At the trial of CIA whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg, Howard Zinn testified that, “Historically, the most terrible things – war, genocide, and slavery – have resulted not from disobedience, but from obedience.” According to Zinn, political and social change emerges from acts of disobedience; on the other hand, these acts also provoke the most violent, authoritarian responses from those in power—even ostensibly liberal, democratic governments. Through a deep engagement with American poetry, film, and political manifestos, this University Writing Seminar explores the history of disobedience, both civil and otherwise, from the 20th century to the present. We will close-read poems by authors such as Audre Lorde, Allen Ginsberg, and Danez Smith; analyze movies by John Carpenter and Sidney Lumet; and acquaint ourselves with the political programs of radical liberation movements. As we discuss and write about these texts, we will grapple with difficult, sometimes insoluble problems that challenge not only our concepts of freedom and oppression, but of justice and resistance as well.

**Required Course Texts**

**Texts provided on LATTE** (marked with an asterisk* on the schedule)
Ginsberg, Allen. “America.”
Lorde, Audre. “Power.”
Rankin, Claudia. Selections from *Citizen.*
Rich, Adrienne. “What Kind of Times Are These.”
Zinn, Howard. “Indian Resistance and Thanksgiving Declarations.”

**Required Software**
Zotero - Free download for Mac/PC/Linux: [zotero.org](http://zotero.org)
Strongly recommended: Google Drive (free), Box (free for Brandeis Students), or Dropbox
Don’t risk losing your work!
Class Policies

Grade breakdown
Close reading essay - 20%
Lens essay & lens assignments - 30%
Research essay & research assignments - 35%
Attendance - 5%
Class participation - 5%
Peer review - 5%

Attendance
You are allowed three absences, no questions asked. For each additional absence, your final grade will be penalized by a third of a grade (B+ → B, B → B- and so on). Seven or more absences will result in a failing grade. Please contact me in the event of an emergency. Missed appointments and conferences with me without notice will be counted as absences. If you are unable to make an appointment with me, contact me as soon as possible in advance.

Your attendance grade will also be affected by consistent lateness. Class begins promptly at 5pm, so you should arrive before 5pm.

Class participation
Your consistent participation in class constitutes a significant portion of your grade, is crucial to the process of our collective learning, and is the most critical component of a successful course. As a member of this class, you are expected to attend every class session, to arrive ready to engage in thoughtful discussion of assigned texts, to pose meaningful questions, and eventually to forge your own independent analyses. Participation includes class and small group discussions as well as in-class peer review and workshopping.

Electronics
Phones and tablets should always be silenced and put away during all class time. Laptops may be used in class only with permission and for accessing relevant course materials. If you use a laptop for other purposes during class (email, social media, texting, etc), you will be asked to leave and be considered absent for the day. Repeated misuse of electronics will result in lowered participation grades.

Classroom environment
We will discuss topics in this class that could prove difficult, and it will take all of our trust, sensitivity, and maturity to create an inclusive and safe environment for conversation. Please remember that your classmates have a range of experiences and be thoughtful when you speak and listen. If you have any concerns about your ability to participate actively in class, because of personal experience, trauma, or something else, please do not hesitate to talk with me about it - the earlier in the semester, the better.
Conferences
Over the course of the semester, you will meet with me individually 3 times to discuss the progress of your writing. Conferences are 20 minutes: come with questions and concerns you are having about your writing. If you miss a conference without notice, it will count as an absence.

Academic integrity
You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work – don’t plagiarize. If you feel overwhelmed by an assignment or are unsure about how to cite others’ ideas, please come see me. The university’s policy on academic honesty is distributed annually in section 5 of the Rights and Responsibilities handbook. Instances of alleged dishonesty will be forwarded to the Office of Campus Life for possible referral to the Student Judicial System. Plagiarism carries severe consequences, including failing the course and/or suspension from the university.

