

Michelle Tokarczyk: Working-Class America

English 105, Spring 2005

Professor Michelle Tokarczyk (Two-car-chick)

Topic: Working-Class America

Most Americans would describe the United States as a nation with an overwhelmingly middle-class population. Indeed, many scholars of and commentators on class have argued that most Americans think of themselves as middle class. However, we're becoming more aware of a working-class population, and becoming more aware of people who identify themselves as such. Who are working-class people? What kinds of work do they do? What kinds of lives do they lead? The course will attempt to answer these questions by looking on theories of class and at literature written about class. We will also look at commentary on one of America's most promising means to upward mobility-education. Finally, we'll look at two cases-one an account written by a therapist, the other an autobiographically based piece of fiction-of upward mobility to complicate stories of "making it."

Of course, this class is a writing class intended to give you practice in using academic research methods and material. You'll write four five-to-seven page papers.

Texts

Blackboard documents.

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*.

Zweig, Michael. *The Working-Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret*.

Film, *People Like Us*.

Requirements

Four papers (20%) each, presentation (10%), class participation and peer group work (10%). Students are expected to keep up with the reading. I will call on you. If you're unprepared, it will negatively affect your class participation grade.

Blackboard

Most course documents are on Blackboard. I'll also send announcements and e-mails through Blackboard, so check it regularly.

Attendance

Is extremely important. More than four absences-excused or unexcused-will lower a student's grade. A student who is absent is still responsible for work covered and should contact a classmate to review what he/she missed.

Paper Policies

Please hand in a hard copy of all drafts and papers and send an electronic copy to the Blackboard address. Rough drafts and final drafts must be handed in on time. Rough drafts handed in after the due dates may not be read. Late final copies will be penalized one grade (ex: B- to C+) for each weekday of lateness.

Students should save all notes on secondary sources. .

Peer Revision Groups

These groups give feedback on first drafts. STUDENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR E-MAILING OR IN SOME OTHER RELIABLE FASHION GETTING PAPERS TO GROUP MEMBERS BY 7PM OF THE EVENING BEFORE GROUPS MEET.

Presentations

At the end of the semester each student will give a ten-minute report on his or her final paper. Students should present their material in an engaging fashion and should anticipate questions.

Conferences

During the week of April 26 classes will be cancelled so that I can hold a twenty-minute conference with each student. These conferences are a class requirement and should be rescheduled only in an emergency.

Course Schedule

(subject to change if necessary)

Week 1

Tues, Jan 25 Introduction. In-class writing.

Thurs, Jan 27 Ideas of Class. Mantsios, "Class in America: Myths and Realities."

Paper 1 assigned. Discuss formulating research questions.

Week 2

Tues, Feb 1 Sennett and Cobb from *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, "The Badge of Ability."

Thurs, Feb 3 Peer Revision groups

Week 3

Tues, Feb 8 People Like Us

Thurs, Feb 10 Discuss student papers.

Week 4

Tues, Feb 15 Zweig, *The Working-Class Majority*, Introduction, Chap 1 and 2.

Thurs, Feb 17 Paper 1 due. Paper 2 assigned. Discuss student papers.

Week 5

Tues, Feb 22 Zweig, Chap 3 through 5.

Thurs, Feb 24 Peer Revision groups

Week 6

Tues, Mar 1 Zweig chap 6 through 9

Thurs, Mar 3 Library

Week 7

Tues, Mar 8 The Promise of Education. hooks, "Coming to Class Consciousness,"
"Making the Personal Political."

Thurs, Mar 10 Finn, "A Distinctly UnAmerican Idea." Paper 2 due. Paper 3 assigned.

Week 8

Tues, Mar 22 Zweig visit.

Thurs, Mar 24 Peer revision groups.

Week 9

Tues, Mar 29 The Promise of Education. Rose, "Politics of Remediation"

Thurs, Mar 31

Week 10

Tues, Apr 5 Personal reflections on class and work. Bowe: Jackson, "Ford Auto
Worker," Pérez, "Bus Driver," Arlene, "Nurse." Paper 3 due. Paper 4 assigned.

Thurs, Apr 7 From Coles and Oresick For a Living: Waring, "It Was My First Nursing
Job." From Oresick and Coles Working Classics "Triangle Fire Poems." Paper 3 due.
Paper 4 assigned.

Week 11

Tues, Apr 12 Out of the Working Class. Jensen, "Across the Great Divide"

Thurs, Apr 14 Peer revision groups

Week 12

Tues, Apr 19 Cisneros, "The House on Mango Street" through "The First Job."

Thurs, Apr 21 Cisneros, "Papa Who Works Up Tired in the Dark" through the end
("Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes.")

Week 13

Tues, Apr 26 Conferences-no classes

Thurs, Apr 28 Conferences-no classes

Week 14

Tues, May 3 Presentations

Thurs, May 5 Presentations. Paper 4 and rewrite due.