

USA 402H1S: Finding Shelter: Reading Refuge in American Literature and History

Tuesdays 3-5pm; OI 4420

Alexandra Rahr

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Office Hours: T 12:30-2:30pm; Th 2:30-4:30pm 1 Devonshire Place, Rm 326N

Course Description: From the days of the Puritans – America’s idealized ur-refugees - the republic has understood itself as a place of asylum. This class will consider the texts and history of refuge, asking what it means to designate certain populations as radically vulnerable, and to represent America as a perpetual zone of safety. We'll consider diverse manifestations of American asylum from the Underground Railroad to the National Park Service to contemporary sanctuary cities for undocumented people to #DataRefuge – a project to download and preserve federal climate data initiated after Donald Trump's election. Throughout the course we'll examine the ideological stakes of American sanctuary, asking what constitutes threat, and who is deemed deserving of shelter.

All required texts available online through Blackboard class website except Colson Whitehead's novel *The Underground Railroad*, available at the U of T Bookstore.

Evaluation:

Informed Participation (15%): In this class, each student bears an equal responsibility for the discussion. You will be evaluated based on both the quality and quantity of your oral participation.

Short Paper (25%): Write a short paper taking a populist position on an issue – either historical or contemporary - and then refute that position. 5 pages; due February 13.

Online Presentation: (25%): Choose a week and orient one aspect of that class’s topic; include images as well as text and analysis. Due on the Blackboard site by 5pm the day before class.

Final Essay (35%): Write an 8-10 page research paper on one aspect of American refuge: an event, speech, political strategy or piece of art. Due March 27.

Late Policy: The penalty for late essays is two percentage points a day to a maximum of fourteen points (e.g., from 80% to 66%). Essays will not be accepted more than one week after the due date unless accompanied by medical documentation.

Plagiarism: According to the Code of Behaviour established by the Governing Council of the University of Toronto, to plagiarize is “to represent as one’s own any idea or expression of an idea or work of another.” This includes borrowing ideas as well as words without attribution, from print and from online sources. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please contact me.

Drop Policy: Last day to cancel S section code courses without academic penalty: **14 March 2018**. By this date, the Comparative Analysis assignment will be marked and returned to you, totaling 20% of your final grade.

E-Culture Policy: Blackboard is the best source for grades and other important course information. While I will respond to emails within two business days, substantive discussions about essays are most successful in person, and I encourage students to take advantage of scheduled office hours. If you're not available during these times, please contact me and we'll schedule an appointment.

Schedule:

January 9: Setting the Terms

John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (Online, excerpts)

January 16: A New World Refuge

John Winthrop, *Winthrop Papers* (Online, excerpts)

Thomas Hooker, *The Danger of Desertion* (Online)

J. Hector St. John De Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (Online, excerpts)

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals* (Online, excerpts)

Jan 23: Sacred Sanctuary

R.J. Macrides, "Killing, Asylum and the Law of Byzantium" (Online)

The Sanctuary Trials (Online)

Vice News Tonight Report (Online)

<http://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org/>

January 30: Immigration - A Nation of Refugees

Emma Lazarus, 'The New Colossus' (Online)

Immigrant Narratives, Ellis Island Archives <https://www.nps.gov/elis/learn/historyculture/oral-histories.htm> (Online)

City of Refuge scriptural excerpts (Online)

Jacques Derrida, 'On Cosmopolitanism' (Online)

February 6: Enslavement - Getting North

Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad* (U of T Bookstore)

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Online, excerpts)

February 13: Enslavement - Getting North

Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad* (U of T Bookstore) **SHORT PAPER DUE**

February 22: READING WEEK

February 27: Domestic Internment

Lawson Fusao Inada, *Only What We Could Carry* (Online, excerpts)

Japanese-American internment, newspaper editorials (Online)

March 6: Shelter from the Storm - Natural Disasters

Noah Dir. Darren Aronofsky (Online, film)

The Great Deluge, Genesis 6-9 (Online)

Hurricane Harvey coverage (online)

March 13: Nature's Refuge- the National Park Service

National Park Service Organic Act (Online)

Frederick Law Olmsted, "The Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Big Tree Grove" (Online)

John R. White, "Atmosphere in the National Parks" (Online)

Rosalie Edge, "Roads and More Roads in the National Parks and Forests" (Online)

Ken Burns, 'The National Parks: America's Best Idea' (Online, excerpts)

March 20: Asylum at the End of the World

Lisa Bedford, <http://thesurvivalmom.com/> (Online)

Casey Ryan Kelly, 'The Man-pocalypse: *Doomsday Preppers* and the Rituals of Apocalyptic Manhood' (Online)

Doomsday Preppers (Online)

March 27: Refugia: Environmental Sanctuaries

Donna Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin" (Online)

Anna Tsing, 'Feral Biologies' (Online)

FINAL ESSAY DUE

April 3: Digital Asylum?

<https://www.datarefuge.org/>

#datarefuge