Issues in Psychology:   
Critical Psychology

Fall 2024 | Psy 493 | Snyder C304 | Prerequisite: Psy 101, Tier I Writing Req | 3 credits

# COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores a growing field in which critical theories and discourses are used to understand social inequities and further social justice. Students will identify the ways in which injustice has been historically upheld by social scientists broadly and psychologists specifically and critique the ways in which our intentions may differ from our impacts. The course is guided by several overarching critiques of mainstream psychology – the traditionally limited level of analysis, how our ideology upholds the status quo, and the tendency to claim scientific objectivity and political neutrality.

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|  | Email | Classroom with solid fill | Office hours icon, two people sitting at a table |
| Professor:  **Dr. Katie Clements Pronouns: she/her** | [vadnais3@msu.edu](mailto:vadnais3@msu.edu)  I will respond within 1 business day. | **Class: Snyder C304**  Monday, Wednesday, Friday  4:10pm-5:00pm | **Office Hours** **–** Fri 10:00am – 11:30am, Psy 136 or schedule at [calendly.com/drkvc](https://calendly.com/drkvc) |

## Office Hours

Office hours are informal ways to connect with your instructor. You can ask questions or discuss course topics. You may or may not have to have a specific concern; think of them as more casual conversations. Attend on Fridays or schedule at the link above (note Psy 493 in your appointment).

## Recommended Text – any version of 2nd edition is fine (library too!)

This is quite likely your first introduction to the topic. You will be required to know the content I present in lecture from the book. You can read it at the library, or find an e-book. Although there are many scholarly/academic and general places to read critiques of mainstream psychology, we’ll cover the fundamentals with this textbook:

Fox, D., Prilleltensky, I., & Austin, S. (2009). *Critical Psychology: An Introduction (2nd ed)*. London: SAGE Publications.

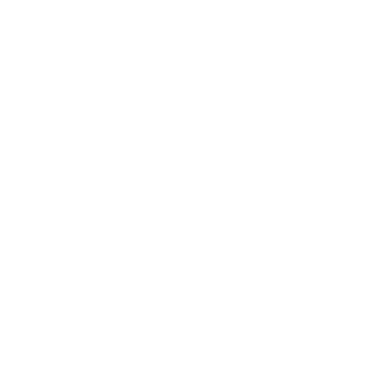
## Course Format

This course meets in person 3 days each week. Complete assigned reading prior to class. We’ll discuss the reading topics on Mon and Wed, and practice developing your own critical perspectives through writing on Fri. This is a writing course, centered on the particular issue/area of critical psychology, so you can expect to write different critiques of mainstream psychology. You will also be expected to peer review each other’s writing.

## Classroom Philosophy

* + - * We are whole people – I respect your “whole personness”
      * We all must be *active*, *engaged* learners and co-create our learning environment
      * Humble respect for others’ experiences, insights, and identities gives us the most room to learn and grow
      * We are all doing our best – it might look different than it was yesterday, or tomorrow, or someone else’s – but we are doing the best we can in this moment

# COURSE OBJECTIVES



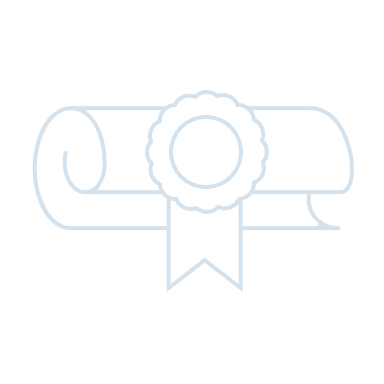
The following are the course objectives you can expect to achieve this semester. By the end of the course you will be able to:

* Critique mainstream psychology’s disciplinary-based and issue-based approaches to:
  + Traditional individual level of analysis
  + Ideological support of the status quo
  + Tendency to claim scientific objectivity and political neutrality
* Articulate and critique the current state of mainstream psychology by:
  + Recognizing and naming underlying assumptions
  + Recognizing and naming institutional practices
  + Exploring and proposing other ways of knowing and understanding human behavior

# WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

|  |  |  |
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| Brain in head with solid fillReflexivity Paper Being able to critique the beliefs we have about psychological knowledge requires understanding who we are and how we come to know and connect with that scholarship. This assignment is a short 1–2-page paper articulating your background, your connection to psychology, and what stands out and connects with your values and interests. Contract with solid fillSmall Individual Assignments Most weeks you will complete a short (max 1 page) writing assignment that encourages and develops your ability to be critical about existing current scholarship. Details will be shared each preceding week and you will submit them to a peer review portal. These assignments are designed to help you break down the process of studying psychology into small, manageable pieces to critique.  We will also work on revising these assignments based on peer review feedback. |  | Rating 3 Star with solid fillSmall Individual Peer Review A big part of developing your own critical thinking about psychology is reading critical thinking (and mainstream thinking!) and developing an ability to ask probing or follow-up questions to understand the details and implications. Most weeks you will complete a short peer-review assignment that helps develop the individual writing assignments submitted for the week. You will complete them in a peer review portal, Eli Review. Group brainstorm with solid fillAttendance There is an attendance component to your grade, for weeks 3-14. 10 of these weeks count towards your grade. Each week includes one class period primarily spent doing in-class writing, so attendance is important for developing those skills towards larger written assignments. Typewriter with solid fillFinal Writing Assignment Your final writing assignment will be a comprehensive critique of psychology by answering “How should psychology change? What does the future of psychology look like? *More specifically* How can psychology foster emancipation, social justice, and social change?” Details provided in the second half of the class. |

ASSIGNMENT MAPPING



I want us to cultivate a classroom where we are invested in the learning process (not an exam). Here is how I do that.

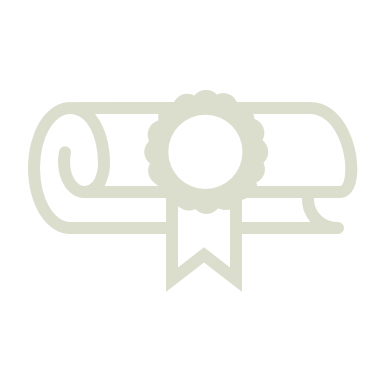
Bloom’s Taxonomy is basically a hierarchical classification of levels of thinking. Modern updates to the model have renamed the levels as verbs (things we consciously do), identified knowledge dimensions (the type of knowledge gained) and cognitive processes dimensions (the processes used to gain the knowledge). I use Bloom’s Taxonomy to ensure we’re mastering a variety of writing skills using a variety of cognitive processes.

Here is a diagram for our course that outlines how you’re progressing up through the levels of thinking in this course, via activities and cognitive processes. As you master more fundamental activities, you gain those skills and move up the hierarchy. Obviously some of the assignments use multiple skills and processes.

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| Assignments | Bloom’s Taxonomy | Cognitive Skills (and many more!) |
| Future of Psychology Paper | Create | Design, develop |
| Future of Psychology components | Evaluate | Argue, critique |
| Group Discussions in class | Analyze | Compare, contrast |
| Peer Review | Apply | Implement, demonstrate |
| Individual Writing | Understand | Explain, describe, summarize |
| Attendance | Remember | Recall |

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# GRADING POLICIES



The grading scale and points allocated per assignment are shown below.

The earlier individual writing activities are 10 points (reflexivity paper is 10 points). The later individual writing activities become more difficult, and are worth 15 points. The final writing project components are worth 20 points, the full draft is worth 30 and the final comprehensive writing project is worth 40 points. All peer reviews are worth 5 points.

|  |  |
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| **Grading Scale** | |
| **Grade** | **%** |
| **4.0** | **89.5-100** |
| **3.5** | **84.5-89.4** |
| **3.0** | **79.5-84.4** |
| **2.5** | **74.5-79.4** |
| **2.0** | **69.5-74.4** |
| **1.5** | **64.5-69.4** |
| **1.0** | **59.5-64.4** |
| **0.0** | **<59.4** |

POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS  
The following describe various policies that will be enforced during the semester.



