

# Academic English Reading and Discussion

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Dr. Chi-fang Chen

cf.chen@mx.nthu.edu.tw

## Description

This course aims to help students develop skills to read materials at advanced level. Practically, such skills will be helpful for students to read academic writing with a good grasp of common academic conventions regardless of discipline. Critically, this course encourages students to engage in intellectual conversation and critical thinking and cultivate their formal sensibility and cultural taste. Students who are interested in intellectual activities through critical discussion, and in exercising critical reflections on a variety of topics, such as economy, (liberal) education, technology, labor, society, politics, language, and literature, etc., are particularly welcome to sign up for the course. Reading materials will be selected based on a number of intellectual and critical topics: university education and the humanities, professionalism and economic life, language and humor, work and leisure, and media technology, among others (see syllabus below). Students are encouraged to critique or share thoughts on these topics through a close reading of selected materials during class discussions.

## Objectives

Students are expected to acquire and perform the following reading skills:

- ❖ Critically engage with intellectual compositions via articulate and detailed commentary, especially during peer critical exchange
- ❖ Identify main ideas and interpret purposes and implications
- ❖ Analyze organization and lines of reasoning
- ❖ Evaluate quality and intellectual/critical rigor of writing
- ❖ Identify and analyze some basic rhetorical and literary devices in fictional and poetic language
- ❖ Read academic writing efficiently, with a grasp of common academic conventions regardless of disciplinary specificity

## Required Reading

A course packet with selections from the following works:

Noel Carroll, *Humour* (2013);

Stefan Collini, *Speaking of Universities* (2017);

William Davis, *The Happiness Industry* (2014);

Adam Greenfield, *Radical Technologies* (2017); and

Andy Merrifield, *The Amateur* (2017)

## Course Requirements & Assessment

1. Attendance and class discussion 15%

Classes feature group discussions on weekly themes (see syllabus below). Students are encouraged to not only exchange opinions but also debate on critical and controversial issues with the teacher and classmates.

2. Summary & critique 3\*10%

Three writing tasks based on select texts from required reading. Students must submit a summary and critique of the weekly text(s) prior to class sessions for peer review in class.

3. Oral presentation on designated texts 25%

Students will be assigned with designated reading materials, on which they shall present and lead class discussions.

4. Term reading comprehension exercise paper 30%

A paper with terminological and essay questions based on the texts read and discussed in this course. Students should write a response to each question based on their comprehension of those texts. A postgraduate alternative to undergraduate final exam.

**Calendar (tentative)**

Week	Topics	Texts
1	Introduction	Lecture: on the ethics of reading
2	Universities today	<i>Speaking of Universities</i> , ch. 11
3	Universities today (cont'd)	<i>Speaking of Universities</i> , ch. 11
4	Universities today (cont'd)	<i>Speaking of Universities</i> , ch. 11
5	Radical technologies: brave new world or dystopia?	Adam Greenfield, "The Sociology of the Smartphone", from <i>Radical Technologies</i>
6	Sociology in the networking age	"The Sociology of the Smartphone"
7	Positivity and productivity	<i>The Happiness Industry</i> , ch. 4
8	Positivity and productivity (cont'd)	<i>The Happiness Industry</i> , ch. 4
9	Professionalism & everyday life: an age of technocracy?	<i>The Amateur</i> , ch. 1
10	The amateur's vision of life	<i>The Amateur</i> , ch. 1
11	Humor & human communication	Noel Carroll, <i>Humour</i> , chap. 3
12	Humor & human communication (cont'd)	<i>Humour</i> , chap. 3
13	Humor & human communication (cont'd)	<i>Humour</i> , chap. 3
14	The condition of higher education	<i>Speaking of Universities</i> , ch. 5
15	The condition of higher education (cont'd)	<i>Speaking of Universities</i> , ch. 5
16	Public higher education	<i>Speaking of Universities</i> , ch. 8
17	Utility and open-ended enquiry	<i>Speaking of Universities</i> , ch. 8
18	Wrap-up	(Term reading comprehension exercise paper due)