Accommodations
If you have been issued a letter of academic accommodation from Disabilities Services and Support, please see me in the first two weeks of the semester to work out the necessary arrangements. If you need an accommodation and have not yet obtained one, please set up an appointment with Beth Rodgers-Kay (brodgers@brandeis.edu) in the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Office (x63470, access@brandeis.edu).

Formatting and submission
All essays will be submitted to me electronically on Latte. All essays should be in correct MLA or Chicago formatting (which one will be specified for each assignment).

Late work & extensions
If you are afraid your work will not be completed in time, contact me at least 24 hours before the due date and arrange for an extension. Otherwise, late work will be penalized by a third of a grade per day (B+ → B, B- and so on). Work more than 2 weeks late without notice will be considered missing and cannot be made up.

Optional revision
At the end of the semester, you will have the option to submit a revision of either your close reading essay or lens essay for an improved grade if you received a B+ or below. Revisions will yield up to 2 grades higher on that essay (Ex: B- → B+).

Four-credit course
Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours per week in preparation for class (readings, writing assignments, etc.).

Communication
I will communicate any changes to the syllabus and schedule to you by email, through Latte. You are responsible for checking your e-mail and keeping on top of any announcements.
**Group Norms**
The reciprocal process of teaching and learning requires a unique level of emotional and intellectual vulnerability. Such a process, of course, doesn’t occur in a vacuum: oppression and privilege, prejudice and preference are at least as operative in the classroom as they are everywhere else. All the messages we have received from birth about who we are, how we should behave, and what we believe influence our educational practices, often without our conscious knowledge. The risk of being vulnerable, then, is one that implicates us quite profoundly within a system of socialization and identity-formation.

I deeply believe that it is more dangerous to ignore this risk than to take it. One way to acknowledge our socialization productively is to establish Group Norms—a set of guidelines that will help us understand how we exist in relationship to one another within the space of the classroom. Something as apparently simple as mapping our interrelated social positions is, in fact, an effective method of resisting the multisystemic oppressions and privileges that envelop our lived experiences. Like all of our beliefs, the following list will be in constant flux, and we will frequently refer to it as we learn from each other.

In designing and teaching this course, I have committed myself to uphold the following norms at all times. By enrolling in it, you are making a similar commitment to:

1. Assume good faith and take responsibility for impact.
2. Assume that we do not know everything about privilege and oppression.
3. Be open to new perspectives, but be honest about how those perspectives make you feel.
4. Make transformative mistakes.
5. Look for learning moments where there seem to be none.
6. Expect and accept non-closure, especially when discussions involve personal experience.
7. Expect and accept confidentiality. Share your learning, not the words of others.
8. Exist in empathy with each other.

The very nature of this course demands that we confront difficult realities about race, gender, ability, economic status, and other sites of social stratification. I encourage you to reach out to me whenever you have questions or concerns.
Course Schedule

All assignments and readings are due by class time.

Unit 1: Close Reading

Week 1
(W) Aug. 29
Introductions, syllabus overview
“America” by Allen Ginsberg*
“The 17-Year-Old & the Gay Bar” by Danez Smith*

Week 2
(M) Sept. 3
No Class, Labor Day

(W) Sept. 5
“No Poem About My Rights” by June Jordan*
“Power” by Audre Lorde*

(Th) Sept. 6
Brandeis Monday
Due: Pre-Draft Assignment 1.1 — Close reading a stanza

Week 3
(M) Sept. 10
No Class, Rosh Hashanah

(W) Sept. 12
“What Kind of Times Are These” by Adrienne Rich*
from *Citizen* by Claudia Rankine*
Due: Pre-Draft Assignment 1.2 — Formulating a thesis statement
Library Session with Zoe: Introduction to LTS & its resources

