Seminar 101:
“Urban Dictionary”
TTh: 2:00-3:500 CF 231 CRN 42204

Steven L. VanderStaay
Old Main 480
650-3004
Steven.VanderStaay@wwu.edu

Office Hours:
After class
Th 8:00-10:00
& by appointment

LaHaji Thomas
thomas49@students.wwu.edu

OVERVIEW AND GOALS OF THE COURSE
Seminar 101, “Urban Dictionary,” is the two-credit seminar linked to Professor Hays Communication 101 course and professor Tsunokai’s Sociology 269 course. The seminar provides a small class in which the content you learn in these courses can be integrated and extended to enhance your experience of Western’s General University Requirements, or liberal arts and sciences curriculum.

The General University Requirements (GURS) embody Western's belief that liberal education--education in breadth--is as important for informed and effective participation in contemporary life as specialized education. Western believes that liberal education enables people to lead fuller and more interesting lives, to perceive and to understand more of the world around and within themselves, and to participate more intelligently, sensitively and deliberately in shaping that world.

This belief reflects a long tradition in American higher education. In this tradition, the bachelor's degree includes specialized study, the major, together with study over a range of human inquiry, expression and accomplishment. Broadly, the liberal education component of a bachelor's degree deals with issues of truth and falsity, with expressions of what is possible for humans to do and be, with things that bear on choices that we make about what in life we consider important. This broader study helps people gain perspective on who they are and what they do in the world.

Few topics touch more closely upon who we are and what we do in the world than the way we speak. This topic, which we can call linguistic diversity, overlaps with both speech and race and ethnic relations, providing many opportunities for integrating and extending your work in your larger GURs. Consequently, Linguistic Diversity will be the theme of this class.

In addition, this seminar serves as a first-year program. The First-year programs recognize that the first year at Western is a time of significant intellectual and personal development. To assist you with this development, first-year courses like this FIG are designed to help you

- Understand the intellectual, moral, civic and personal purposes of your liberal arts and science education.
- Negotiate successfully the academic and personal opportunities and challenges of your first year.
- Connect to Western faculty and the larger campus.

TEXTS
LIGHT, RICHARD J. MAKING THE MOST OF COLLEGE: STUDENTS SPEAK THEIR MINDS. 2001

Reasonable Accommodation Policy
Western is committed to equal opportunity and non-discrimination in all programs and activities. Requests for accommodation or assistance should be directed to the WWW disAbility Resources for
Students by calling 360-650-3083 (Voice)/360-650-3725 (TTY) or by visiting the office at Old Main 110.

**Academic Dishonesty Policy**
Western Washington University students are responsible for reading, understanding, and following the policy and procedures regarding academic dishonesty as set forth in the WWU Academic Dishonesty Policy and Procedure (see Appendix D of the University Catalog).

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Reading and Writing Assignments**
There are weekly reading and writing assignments, including prepared notes for the book seminar. Each class includes a book seminar in which students discuss readings in small groups. Each participant prepares for the seminar, fulfilling an assigned role. 10 pts. (Pts. awarded only on the due date).

**Mini Presentation**
Students give a mini presentation that extends or builds upon a topic mentioned in our class or one of our readings, or that acquaints students with a campus or community opportunity. Topics can include study or test-taking strategies, campus clubs and services, or topics related to linguistic diversity, such as word formation within specific cultural groups. (Be on the lookout for topics that interest you). The mini presentation is accompanied by a 2-page paper. 20 pts.

**Campus and Community Events**
Students log 5 hours of participation at campus and community events. 10 pts. (Additional participation yields extra credit at 2 pts/hour, up to 10 pts). A memo indicating what students attended, what happened, and how the event related to or extended FIG content is required).

**Final Presentation or Paper**
Students prepare a final presentation or paper on a course-related topic or a disappearing language. 20 pts.

**Midterm Portfolio**
Students turn in a midterm portfolio of all assigned work, accompanied by a reflective memo about the quality of their work and the extent of their learning in all three fig courses. The midterm portfolio includes a cultural identity memo—in which you explore your own cultural identity, and how it has affected your life and your communication with others. This assignment will require you to integrate your personal reflection with course concepts, theories and readings. 20 pts.

**Final Portfolio**
Students turn in a final portfolio of all assigned work, accompanied by a reflective memo about the quality of their work and the extent of their learning in all three fig courses. 20 pts.