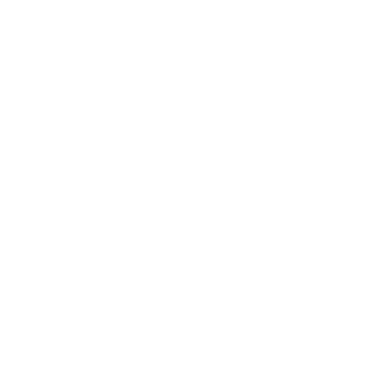
|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Deadlines and Due Dates  * Class: Mon, Wed, Fri 4:10 – 5:00 * Most assignments due by class start   Note exceptions in the syllabus/assignment details. I will make reasonable accommodations for students if notified in a timely manner. I never assign weekend or late night deadlines, in alignment with my values. Academic Misconduct Both students and faculty are responsible for "maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards," per MSU’s [Student Rights and Responsibilities](http://splife.studentlife.msu.edu/academic-freedom-for-students-at-michigan-state-university) and the [Spartan Code of Honor](http://splife.studentlife.msu.edu/spartan-code-of-honor-academic-pledge). In addition, the Psychology Department adheres to General Student Regulations 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all- University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. **Your work must be your own original work, and all contributing ideas must be cited. If you are unsure, contact me.** Civility (Non-Academic Misconduct) Developing a successful learning space requires extra attention to the *way* we engage each other. Our actions affect everyone in our community. This class may challenge and explore our own beliefs and we may find ourselves challenging each other’s beliefs as well. Please remember that everyone moves through this material in their own way and from the lens of their own experiences. If/when you challenge your classmates, make sure it’s with the goal of enhancing each other’s learning. Course Management Software (D2L)  * We use D2L ([**https://d2l.msu.edu/**](https://d2l.msu.edu/)) for course management *and communication*. * **Very important:** Please manually set your D2L emails and announcements to forward to your @msu.edu email (in D2L email settings) * We also use the Eli Review website to manage peer review assignments. |  |  | Limits to Confidentiality Please note that **the instructor of this course is a mandated reporter.** I am required to report all incidents of relationship violence and sexual misconduct that involve students, faculty, or staff, occurred at a University-sponsored event, or occurred on University property, and *even* *if these are reported in course materials*. Therefore, if you share such an experience with me, I will be required to share your name and the details of the disclosure to the Office for Civil Rights and Title IX Education and Compliance (OCR) and MSU Police:   * *Suspected child abuse/neglect, even if this maltreatment happened when you were a child;* * *Allegations of sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, or sexual harassment; and* * *Credible threats of harm to oneself or to others.*  OCR will include these facts, (not your name) in the University’s statistics on sexual and domestic violence. They will also reach out to you via email with additional university resources. It is entirely your decision to use any of the provided services or even respond to the University’s email.Accommodations Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services, and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at [rcpd.msu.edu](http://www.rcpd.msu.edu). Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation (“VISA”) form. Please email or have RCPD send this form to **me as soon as possible or at least two weeks prior to the accommodation date** (class, assignment, etc.). VISAs are not retroactive. You must submit them prior to the accommodation, so submit early **even if you’re unsure if you will need it.** |

