

There's No Place Like Home

**IDS 100-16
First Year Seminar
Hope College
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“The word *home* summons up a place . . . where you feel, or did feel once, uniquely *at home*, which is to say a place where you feel you belong, and which in some sense belongs to you, a place where you feel that all is somehow ultimately well even if things aren't going all that well at any given moment.”

Frederick Buechner, *The Longing for Home*, p. 7

“Home is where we are safe. It is no longer a question of competition, for home is a place of communion. ‘Going home’ is a journey to the heart of who we are, a place where we can be ourselves and welcome the reality of our beauty and our pain.”

Jean Vanier, *Our Journey Home*, p. xi

“It is clear that the issue of home strikes troubling chords in our society. Have modern societies abandoned the ties with extended families and community, the natural world, ancestors, and the gods that provided meaningful connections of home in traditional times?”

Barbara Bonner, *Sacred Ground: Writings About Home*, p. ix

Yet over and over again I have left home. I have fled the hands of blessing and run off to faraway places searching for love! This is the great tragedy of my life and of the lives of so many I meet on my journey.

Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal*, p. 39

“You don't have to have left home to become a refugee.”

Walter Truett Anderson, *Reality Isn't What It Used To Be*, p. 27

“By ‘economy’ I do not mean ‘economics,’ which is the study of money-making, but rather the ways of human house-keeping, the ways by which the human household is situated and maintained within the household of nature. . . .Probably the most urgent question now facing the people who would adhere to the Bible is this: what sort of economy would be responsible to the holiness of life?”

Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community*, pp. 99-100

“Homeward bound, I wish I was homeward bound. Home, where my thought's escapin; home, where my music's playin; home, where my love lies waitin silently for me.”

Simon and Garfunkel, “Homeward Bound”

“There's no place like home, there's no place like home!”

Dorothy, “The Wizard of Oz”

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Hometeam. Homelessness. Homecoming. The meanings and feelings of home run very deep in human consciousness. Allegiances to home fuel athletic rivalries and instigate wars. The longing for home sustains soldiers and motivates pilgrims. Making a home is complex—for beavers building a lodge as well as for humans fashioning a culture on this our home planet. But what exactly is a home? Why do some people lose their home? What does it mean to leave home (to come to college, for example)? How do you make a home? What does it mean to be “at home” not just in terms of a place but emotionally, intellectually, and religiously speaking?

In this course we will explore these and other related questions concerning the meaning of home, homelessness, and homecoming. And this exploration will involve reading classic texts and contemporary essays, viewing movies and listening to music, writing papers and doing journals. As Dorothy emphatically states: “There’s no place like home.” But what does she mean? Is she right? What do you think?

THE PURPOSE OF THE FIRST YEAR SEMINAR

FYS is an opportunity to explore questions, topics, and concerns that are of interest and importance to you—which touch on some of the hopes and fears of human existence. We will discuss ideas from a variety of disciplines in such a way as to introduce you to the kinds of learning you will pursue here at Hope College. Expect these classes to be intellectually challenging, especially as they prompt us to examine or reexamine our own beliefs and basic convictions. I hope that this class will be a place of safety in which we together are willing to take risks in the search for truth.

In the effort to foster both the sense of courage necessary to undertake this search and the sense of humility necessary to confront our own ignorance, FYS will stress two features: (1) the active involvement of you in your own learning, and (2) your willingness and ability to work with each other and collaborate in this pursuit. Only if we are actively engaged in inquiry will these questions take on significance in our lives. But such engagement need not be pursued alone. Given the different talents, interests, and intellectual skills among the persons in this class, each of you has much to contribute and by working together we enhance the prospects of learning more about ourselves and our world.

To achieve these goals, FYS is set up as a seminar. As a student in this seminar, you will need to be reading, thinking, feeling, listening, talking, and writing, but you will be much more responsible for the direction of the class. The quality of the discussions, and ultimately of the class as a whole, depends very much on you. Come to class prepared, having carefully done the reading. Be ready to ask questions of the texts and of each other. Be willing to defend your views, and to change your mind. This kind of class is different, and maybe a bit scary, but in the end it can be very exciting.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To provide opportunities for you the student to . . .

1. Read literary texts critically.
2. Discuss texts honestly and respectfully in a seminar format.
3. Articulate your insights concisely and coherently in writing.
4. Orally present your ideas clearly for discussion and communal reflection.
5. Learn about the nature and purpose of a liberal arts education.
6. Eagerly explore an intellectually important topic with an instructor and peers.
7. Reflect with care on your own life.

