives from the community.

The theme of the Columbia Journey Seminar is inspired by the name of alma mater, “Columbia University in the City of New York.” Scholars will explore the concepts of identity and belonging both in the city and on campus through field trips and seminar discussions. Utilizing a stimulus and discussion model, Scholars should consider the ways in which each encounter – a lecture, film, neighborhood visit, interview with Columbia faculty, or tour of university spaces – shapes and is shaped by their experience as Columbia students.

Schedule/Readings

—Week of October 5-9th
CJS #1 – Introduction to CJS

—Week of October 12-16th
CJS #2 – The Immigrant City: Coming to New York, Coming to the U.S.
New York was for many years the principal port of entry for immigrants to the United States, particularly once Ellis Island became America's first Federal immigration station in 1890 (and its busiest until its closure in 1954). In this class, we will explore what it means to be an immigrant in light of New York’s immigrant history.

Preparatory Reading Assignment:
- E. B. White, *Here is New York* (1949) [excerpt]
  http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/25/opinion/sunday/the-immigrant-advantage.html?_r=0

—Week of October 19-23rd
CJS #3 – Genealogy
What are we, exactly, and where do we come from? How have our identities been shaped by events of the past over which we have no control? In what ways are our family’s stories also the stories of the places they have settled? In this class we explore these questions against the backdrop of Jeffrey Eugenides’ novel *Middlesex*, for which he won the Pulitzer prize. At once epic and meticulous, it tells the story of three generations of a Greek-American family through the eyes of his narrator, Cal, showing how the events of the past weave together to shape the identity of a country, a family, and a single individual.
Preparatory Reading Assignment:
• Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex* (2002) [excerpt]
• Book review of *Middlesex* [optional]
  http://www.lrb.co.uk/v24/n19/daniel-soar/small-crocus-big-kick

---Week of October 26-30th
CJS #4 – Harlem and its Relationship with Columbia
During this session we will explore your personal reactions to the Harlem Tour and reflect upon Columbia University’s place in the fabric of the surrounding neighborhood. We will discuss Columbia’s expansion to Manhattanville in light of the assigned articles.

Preparatory Reading Assignment:
• “Growing Together: An Update on Community Services, Amenities, and Benefits of Columbia University’s Manhattanville Campus in West Harlem,” September 2013
  http://gca.columbia.edu/files/gca/content/Final%20Growing%20Together%20-%20Update%20to%20the%20Community.pdf
• Tasha Moore, “Harlem and Columbia Expansion,” *The Harlem Times*, Feb 15, 2014
  http://theharlemtimes.com/online-news/harlem-columbia-expansion
  http://columbiaspectator.com/2008/01/24/manhattanville%E2%80%99s-forgotten-beneficiaries
  http://columbiaspectator.com/2008/01/29/manhattanville-global-context

---Week of November 9-13th
CJS #5 – #BlackLivesMatter
Over the past year, the Black Lives Matter movement has pushed the issue of police violence against black people in the United States into the spotlight. Violence and harassment of people of color at the hands of NYC police (NYPD) has been a long-standing problem that countless communities and organizations have confronted. This week, we’ll look at articles on the history of “broken windows” policing in New York City and police violence against not only black men, but also black women.

Preparatory Reading Assignment:
  [http://socialistworker.org/2015/01/07/breaking-broken-windows](http://socialistworker.org/2015/01/07/breaking-broken-windows)


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**Week of November 16-20th**

**CJS #6 – I Heart New York?**

Imagine that after ten years in New York pursuing your dreams, you decide to call it quits. How would you explain your decision to leave? This is the task Joan Didion undertakes in "Goodbye to All That". But who is she explaining to? And for what purpose? In this class we'll discuss the ambivalent feelings provoked by a city considered by many to be the center of the cultural universe, but where it might also be, as Didion suggests "distinctly possible to stay too long at the fair."

Preparatory Reading Assignment:

• Joan Didion, “Goodbye to All That” (1967)

• Jeremiah’s Vanishing New York
  [http://vanishingnewyork.blogspot.com/](http://vanishingnewyork.blogspot.com/)

• Francis Morrone, “No, New York City is not losing its soul: What the anti-gentrification handwringers fail to understand about the city's past, present and future,” *New York Daily News*, May 31, 2015

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**Week of November 30-December 4th**

**CJS #7 – New York on Film**

With over 40,000 locations shoots each year, no city has been depicted on film as frequently as New York. Yet it would be impossible to represent every angle and aspect of the city as a whole; representations always contain a particular bias – of culture, race, class, time, and style. As we round off the fall semester’s exploration of identity and belonging, we’ll consider a handful of the city’s most iconic roles. In watching scenes from *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* (1961), *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), *Manhattan* (1979), and *Do the Right Thing* (1989), students are invited to think about how these and other films reflect, shape and/or distort the identity of the city and those who live in it.

Video montage for in-class discussion:

• [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLkwjJC4GMumsr1BzgGW6YNPlSS-Yryo88](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLkwjJC4GMumsr1BzgGW6YNPlSS-Yryo88)
—Week of December 7-11th

CJS #8 – Genealogy Project Discussion

The goal of the Genealogy Project is to explore your own personal genealogy in light of themes we have discussed over the course of the CJS fall seminar. The central question to consider is “How did you get to Columbia?” To answer this question, please conduct informal interviews with family members in order to piece together a narrative of your genealogy up to the present moment. You can reflect on any aspect of your broader identity (gender-race-class-nationality) at any scale (that is reasonable within the scope of the assignment); or you can be very specific, for example by focusing on a single pivotal shift. Allow yourself the freedom of a literary reflection, like White, Eugenides, and Didion, but also strive to be as concise as possible. To that end, your essay should be approx. 600 words. Please upload it for the rest of the class to read by the Friday before the last class session. We will have a general discussion in class about your essays.