**GRADES**
Students in this class are graded A-F, as follows: A (excellent), 4.00; A-, 3.70; B+; 3.30; B (good), 3.00; B-, 2.70; C+; 2.30; C (fair), 2.00; C-, 1.70; D+, 1.30; D (poor), 1.00; D-, 0.70; F (failure), 0.00; Z (failure due to discontinued attendance without withdrawal). My own standards are referenced according to my sense of what “good” means for work turned in by a freshman or sophomore at a state university: “excellent” refers to work clearly above this standard; “poor” refers to work clearly below it. I use a 100 pt. scale with 95 = A, 90 = A-, 85 = B, etc.

**Student Services**
Please “take advantage of your advantages” at Western by using your resources. I strongly suggest you contact the following offices early if you have health and wellness concerns, or a family or personal crisis or emergency.

- In the case of a medical concern or question, please contact the Health Center: 650-3400 or [http://www.wwu.edu/chw/student_health/](http://www.wwu.edu/chw/student_health/)

- In the case of an emotional or psychological concern or question, please contact the Counseling Center: 650-3400 or [http://www.wwu.edu/counseling/](http://www.wwu.edu/counseling/)

- In the case of a health and safety concern, please contact the University Police: 650-3555 or [https://www.ps.wwu.edu/](https://www.ps.wwu.edu/)

- In the case of a family or personal crisis or emergency, contact the Dean of Students: 650-3775 or [http://www.wwu.edu/dos/index.shtml](http://www.wwu.edu/dos/index.shtml)

**Possible Changes**
This syllabus and course schedule is subject to change. Changes, if any, will be announced in class. Students will be held responsible for all changes.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Th: September 22**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>HW Due</th>
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| 9/22  | --Course introductions  
--“Who am I” poems  
--What it means to learn  
--Linguistic Diversity | --Revise one of your “Who Am I” poems you are comfortable sharing and send me an electronic copy. |
| 9/29  | --American Tongues                              | --Skim the Intro and Chapter 2 of Making the Most of College ("MTMOC"), then read Ch. 3 more carefully, fulfilling your book seminar roles.  
--Skim “How to Study” and note 1 idea you already use, 1 you knew but had forgotten about and 1 new one that makes sense to you: [http://www.cse.buffalo.edu/~rapaport/howtostudy.html](http://www.cse.buffalo.edu/~rapaport/howtostudy.html)  
--Research the definition and benefits of studying the liberal arts and sciences. Bring a brief memo outlining the definition and benefits. The AACU website is a good place to start. |
| 10/6  | Professor Tsunokai & Hays  
--Mini lesson topics | --Read Ch. 8, “Learning from Differences,” in MTMOC, fulfilling your book seminar roles. |
| 10/13 |                                                |                                                                       |
10/27
Professor Tsunokai
--Read “Speech and Harm” (NYT), fulfilling book seminar roles.

11/3
The Whorf Sapir Hypothesis
--Read “Does Language Shape How You Think” (NYT) and “Lost in Translation” (WSJ), fulfilling book seminar roles.

11/8
7:30 pm
Dress Rehearsal to Play

11/10
Mini presentations
--Skim the Intro, and chapters 1-2 of Religious Literacy, fulfilling your book seminar roles.

11/17
Mini presentations
--Read Chapters of Religious Literacy, fulfilling your book seminar roles.

11/24
Thanksgiving Holiday

12/1
Professor Tsunokai and Hays

Final
Final Portfolio due

**Book Seminar Roles:**

**Discussion leader:** Leads the discussion, preparing questions and inviting opinions; summarizes discussion for class. Suggested language:

--What do people think of that idea? What would someone who disagreed with that idea say? Is there something we're missing?

**Summarizer.** Summarizes the main idea, its entailments and consequences.

Illustrator. Identifies key passages and quotations that capture central ideas or issues. Prepares questions concerning the passages.

**Connector and Extender.** Connects the reading to other content in the FIG and notes how the reading extends or adds to this content knowledge.
“Catch Up Assignments”

1) **American Tongues.** Go to the reserve desk and check out the movie, “American Tongues,” on reserve for this class. Watch the film and craft a memo describing the movie’s main point, the relation of this main point to content discussed in your three fig classes, and any bias you recognized in yourself concerning the dialects of the speakers. Due: 10/20

2) **Who Am I poem assignment.**

Please follow the assignments below to draft two “Who Am I” poems. Select one and revise it with an eye to sharing it with the class. Send this to Steve at Steven.VanderStaay@wwu.edu and Thomas49@students.wwu.edu Drafts due: 10/13. Send your revised poem for sharing to Steve by 10/17.