READINGS

1. Steven Bouma-Prediger. *Beyond Homelessness: Christian Faith in a Culture of Displacement*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
2. Elton Bruins and Larry Wagenaar. *Campus Alive: A Walking Tour of Hope College*.
3. Scott Russell Sanders. *Hunting for Hope*. Boston: Beacon, 1998.
4. Various other readings will be handed out in class.

EVALUATION

1. Class participation, including in-class writing (30%)
2. Out of class events (5%)
3. Reading the cityscape paper (5%)
4. Liberal arts reflection paper (10%)
5. Journal (20%)
6. Interview essay (10%)
7. Group research project (10%)
8. Response paper (10%)

CLASS PARTICIPATION

As indicated above in the description of the first year seminar, this course is based largely on discussion. We are in this together. We all need to participate in order for the course to be a success. So come to class with reading done, written responses completed, willing to talk, emote, question, laugh, cry. If you often are quiet in large groups, then rely on your journal or written work to give voice to your views. In order to learn, we need to hear from you.

So what are the characteristics of a good comment in a group discussion? A comment is valuable when it is: insightful (comes from thoughtful reflection), relevant (pertains to the topic at hand), creative (brings interesting new ideas to bear on the subject), discerning (sees the real problems and assumptions at stake), courageous (dares to raise a perspective which challenges the views of others), sensitive (is kind and gentle to those who don't agree), honest (truthful and genuine).

OUT OF CLASS EVENTS

Though a small college, Hope has a rich extracurricular life. There are, for example, guest lectures, poetry readings, musical recitals, dance concerts, theatre productions, presentations of faculty and student research. Attend three such events during the course of the semester. After each event write a one page (300 words maximum) reflection paper in which you briefly describe the event and identify one thing you learned. All due at the end of the semester.

READING THE CITYSCAPE PAPER

Spend a couple hours observing an off-campus place or community event, e.g., the Farmer's Market, Holland Museum, Pilgrim Home Cemetery. Then write a 2 page (600 words max) paper describing what this place or event reveals about Holland, Michigan. Due Sept. 10.

LIBERAL ARTS REFLECTION PAPER

Where do you want to be in four years? What kind of person do you want to become? What are your personal goals, dreams, and aspirations for your college education?

First, write down your personal goals and dreams. Next, read about the philosophy of education and objectives of the curriculum here at Hope (pp. 97-98 of the Hope College Catalog). Which of these goals do you find inspiring, puzzling, intimidating? Which are in accord with your own dreams and which are in conflict? What parts of the liberal arts education described in the Catalog matter most to you, and why? Finally, write a 3 page paper (900 words max): 1) articulating your own personal goals, 2) comparing your goals with the "Philosophy of Education" at Hope, and 3) describing the kind of person you think you will become by the end of your college career. Due Oct. 1.

JOURNAL

A. What you need to do

State the author's main point, and then either formulate one relevant question or briefly comment (4-5 sentences) on something which struck you about the reading(s).

B. Groundrules

1. You must make at least one entry for each week's reading.
2. The entries need not be type or computer written, but they must be readable.
3. You may be creative by including, in addition to your brief written response, cartoons, songs, drawings, photographs, etc.
4. The journals will be collected at times announced in class.
5. Emphasis is on your careful reading of and insightful response to the texts.

INTERVIEW ESSAY

What is the experience of home for someone from another country? What is it like to go away for an extended period and come home? Interview a fellow Hope student from another country, or someone who has gone abroad for a year, to gain a better understanding of their experience of home. Sample interview questions will be provided. After the interview write a 3 page essay (900 words max) on what you learned about home, homesickness, homelessness, homemaking, homecoming. Also, you will present your findings to the class. Due Oct. 20 or 22.

GROUP RESEARCH PROJECT

With 2 or 3 of your classmates you will do research on various kinds of homelessness and then present your findings to the class. For example, with regard to socio-economic homelessness, how many homeless people are in Holland, in Ottawa County, in the USA? What are some reasons for ecological homelessness? What contributes to our sense of postmodern spiritual homelessness? The details for this project will be spelled out later in the semester. Due Nov. 17 or 19.

RESPONSE PAPER

A. Topics

1. On Homelessness

Barbara Bonner claims: “It is clear that the issue of home strikes troubling chords in our society. Have modern societies abandoned the ties with extended families and community, the natural world, ancestors, and the gods that provided meaningful connections of home in traditional times?” Do you agree with her first sentence? Why or why not? How do you answer her question? What evidence do you have, especially from your own personal experience and/or observations, for your view?

2. On Homecoming

Jean Vanier speaks of homecoming in this way: “Home is where we are safe. It is no longer a question of competition, for home is a place of communion. ‘Going home’ is a journey to the heart of who we are, a place where we can be ourselves and welcome the reality of our beauty and our pain.” Describe an experience of homecoming in your own life. What was it like? What did you feel? What brought it about? How have you learned from it?