# TIPS FOR SUCCESS

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| Reading and Projects  Complete the assigned reading/watching/listening before class. They will help you develop an informed perspective to bring to class discussion. If you are confused about any part of the reading or have questions about what you read, bring those too!  The more familiar you are with the readings, the more you prepared you will be to express your own critical ideas in small writing assignments. These are less than one page, but please take your time to complete these with your best work. Reviewing others’ writing also helps you think about your own writing in new ways!  DollarExternal resources  I am very aware that students are facing additional financial strain. If accessing external resources like the book or other media is a financial barrier for you, let me know – there is no threshold of need here. No one will go without the resources they need for this class. We’ll make sure you get what you need.  Weekly Schedule  I recommend maintaining a weekly schedule of activities for this and any other courses with unusual schedules (online, once-a-week, etc.). It can be extra difficult for some students to hold themselves accountable in these course formats. The schedule below is just a suggestion, but I recommend sticking to something that works for you and helps spread out the work.    **Monday:** Class  **Tuesday:** Peer review  **Wednesday:** Class  **Thursday:** Read, annotate  **Friday:** Class (collab, write) |  | How to Email  I post all announcements in D2L, even though we meet in person. Check your email and D2L regularly for updates. Please forward your D2L inbox to your regular MSU email. I will make every effort to respond to emails within 1 MSU business day. I expect you will extend the same courtesy and respond to emails from your instructors and classmates in a timely manner. Always include ‘Psy 493’ in your subject line so I can find your emails and respond appropriately. Always write your email in a professional manner (i.e., greeting, complete sentences, sign your name). MSU is my professional workplace, and it’s easy to email your professors respectfully. Follow these guidelines: [Email without being annoying](https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087)  D2L  D2L will be used for administrative and instruction purposes including announcements, housing course documents (e.g., assignments, readings), and recording grades. Please explore D2L widely, so you know how to find materials and track your progress. As an instructor, I can also see your progress – including what you do and don’t access and submit. Please remember the D2L HelpDesk (accessed at <http://d2l.msu.edu> or by phone at 1-800-500-1554) is a great tool for navigation and troubleshooting. Please route your technological concerns to them.    Personal Success  Please utilize me as a resource to help you succeed, both in class and outside class. I want you to 4.0 and enjoy this class, do well at MSU, and still have a life with your friends, family, and hobbies. If one or more of those things are not happening, please connect with me so we can work together to figure out a plan to improve your situation. |

You should expect a 4.0 in this class. Do the following, and you will succeed!

# RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS



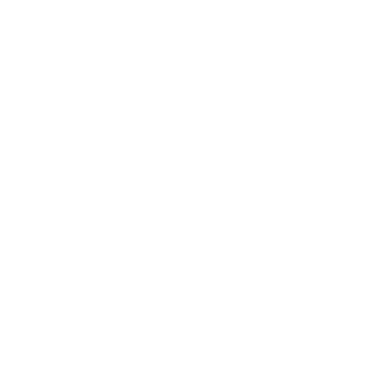
I can help you with needs pertaining to this course, and I will otherwise do my best to connect you to the right place. The university is a huge institution, and if a different form of support would be useful, we will do our best to help you find it.

Please, save the **National Suicide Prevention Hotline number in your phone: 800-273-8255**

**Mental Health Hotline: 988**

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| Deciduous tree with solid fillMSU Campus Resource List  The Department of Psychology has compiled a list of academic, mental health, culture, and identity resources around campus: <https://psychology.msu.edu/undergraduates/student-resources.html> MSU Dependent Care Support Michigan State University offers a dependent care support program for children or elders. This is a backup option if your usual child or eldercare falls through and a lack of care would stop you from attending class or completing schoolwork. More information about the program can be found here: <https://worklife.msu.edu/family-care/kids-parents/backup-care>. MSU Student Food BankThe MSU Student Food Bank serves MSU students experiencing food insecurity by providing free food and related items. You can visit their website here: <https://foodbank.msu.edu/> or email them at: [foodbank@msu.edu](mailto:foodbank@msu.edu). Scales of justice with solid fill Legal Services Funded by student taxes, Student Legal Services provides free professional legal assistance and representation to eligible students through a contract with the law firm of Jeffries and Associates, PLLC. Call to engage services. <http://studentlegalservices.com/index.html>. Group brainstormWriting Center and Collaborative Learning Center The Writing Center ([writing.msu.edu](https://michiganstate-my.sharepoint.com/personal/vadnais3_msu_edu/Documents/FS20%20270/writing.msu.edu)) and the Collaborative Learning Center ([nssc.msu.edu/clc](https://nssc.msu.edu/clc/index.html)) help develop writing skills and academic strategies. |  | Student Essential Needs Student Advocates for Essential Needs Security (SAENS) is a student organization that advocates on behalf of students for the equitable distribution and practice of providing for the essential needs of students. This includes housing, food, health, and access to the hygiene and other resources that contribute to student success. Their website and resource guide are located at: <https://socialwork.msu.edu/students/student-advocates-for-essential-needs-security.html> Confidential MSU Resources There are several resources available for students who would like confidential support, *without reporting* to OIE or MSU Police.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **MSU Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS)**  3rd Floor Olin Health Center Building  463 E Circle Drive  East Lansing, MI 48824  (517) 355-8270 | **MSU Sexual Assault Program**  207 Student Services Building  556 East Circle Drive  East Lansing, MI 48824  (517) 355-3551 (office)  (517) 372-6666 (24 hour crisis line)  Website: [www.endrape.msu.edu](http://www.endrape.msu.edu)  **Sexual Assault Healthcare Program – 24/7 Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners**  Student Services Bldg w/ Parking  [Website link](https://centerforsurvivors.msu.edu/sexual-assault-healthcare-program/index.html)  (517) 353-2700 | | **MSU Safe Place (Domestic Violence)**  (517) 355-1100  Email: [noabuse@msu.edu](mailto:noabuse@msu.edu)  Website: <http://safeplace.msu.edu> | **University Ombudsperson**  354 Farm Lane, Room 129, North Kedzie Hall  East Lansing, MI 48824  (517) 353-8830  Email: [ombud@msu.edu](mailto:ombud@msu.edu)  Website: <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud> | |