**I am From Poem**

Make a list of everything and everyone you are “from.” For example, you might include the places, traditions, people, words, smells, phrases, feelings, culture and so on you are “from.” Look these over and select the ones that are most important to you and most visual then in a “list” poem in which each stanza begins “I am from. . . ” e.g.

I am from a history filled with negative imagery,
Constantly trying to put me down,
Telling me how to live my life
And determining whether to speed up or slow down.

I am from a family in which “can’t is not in the vocabulary,
Failure was never accepted,
And people always telling me
I better be all that I can be . . .

**Photo Poem**

Find (or remember) a family photo, or a photo of you and friends. Describe the photo in poetic form, paying particular attention to images and other concrete representations. Try not to tell the reader what the photo means, or what to think about it. Instead, focus on description of what you see in the photo.

**Hermit Crab Poem**

Take a common form—such as Google directions, a cake recipe, A text book’s table of contents, etc.—and write about yourself in that form. E.g.

Begin in Port Orchard, Washington.
Go straight for 16 years, past grade school,
Middle school, baseball, football, wrestling.

Turn left at 17 and drive 20 miles to Tacoma.
Continue through high school, drama, honors.

3. **Sociology Exam Preparation**

Next week bring remaining questions you have about sociology concepts, terms and the study guide.
“Urban Dictionary” Portfolio Checklist

1. 2—3 “Who Am I Poems”

2. Skim the Intro and Chapter 2 of Making the Most of College (“MTMOC”), then read Ch. 3 more carefully. Briefly note the main ideas, and any thoughts you have about them.

3. Skim “How to Study” and note 1 idea you already use, 1 you knew but had forgotten about and 1 new one that makes sense to you:

4. Research the definition and benefits of studying the liberal arts and sciences. Bring a brief memo outlining the definition and benefits. The AACU website is a good place to start.

5. Read Ch. 8, “Learning from Differences,” in MTMOC, fulfilling your book seminar roles.

6. American Tongues. Go to the reserve desk and check out the movie, “American Tongues,” on reserve for this class. Watch the film and craft a memo describing the movie’s main point, the relation of this main point to content discussed in your three fig classes, and any bias you recognized in yourself concerning the dialects of the speakers.

7. Read “Suite for Ebony and Phonic” Prepare notes for the SAME book seminar role you fulfilled last time. If you don't remember, describe the main point and list questions you have about the main ideas.

8. Read “Speech and Harm” an article at the New York Times. and write a memo in which you describe: the writer's main idea and questions you have about it.

9. Write a reflective memo about the quality of your work and the extent of your learning in all three fig courses. Comment on what information and experiences in these three courses have been most meaningful for you. Comment, as well, on where you have been and have not been an effective student, noting ways in which your study habits and abilities have improved.

10. Include a cultural identity memo in which you explore your own cultural identity, and how it has enriched your life and impacted your speech or communication patterns. This assignment will permit you to integrate your personal reflection with course concepts, theories and readings from all three of the FIG courses.

Rubric
14 pts. A portfolio that receives 14 points is incomplete in some way. Either something on the checklist is missing, or an assignment on the list is incomplete or insufficient. For instance, the student may not have sufficiently described a main point or may have forgotten to respond to all portions of the assignment.

16 Pts. A portfolio that receives 16 points is complete, meeting all requirements of the assignment. The insights and connections are typical of what most freshmen demonstrate. Consequently, portfolios in this range tend to be very similar and rarely include reflections or insights or observations not made by other students.

18-20 pts. A portfolio that receives 18—20 points is complete, meets all requirements of the assignment, and does so in a particularly thorough or original way. The student may go beyond restating a main idea to also tease apart the consequences of the main idea, or its implications. Consequently, insights and connections are often original, more probing, or distinct from the work that most freshmen complete. Portfolios at this level often consider the significance of ideas as well as their meaning.
Scavenger Hunt

Find the following as you read your classmates’ poetry:

A strong visual image

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________

A metaphor you particularly like

___________________________________________________________________________________

A great closing image

___________________________________________________________________________________

A phrase you find pleasurable to read out loud

___________________________________________________________________________________

A phrase or line you find beautiful or delightful

___________________________________________________________________________________

A phrase or line you find instructive

___________________________________________________________________________________

A phrase or line you find original

___________________________________________________________________________________

The main idea, the “big meaning,” or main effect of a particular poem. Write down the poem title and the main idea or effect.