3. On Homemaking

Scott Russell Sanders claims that though we humans are a wandering species we must become “residents who keep watch over what is preserved and what is lost, who see beauty that escapes the frame of the tourist’s windshield or the investor’s spreadsheet.” Thus we must become a “placed people” who know our home place. Furthermore, he argues, we can recognize and honor the diversity of other places, peoples, and cultures only if we know our own, since “local knowledge is the grounding for global knowledge.” Do you agree? If so, then how can you become an inhabitant of your place? If not, why not? In either case, how can you better offer homemaking hospitality to those others (human and nonhuman) around you?

B. Groundrules

1. Write any **one** paper from the list of three topics.
2. Due Nov. 12.
3. Maximum of 900 words or approximately 3 pages typed double-spaced.
4. Ten points off for each week late.
5. You must use gender inclusive language.
6. You need not consult any books or experts.
7. Emphasis is on the depth of your own personal reflections presented concisely in clear, well-written prose.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Question/Topic	Assignment Due
8-23 (Sat)	Who are we?/Introductions of students	
8-27	What questions will we seek to answer?/Intro to course	BH, pp. 1-7
9-1	What home have you left behind?/ Leaving home	BH, pp. 38-45
9-3	What kind of place is Hope College?/Walking tour of Hope	Bruins and Wagenaar
9-8	What does it mean to be at home?/Houses and homes	BH, pp. 56-67
9-10	Looking for home in the Library?/Library orientation	cityscape paper
9-13 (Sat)	What's up on the Kalamazoo?/Canoe trip	
9-15	Does anybody feel at home?/Psychological homelessness	Vanier handout
9-17	How can I feel at home at this time?/ Stages of life	Vanier handout
9-22	Who is nobody's child?/Socio-economic homelessness	BH, pp. 76-92
9-24	Why socio-economic homelessness?/Structural analysis	BH, pp. 92-112
9-28 (Sun)	Can you get lost in the Saugatuck Dunes?/Hiking Trip	
9-29	What can we do about folks on the street?/Homemaking	BH, pp. 121-152
10-1	no class: Critical Issues Symposium	liberal arts paper
10-6	Is creation groaning?/Ecological homelessness	BH, pp. 158-169
10-8	Why ecological homelessness?/Socio-cultural analysis	BH, pp. 169-189
10-13	no class: Fall Break	
10-15	What can we do about an aching earth?/Earthkeeping	BH, pp. 196-229
10-20	Student presentations on interview essay	interview essay
10-22	Student presentations on interview essay	interview essay
10-27	Why is Ryan Bingham homeless?/Postmodern homelessness	BH, pp. 239-246
10-29	Why PM homelessness?/Religio-cultural analysis	BH, pp. 246-263
11-3	What does it mean to come home?/"Places in the Heart" film	8-10 pm in VWL
11-5	What can we do about PM homelessness?/Sojourning	BH, pp. 271-304
11-10	Why have hope?/Homecoming and hope	BH, pp. 313-327
11-12	Homelessness, homecoming, homemaking?/ Discussion	response paper
11-17	Student presentations on group research project	research project
11-19	Student presentations on group research project	research project

11-24	So where is hope?/Sources of hope	Sanders, chs. 1-7
11-26	So where is hope?/More sources of hope	Sanders, chs. 8-15
12-1	How then do we live?/Home economics	Berry handout
12-3	Where do we go from here?/Journeying home	

ADVICE FROM FORMER STUDENTS

Keep up with the reading. Class discussions are much more worthwhile when you can contribute.

Be yourself and participate in class conversations. Come with an open mind.

This class is for you, so be honest with yourself in your personal reflections and be willing to share your ideas with others.

Be sure to journal regularly. Don't wait until it is due. And get to know each other.

Don't look at the outside activities as a chore. Pick ones that interest you and enjoy, since they can be a lot of fun and educational.

Read, read, read. You are cheating yourself out of a wonderful growing experience if you don't.

Get to know your classmates and enjoy. Take to heart the readings and apply them to your everyday life.

Go to the outside activities mentioned by BP. You will be surprised by how many you didn't think you would like but ended up loving.

Think about what you read and be open with your thoughts. Relax, this is a great class.

The reading assigned is designed to expand your knowledge, so the more critically you read each text, the more you will get out of it.

Participate in class discussions and don't be afraid to comment and ask questions.

Be open-minded to the opinions and views of others. Don't be afraid to share your thoughts and feelings. This class is about learning from each other!

Learn to like Bruce Cockburn. Do as many out of the outside of class activities as possible, for they are a great experience.

If you are not one to orally state your views in class, use the journal and papers to do this.

Have fun!!!