# COURSE SCHEDULE



Each week we will cover a scholarship or practice area. See the attached reading list for each week.

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| **Week** | Date | **Topic** | **Assignments & Projects Due** | |
| 1 | 8/26 | Course, Syllabus, D2L exploration |  | |
|  | 8/28 | History of Psychology |  | |
|  | 8/30 | **Football Friday; no class** |  | |
| 2 | 9/2 | **Labor Day; no class** |  | |
|  | 9/4 | Library, Writing Intro | Reflexivity Paper | |
|  | 9/6 | Collab Writing Day |  | |
| 3 | 9/9 | Critiquing Social Psychology | Find article, identify meaningful pieces of information | |
|  | 9/11 |  | Peer Review | |
|  | 9/13 | Collab Writing Day | Revise and Resubmit | |
| 4 | 9/16 | Critiquing Clinical Psychology | | Find article, identify meaningful pieces of information |
|  | 9/18 |  | Peer Review | |
|  | 9/20 | Collab Writing Day | Revise and Resubmit | |
| 5 | 9/23 | Critiquing Community Psychology | Find article, identify theory – explain in your own words | |
|  | 9/25 |  | Peer Review | |
|  | 9/27 | Collab Writing Day | Revise and Resubmit | |
| 6 | 9/30 | Critiquing Cognitive Psychology | Find empirical article, explain in your own words how they developed research question | |
|  | 10/2 |  | Peer Review | |
|  | 10/4 | Collab Writing Day | Revise and Resubmit | |
| 7 | 10/7 | Critiquing Race in Psychology | Consider any topic – use a critical lens to develop your own research question | |
|  | 10/9 |  | Peer Review | |
|  | 10/11 | Collab Writing Day | Revise and Resubmit | |
| 8 | 10/14 | Critiquing Class in Psychology | Find empirical article, explain the methods in your own words | |
|  | 10/16 |  | Peer Review | |
|  | 10/18 | Collab Writing Day | Revise and Resubmit | |
| 9 | 10/21 | **Fall Break Day** |  | |
|  | 10/23 | Critiquing Psychology and Disability Studies | Consider any topic [critically], how would you study it? What would you measure and how? | |
|  | 10/25 | Collab Writing Day | Peer Workshop | |
| 10 | 10/28 | Critiquing Gender in Psychology | Thesis statement - draft topic and audience for final writing project | |
|  | 10/30 |  | Peer Review | |
|  | 11/1 | Collab Writing Day | Revise and Resubmit | |
| 11 | 11/4 | Critiquing Mental Health in Psychology | Outline 3+ scholarly sources as background | |
|  | 11/6 |  | Peer Review | |
|  | 11/8 | Collab Writing Day | Revise and Resubmit | |
| 12 | 11/11 | Critical Theorizing | Outline critique of previous scholarly sources – assumptions? Values? Voices included and missing? | |
|  | 11/13 |  | Peer Review | |
|  | 11/15 | Collab Writing Day | Revise and Resubmit | |
| 13 | 11/18 | Critical Research Methods | Outline final writing project | |
|  | 11/20 |  | Peer Review | |
|  | 11/22 | Collab Writing Day | Revise and Resubmit | |
| 14 | 11/25 | Critical Psychology and Politics of Resistance | Full Draft | |
|  | 11/27 |  |  | |
|  | 11/29 | **Thanksgiving Break Day** |  | |
| 15 | 12/2 | Final Writing Workshop Week – no class; | Individual Meetings – sign up for slot in class | |
|  | 12/4 | Individual Meetings MWF |  | |
|  | 12/6 |  |  | |
| Finals | 12/13 | Final Exam Time – 12:45 – 2:45pm | Remote; Submit final writing assignment | |

