

AMST 410
The Office: White-Collar Work in American Culture

Fall 2019
MW 1-2:15pm
EC-011

Instructor: Dr. Carrie Lane
Office Hours: M 2:30-4:30pm; W 9-10am; & by appointment
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Catalog Description: Interdisciplinary exploration of history and culture of white-collar work through film, television, novels, ethnographies and historical works. Topics include: work and identity; gender, race and corporate hierarchy; work/life balance; office design; corporate ethics; flexible work arrangements; and layoffs.

Course Description: While most Americans will work in an office at some point in their lives, few have the opportunity to examine the office and office workers in cultural or historical perspective. This interdisciplinary course uses film, television, fiction, and scholarly works to explore the history and culture of white-collar work from the 1870s to the present. Topics include: gender, race, and hierarchy; ideas of merit, success, and upward mobility; the relationship between work and home; management theory; workplace design; downsizing and layoffs; business ethics; and the future of office work.

Prerequisites: Completion of G.E. Category D.2 or Category D.3 or graduate standing.

Learning Goals and Objectives: Like most American Studies classes, this class aims to enhance your understanding of America's diverse past, to improve your ability to critically analyze a range of cultural and artistic evidence, and to guide you to communicate your interpretations in class discussions and written work. In this particular class:

- Students will come to understand white-collar work and representations thereof from a uniquely interdisciplinary and cultural perspective. They will learn about white-collar work and workers from a variety of cultural documents, including advertisements, films (documentary and feature), office floorplans, and television programs.
- Students will analyze how white-collar work has been represented in American popular culture in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. In doing so they will gain skills and perspective that they can later apply to the analysis and critique of US popular cultural representations more broadly.

- Students will use the study of work as a lens through which to examine broader aspects of American history and culture, such as hierarchy and discrimination, gender relations, the American Dream, workers' rights, the work ethic, and the nuclear family.
- Students will present oral and written analyses of a sampling of the above subjects. A variety of assignments will demonstrate students' comprehension of course readings, films, and discussions, as well as their ability to draw connections between course materials in the process of crafting an original, well-evidenced argument.

Required Texts:

- Robert Jackall, *Moral Mazes: The World of Corporate Managers*
- All additional required readings available on Titanium

I do not require a specific edition of any book, so you may choose to purchase used copies or older editions from any bookstore or sites such as half.com. CSUF library and the American Studies reading room in GH-210a may also have free copies of course books for you to borrow.

Course Requirements:

Attendance: Attendance is required. You are allowed up to **three absences** over the semester without hurting your participation grade, because life happens; I do not need to see outside proof for three or fewer absences. If you have a childcare emergency, consider bringing your child to class. After three absences, each additional absence will reduce your final course grade by one half letter grade (5 percentage points), except in extreme and documented circumstances.

Participation: You are expected to have completed the week's readings in time for class each week. Your **class participation grade** will depend not only on attendance and frequency of participation, but also on the substance of your participation, and whether your comments and questions contribute to the creation of an engaged and intellectually rigorous learning community. If you cannot participate verbally or need encouragement or assistance in doing so, it is your responsibility to meet with me to discuss strategies for improving your participation level and, if necessary, identifying alternative methods of participation.

Presentations on Weekly Reading: For most Monday class sessions, one or more undergraduate students will be responsible for kicking off class discussion. **By noon on the day before** the class in which they'll be presenting, each student will submit to me three questions for class discussion, along with their own preliminary responses to those questions. Questions should be thoughtful, original, and designed to encourage class discussion. They might concern something you found especially interesting or thought provoking in the reading, or they may put this reading in conversation with previous readings. When possible, reference specific pages, quotations, and/or sections of the reading. After each question you should **write your own preliminary response** to that question. These responses should be approximately one paragraph each (for a total of about three paragraphs).

At least two of your questions must relate **directly** to that week's reading/s. (This means only one question can be the sort that draws us *away* from the reading, such as, "Have you ever experienced X in your own workplace?" or "Is this the same today?" These sorts of questions are good for starting conversation but not as good at keeping us in conversation with the text itself.)