Week 4
(M) Sept. 17
Due: Pre-Draft Assignment 1.3 — Outline for your rough draft

(W) Sept. 19
No Class, Yom Kippur

Week 5
(M) Sept. 24
No Class, Sukkot

(T) Sept. 25
Brandeis Monday
Due: Rough Draft & Cover Letter — Close Reading

(W) Sept. 26
Peer Review

Week 6
(M) Oct. 1
No Class, Shemini Atzeret

(T) Oct. 2
Conferences
(W) Oct. 3
Conferences

Unit 2: Lens Essay

(F) Oct. 5
*They Live* (1988), dir. John Carpenter*

**Due: Final Draft — Close Reading**

**Week 7**
(M) Oct. 8
Introduction to the Lens Essay
*Network* (1976), dir. Sidney Lumet*
Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, Chapters 1-4 (pp. 1-30)

(W) Oct. 10
Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, Chapters 7 & 9 (pp. 54-61, 71-81)
Due: Pre-Draft assignment 2.1 — Reverse Outline

**Week 8**
(M) Oct. 15
*Indigenous Peoples’ Day*
“Indian Resistance and Thanksgiving Declarations” by Howard Zinn*
Due: Pre-Draft Assignment 2.2 — Mini lens analysis

(W) Oct. 17
Due: Pre-draft 2.3 — Outline for rough draft

**Week 9**
(M) Oct. 22
Peer Review
Due: Rough Draft & Cover Letter — Lens Essay

(T) Oct. 23
Conferences

(W) Oct. 24
Conferences

Unit 3: Research Essay

**Week 10**
(M) Oct. 29
Introduction to the Research Essay
**Due: Final Draft — Lens Essay**

(W) Oct. 31
Zotero Session with Paige Eggebrecht, Library Session with Zoe Weinstein,
Introduction to annotated bibliographies
Due: Pre-Draft Assignment 3.1 — Essay Proposal

**Week 11**
(M) Nov. 5
Discussion of research topics and proposals
Due: Pre-Draft Assignment 3.2 — Annotated bibliography
(W) Nov. 7  Research workshop: Refining topics, appraising sources, framing your argument

Week 12
(M) Nov. 12  Research workshop, cont’d
Due: Pre-Draft Assignment 3.3 — Research Essay Outline

(T) Nov. 13  Conferences

(W) Nov. 14  Conferences

Week 13
(M) Nov. 19  Due: Rough Draft & Cover Letter — Research Essay

Nov 21 – 23  Thanksgiving Break

Week 14
(M) Nov. 26  Peer Review
Due: Post-Draft 3.4 — Reverse Outline

(W) Nov. 28  Final Research Presentations

Week 15
(M) Dec. 3  Final Research Presentations

(W) Dec. 5  Final Research Presentations

Week 16
(M) Dec. 10  Final Research Presentations

(F) Dec. 14  Due: Final Draft — Research Essay
UWS Outcomes

**Critical thinking, reading, and writing**
- Use writing and discussion to work through and interpret complex ideas from readings and other texts.
- Critically analyze your own and others’ choices regarding language and form (e.g., in student texts or formally published texts)
- Engage in multiple modes of inquiry using multiple texts
- Incorporate significant research into writing that engages a question and/or topic and uses it as a central theme for a substantive, research-based essay
- Use writing to support interpretations of texts, and understand that there are multiple interpretations of texts
- Consider and express the relationship of your own ideas to the ideas of others

**Processes**
- Use written, visual, and/or experience-based texts as tools to develop ideas for writing
- Understand that writing takes place through recurring processes of invention, revision, and editing
- Develop successful, flexible strategies for your own writing through the processes of invention, revision, and editing
- Experience and understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing
- Learn to critique your own and others’ work productively and respectfully
- Be reflective about your own writing processes

**Knowledge of conventions**
- Understand the conventions of particular genres of writing
- Use conventions associated with a range of dialects, particularly standardized written English (but not necessarily limited to it)
- Recognize and address patterns in your writing that unintentionally diverge from patterns expected by their audience
- Practice using academic citation systems (MLA and Chicago) for documenting work