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________
**Mini Presentation**
Students give a mini presentation that extends or builds upon a topic mentioned in our class or one of our readings, or that acquaints students with a campus or community opportunity related to any of the three FIG courses. Topics can include study or test-taking strategies, campus clubs and services, or topics related to linguistic diversity, such as word formation within specific cultural groups. (Be on the lookout for topics that interest you). The mini presentation is accompanied by a 2-page paper. 20 pts.

**Grading Rubric**

**The paper and presentation**

| includes an introduction that describes the topic and purpose of the presentation | 1—4 pts |
| connects the topic to 1 or more of the FIG classes | 1—4 pts |
| teaches the class about the topic | 1—4 pts |
| explains the value of the topic in a conclusion that answers the “so what” question. | 1—4 pts |

**The presentation**

| is completed in 5 minutes | 1—2 pts |

**The paper**

| is clear, well organized and free of most common grammatical errors. | 1—2 pts |

/ 20 pts

**Final Presentation or Paper**

Students prepare a final presentation or paper on a cluster-related topic. The purpose of this paper is to encourage you to undertake individual research and exploration on a topic of interest to you, extending your knowledge of that topic beyond the information covered in the cluster. 20 pts.

Step 1: Send Steve a proposal outlining the topic you wish to research and how you wish to research the topic (library research, interviews, a study or survey, etc.). Due: 11/17

Step 2: Conduct the research and write the paper.

Step 3: Have a peer respond to ideas in the paper and its organization.

Step 4: Revise the paper

Step 5: Have a peer proofread the paper for grammatical and spelling issues.

Step 6: Polish the paper

**Final Paper Rubric**

| memo completed by due date | 1—4 pts |
| paper describes information covered on the topic in class | 1—4 pts |
| paper provides additional information about the topic not covered in class | 1—4 pts |
| paper answers the “so what” question, commenting on value of topic and the student’s view about the topic. | 1—4 pts |
| paper is clear, well organized and free of most common grammatical errors | 1—4 pts |
| student consults with Steve or LaHaji about the paper | 2 pts |
Draft a thesis that asserts the civic importance of understanding the history of racial and ethnic oppression in the United States.

Draft a thesis that asserts the civic importance of understanding the contributions to our history and society made by distinct ethnic and racial groups.

Draft a thesis asserting the value and benefits of an ethnically diverse society.

Draft a thesis asserting the value of benefits of a linguistically diverse society.

Now, determine whether these same values can be applied to
   --the civic importance of understanding the history of religious oppression in the
Final Presentation or Paper
Students prepare a final presentation or paper on a cluster-related topic. The purpose of this paper is to encourage you to undertake individual research and exploration on a topic of interest to you, extending your knowledge of that topic beyond the information covered in the cluster. 20 pts.

**Step 1:** Review your notes and texts, searching for a topic of interest to you. Use your textbook or library sources to find at least one additional resource on the topic. Send Steve a proposal outlining the topic, your additional resources. Due: 11/17
**Step 2:** Conduct the research and write the paper. In this manner:

- **Section 1:** Intro: Describe the topic, the information presented on it in your class or text, and why you were interested in exploring the topic further.
- **Section 2:** Describe the research you did and what additional information you found out about the topic.
- **Section 3:** Discuss the significance of this additional information.
- **Section 4:** Describe the steps you would take if you were to expand this paper into a research paper, describing additional questions you would want answered about this topic.

**Step 3:** Have a peer respond to ideas in the paper and its organization.
**Step 4:** Revise the paper
**Step 5:** Have a peer proofread the paper for grammatical and spelling issues.
**Step 6:** Polish the paper

**Final Paper Rubric**

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From 269
Identification assimilation; attitude-receptional assimilation; behavior-receptional assimilation; civic assimilation, etc.
Power-conflict theories, Race relations cycle, Cultural pluralism, Internal colonialism, Biosocial perspectives on racial and ethnic relations, Transnationalism, Progressive assimilation, Segmented assimilation, Middleman minorities, Racial formation theory, Ethnogenesis, Egalitarian symbiosis
Racial profiling, Exploitation theory, etc.

From our seminar

Endangered languages
Language change
Ebonics
African American Vernacular English
Whorf-Sapir Hypothesis
Dialects
Bilingualism