

FW 2025-26

AP/EN 3073 6.0A (Y)	The Small Town in Film and Literature
Course Director:	Prof. Karen Valihora valihora@yorku.ca
Time:	Monday, 11:30 am – 2:20 pm
Delivery Format:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SEMINAR
Description:	<p>This course explores the idea of the golden age to illuminate the small town and village settings of literature and film. The dreamlike harmony and integration of village life as it features in major twentieth-century films, such as <i>Breakfast at Tiffany's</i> (1961), <i>It's a Wonderful Life</i> (1946), <i>The Truman Show</i> (1998), and <i>Groundhog Day</i> (1993), are not new; no matter how far back in time we go, we find the same yearning to recover a perfect place and time — one that can only be imagined as lost. Beginning with Hesiod's myth of the golden age, this course traces that myth from pastoral poetry through major novels by Jane Austen, E.M. Forster, Agatha Christie, George Orwell, Eleanor Catton, Patricia Highsmith, and contemporary film, starting with Hitchcock. All of the works explored in this course use the small town as a backdrop, to prioritize social interconnection, and to explore and define the parameters of realism and everyday life. We will pay special attention to how setting determines the major features of stories being told even as it fades into the background. Towards the close of the course the function of an imagined community in the creation and maintenance of liberal democracy becomes a key question.</p>
Category:	A
Historical Requirement:	N/A
Requirements:	One short (900 words) paper on a myth or poem 10%; December reading exam 15%; December term paper (2000 words) 15%; seminar paper (1200 words; 15%) April exam 15%, final essay (2000 words) 20%. All year: participation, 10%.
Reading List:	<p><u>Selected Readings:</u> Hesiod, <i>Works and Days</i> (in course kit); Theocritus, <i>Idylls</i> (in course kit); Virgil, <i>Eclogues</i> (Penguin); Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i> (trans. A.D. Melville) Oxford; Andrew Marvell, <i>The Mower Poems</i>; Jane Austen, <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> (Norton); Sigmund Freud, <i>Civilization and Its Discontents</i> (Penguin) and selected essays (course kit); George Orwell, <i>Coming up for Air</i> (1939) and <i>1984</i> (1948).</p>

	<u>Selected Films:</u> Frank Capra, <i>It's a Wonderful Life</i> (1946); Blake Edwards, <i>Breakfast at Tiffany's</i> (1961); Alfred Hitchcock, <i>Shadow of a Doubt</i> (1949); Harold Ramis, <i>Groundhog Day</i> (1993); Peter Weir, <i>The Truman Show</i> (1998).
Open To:	Years 3, 4