WEEKLY reading/watching/listening

*In addition, skim posted materials in D2L. This list is subject to change. I’d like to add more non-textbook media – TBD!*

**Week 01: 8/26-8/30 – What is this course all about? History of Psychology**

1. Read: Syllabus
2. Read: APA statement: *Apology to People of Color for APA’s Role in Promoting, Perpetuating, and Failing to Challenge Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Human Hierarchy in U.S.* <https://www.apa.org/about/policy/racism-apology>

**Week 02: 9/2 – 9/6 – History of Psychology**

1. Read: Chapter 2, *What Critical Psychologists Should Know about the History of Psychology*
2. Read: APA statement part 2: *Historical Chronology:* [*https://www.apa.org/about/apa/addressing-racism/historical-chronology*](https://www.apa.org/about/apa/addressing-racism/historical-chronology)
3. Watch: d2l videos on reading scholarly articles

**Week 03: 9/9 – 9/13 – Critiquing Social Psychology**

1. Read: Chapter 6, *Social Psychology and Social Change*

**Week 04: 9/16 – 9/20 – Critiquing Clinical Psychology**

1. Read: Chapter 5, *Clinical Psychology: The Politics of Madness*

**Week 05: 9/23 – 9/27 – Critiquing Community Psychology**

1. Read: Chapter 8, *Community Psychology: Advancing Social Justice*

**Week 06: 9/30 – 10/4 – Critiquing Cognitive Psychology**

1. Read: Chapter 11, *Rethinking Subjectivity: A Discursive Psychological Approach to Cognition and Emotion*

**Week 07: 10/7 – 10/11 – Critiquing Race in Psychology**

1. Read: Chapter 12, *Race and Racism*

**Week 08: 10/14 – 10/18 – Critiquing Class in Psychology**

1. Read: Chapter 13, *Class*

**Week 09: 10/21 – 10/25 – Critiquing Disability Studies in Psychology**

1. Read: Chapter 15, *Critiquing Psychology and Disability Studies: Critiquing the Mainstream and Critiquing the Critique*

**Week 10: 10/28 – 11/1 – Critiquing Gender in Psychology**

1. Read: Chapter 14, *Gender*

**Week 11: 11/4 – 11/8 – Critiquing Mental Health in Psychology**

1. Read: Chapter 18, *Oppression and Empowerment: The Genesis of a Critical Analysis of Mental Health*

**Week 12: 11/11 – 11/15 – Critical Theorizing**

1. Read: Chapter 19, *Doing Theory*

**Week 13: 11/18 – 11/22– Critiquing Research Methods**

1. Read: Chapter 20, *Research Methodology*

**Week 14: 11/25 – 11/29 – Critical Psychology as Resistance**

1. Read: Chapter 23, *Critical Psychology and the Politics of Resistance*

**Week 15: 12/2 – 12/6 – Final Writing Project Workshop Week**

1. Individual 1-on-1 meetings to review final paper

**Finals Week: 12/13 – 5:45 – 7:45pm ET**

1. Submit final writing assignment