Students presenting on the same week's readings must meet beforehand to ensure their questions do not overlap too much. You and your co-presenter(s) can decide whether you want to alternate questions or do your presentations separately. You may use handouts or audiovisuals for your presentation but you are not required to do so.

You will be graded on the quality of the questions you present to the class as well as your presentation of those questions in class.

Historical Essay: In this short paper (approximately 4 pages) you will discuss the rise of white-collar work, focusing both on the forces that compelled the expansion of offices and office work as well as the challenges these changes posed for corporate employers and employees.

Movie Review & Presentation: For this assignment you'll select a feature film or documentary that focuses on an office or office work. The film can concern any era but must focus on the United States. Your review will be approximately four pages long, and should: 1) briefly describe the movie; 2) discuss what you think the film tells the viewer, intentionally or not, about office work in American culture; and 3) connect your analysis of the film to **at least two** course readings. Be sure to draw on course materials and discussions to frame and bolster your discussion of the film. I will provide a list of possible films; you may select a movie not on the list so long as you receive my prior approval. You cannot review a film we watch together in class. You will also present your analysis of the film in a brief in-class presentation.

Final Paper: Your final paper (minimum 6 pages) will demonstrate your comprehension of course readings, films, and class discussions and will require you to draw thoughtful connections between multiple course readings in the process of making an original and well-evidenced argument. I'll provide more detail on the assignment sheet.

Graduate Students: For all requirements outlined above, graduate students will be expected to demonstrate a higher level of written and oral communication and a greater scope, depth, and length of analysis than that expected of undergraduates. Graduate students will also read **one additional scholarly book** concerning the history or culture of the office in the U.S. You will then **write a review** of approximately 5 pages in which you summarize the book and its core arguments and offer your own assessment of the book's strengths and weaknesses. I will meet with grad students over the course of the semester to determine any additional requirements.

In grading your assignments, I will pay close attention to both substance and form (grammar, spelling, organization, and clarity of expression). In evaluating the substance of an essay, I will examine whether you have demonstrated a critical understanding of course materials **and**

presented and substantiated a coherent thesis or argument. I reserve the right to modify or add assignments throughout the semester.

Calendar of Assignments: All assignments are to be submitted at the beginning of class on the due date unless otherwise specified.

<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Sept. 18	Historical Essay
Nov. 4	Movie Review
Dec. 3	Book Review (grad students only)
Dec. 16	Final Paper

Grading Procedures and Standards:

<u>Undergraduates</u>		<u>Graduate Students</u>	
Historical Essay	25%	Historical Essay	25%
Movie Review & Pres.	20%	Movie Review & Pres.	20%
Final Paper	30%	Final Paper	30%
Presentation on Weekly Readings	15%	Book Review	15%
Class Participation	10%	Class Participation	10%
A+ 100% or higher	B- 80-81	D 62-67%	
A 92-99%	C+ 78-79%	D- 60-61%	
A- 90-91%	C 72-77%	F 59% or lower	
B+ 88-89%	C- 70-71		
B 82-87%	D+ 68-69%		

The +/- grading system will be used. Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade for every unexcused day overdue. Extensions should be requested well in advance of the assignment deadline. There is no make-up work in this class without a written documented excuse. Please keep all graded assignments so any discrepancies may be easily and fairly straightened out. I reserve the right to add or modify assignments over the course of the semester. There are currently no extra credit assignments for this course; if I elect to add extra-credit assignments during the semester they will be equally available to all students.

Office Hours: I encourage you to attend office hours, or to schedule an individual appointment with me if those hours are not compatible with your schedule. I am always happy to talk with you about the course readings, assignments, and broader questions about American Studies and academic life. It is a true pleasure for me to get to know you and your intellectual interests, so please drop by with any questions or to mull over something you've been thinking about.

Course Policies

Student Information Page: Visit <http://fdc.fullerton.edu/teaching/syllabus.php> for information on:

- Disability Support Services
- Academic Dishonesty Policy
- Emergency Preparedness
- Student Learning Goals and Outcomes
- Library Resources

Course Communication: I regularly use Titanium to communicate with you about this class, so be sure to check your student email address several times each week. I strive to reply to student queries within two business days. If you phone or email me and do not hear a reply within two business days, please re-send your message.

Technical Support: If you encounter technical problems, contact the student help desk at (657) 278-8888 or email StudentITHelpDesk@fullerton.edu. All CSUF students can also go to the [Student Genius Corner \(SGC\)](#) located in the Titan Lab (PLN- 30) for **walk-in help with technology**. Take advantage if you are having a hard time getting used to the Titanium site or your own software: they are there to help. Also, if you would like the latest version of Microsoft Office 365 or Adobe Creative Cloud, you can get **free access to software programs** through our IT page. Click [here](#) to see the many free software options available for students.

Academic Integrity: Any student engaging in plagiarism, cheating, unauthorized collaboration, selling your own lecture notes, or other academic dishonesty will receive a zero on the assignment and will be reported to the Dean of Students Office. For further information, see <http://www.fullerton.edu/integrity/student/> and www.fullerton.edu/senate/PDF/300/UPS300-021.pdf

Classroom Tips and Policies:

- **Get to class on time.** I make most important announcements in the first 5 minutes. Notify me in advance if you need to arrive late or leave early.
- **Cellphones must be off** (not on vibrate) and stowed away (not on your desk). If you need to make or receive a text or call during class time, please leave the classroom in order to do so.
- **No taking notes on computers** or audio recording lectures unless specifically authorized to do so by Disability Support Services. Studies have confirmed that people retain far more information when they write rather than type their notes. Typing up notes, even verbatim, decreases students' retention of the material presented. The use of computers has also proven distracting to the students seated *around* the computer, not just the one using it. I ban computers not because I'm an ogre or a Luddite but because I truly believe it helps you learn.
- Students are expected to conduct themselves in a **professional manner**. Talking when someone else is speaking, sleeping, reading non-class related materials, texting, emailing, etc.,

are unacceptable behaviors and will result in my asking you to leave the classroom. Anything which distracts me or your fellow students is unacceptable. When someone has the floor, whether a fellow student, a guest, or myself, they deserve your undivided attention.

- I expect you to **demonstrate tolerance and respect** in all interactions with your classmates and professor. Disagreement is a natural, even necessary part of the learning process, and we will likely touch on sensitive topics in this class. I hope you will keep an open mind when others express opinions different from your own and approach all interactions in the spirit of intellectual curiosity. If someone offends you, give them the benefit of the doubt by assuming they did not intend to offend and either misspoke or were misinformed; respectfully help them see alternative perspectives or correct their misperceptions. However, if at any time you feel uncomfortable, insulted, or unsafe in our classroom, notify me immediately and we will work together to address the problem.
- **Don't be shy with questions**—I'm happy to answer them, big or small. However, always check the syllabus, website, and/or assignment sheets before contacting me in case the answer is already there (e.g., When is the paper due? What should I read this week?).

Further Resources

Writing Center: Located on the first floor of Pollak Library, the Writing Center offers 30-minute, one-on-one peer tutoring sessions and workshops. Registration and appointment schedules are available at the [Writing Center webpage](#) or by calling (657) 278-3650.

University Learning Center (ULC): The ULC provides CSUF students with academic support including assistance with assignments, general study skills, and computer user needs. The ULC offers one-to-one peer tutoring, online writing review, and many more services. More information can be found on the [ULC website](#).

Disability Support Services: If you have a temporary (like a broken ankle) or permanent disability or believe you may have a disability, visit <http://www.fullerton.edu/dss/> for information about access to closer parking, note-takers, and other forms of support.

Counseling & Psychological Services: CSUF students are eligible for **free** counseling (individual, group, or couples), crisis intervention, and wellness programs. Please click here for an appointment if you feel overwhelmed this semester: <http://www.fullerton.edu/caps/>

The WoMen's Center also provides students with a variety of support opportunities for adult re-entry students, parenting students, LGBTQ students, advocacy for issues of sexual assault, stalking and domestic violence. Please click here for more information: <http://www.fullerton.edu/womenscenter/>

Tuffy's Basic Needs: If you are facing challenges this semester regarding securing food and/or housing, please go to the Tuffy's Basic Needs office in MH-143 or click here: https://www.fullerton.edu/deanofstudents/tuffys_basic_needs/ In addition to on-campus housing, they offer hygiene products, gently used career clothing, and emergency grants for those who qualify.

Graduate Student Food Pantry was established to address the growing food insecurity problem among CSU grad students. The pantry is available to all graduate students through the Graduate Student Success Center (PLS 365) and offers students the use of a microwave, refrigerator, hot water pot, and coffee maker.

Project Rebound supports formerly incarcerated students and those affected by mass incarceration. You can contact them at <https://www.fullerton.edu/rebound/>

Scholarships of all types and amounts are available to CSUF students. Review the list (<http://www.fullerton.edu/financialaid/general/scholarships.php>) and apply for any and all for which you're eligible. You might not be awarded all of them, or even any of them, but it is worth a try, and you definitely won't win if you don't apply.

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

Introduction and Overview

- 8/26** Course overview
- 8/28** **Watch in class:** Episode of “The Office” (2005)
*Decide which week you'll lead class discussion

Transitioning into the White-Collar World

- 9/2** **NO CLASS: Campus closed for Labor Day**
- 9/4** **Read:** Clark Davis, “The Corporate Reconstruction of Middle-Class Manhood”
Watch in class: *The Crowd* (1928) excerpts
- 9/9** **Read:** Angel Kwolek-Folland, *Engendering Business*, Intro., Chapters 2 & 6
- 9/11** Analyze primary documents in class

Historical Essay

- 9/16** **Read:** No Reading
- 9/18** **Due:** **Historical Essay**

Critiques of the Organization Man and Organizational Structure

- 9/23** **Read:** Whyte, *The Organization Man*, Foreword, Part 1, Part 4, Appendix
- 9/25** **Watch in class:** *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, excerpts
- 9/30** **Read:** Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation*, Ch. 2-5
- 10/2** **Watch in class:** Episode of “Mad Men” (2007)

Ethics and Managerial Culture

- 10/7** **Read:** Jackall, *Moral Mazes*, Intro. & Ch. 1-4
- 10/9** **Watch:** “Enron: The Smartest Men in the Room” (2005)
- 10/14** **Read:** Jackall, *Moral Mazes*, Ch. 5-8 & Author’s Note
- 10/16** Ethical dilemmas brainstorm

Inequality in Office Life

10/21 Read: Pierce, "Racing for Innocence"

DiTomaso, "How Social Networks Drive Black Unemployment"

Chen, "The State of the Asian in Corporate America"

10/23 Analyze primary documents in class

10/28 Read: Kinsey & Co., "Women in the Workplace: 2018"

Goldstein, "The Open Secret of Anti-Mom Bias at Work"

10/30 Analyze primary documents in class

Movie Review

11/4 Due: Movie Review: Come prepared to tell the class about your movie review

11/6 NO CLASS: Professor Lane at American Studies Association Conference

Insecurity and the Restructuring of Corporate Employment

11/11 NO CLASS: Campus closed for Veterans Day

11/13 Read: Newman, *Falling from Grace*, Ch. 3

Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character*, Preface, Ch. 1, 7-8

11/18 Read: Barley and Kunda, *Gurus, Hired Guns, and Warm Bodies*, Ch. 1 & 13

11/20 Analyze primary documents in class

11/25 NO IN-PERSON CLASS—online discussion post in lieu of in-class meeting

* * * **FALL BREAK** * * *

The Integration of Work, Leisure, and Home Life

12/2 Read: Hochschild, "There's No Place like Work"

Gladwell, "Designs for Working"

Anders, Review of Perlow's *Sleeping with your Smartphone*

12/4 Due: (Grad Students Only) Book Review (*come prepared to discuss your review*)

12/9 Read: Dave Eggers, "We Like You So Much and Want to Know You Better"

12/11 Homework: Bring a representation of the future of office work

12/16 Due Monday: Final Paper