

American Studies 501 THEORY AND METHODS

California State University, Fullerton
Fall 2014
Tuesdays, 7:00-9:45 PM
UH-319

AMST 501-01, #14857
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Office Hours (UH-415): Wednesdays, 1-3, and by appointment

Course Description

This seminar introduces graduate students to the field of American Studies. It examines a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches scholars use in the study of American culture. It also explores the history and development of American Studies as a discipline and scholarly enterprise.

The course is organized around seven subject areas: work, consumption, and leisure; race, ethnicity, and class formation; gender and sexuality; transnationalism; popular culture and expressive forms; natural and built environments; and institutions and ideals. Each subject area represents a major focus of interdisciplinary inquiry in American Studies. Class time will be spent discussing various approaches in depth. In written assignments, students will have the opportunity to apply American Studies theories and methods to topics of their choice. The overarching goal of this course is to enhance students' ability to discuss, research, write, and think critically about American culture.

Required Texts

- Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 1983
- Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*, Harvard University Press, 2001
- George Chauncy, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*, Basic Books, 1995
- Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*, University of California Press, 2001
- Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, Wesleyan University Press, 1994
- William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*, Hill and Wang; Revised edition, 2003
- Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1*, Vintage, 1991
- Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *Kansas Charley: The Boy Murderer*, Penguin Books, 2003

There will be additional assigned readings available as URLs or PDF documents for download on the course Titanium site.

American Studies Department M.A. Student Learning Goals and Outcomes

Develop a rigorous concept of culture and cultural process as well as an interdisciplinary sensibility, demonstrating an advanced understanding of connections among the social sciences and the humanities.

- Develop an advanced interdisciplinary interpretive framework for studying American culture, cultural diversity, and cultural processes in ways that will enable students to solve practical and theoretical problems
- Have an advanced knowledge of the history of the field of American Studies—its theories, methods, and intellectual justifications—and of at least one outside disciplinary field
- Develop an advanced understanding of the theoretical and methodological approaches used in American Studies and interdisciplinary scholarship

Gain a thorough understanding of cultural diversity by examining the creative tension between unity and multiplicity in American experiences.

- Identify a variety of examples of cultural diversity and commonality in America's past and present, demonstrating an advanced understanding of the similarities, differences, and relationships among the multitude of American groups
- Explain how categories of difference—including race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality—are culturally constructed and vary according to historical, regional, and social contexts
- Understand and demonstrate how cultural beliefs and practices have played a role in both the exercise of and resistance to power throughout American history
- Articulate a critical awareness of the conceptual approaches to the study of cultural diversity

Understand and interpret the ways in which culture creates meaning and guides behavior.

- Critically analyze and interpret a spectrum of cultural documents and expressive forms, ranging from popular to folk to elite expressions, from mass media to material culture
- Employ both historical and contemporary perspectives in order to situate these documents in relevant individual and social as well as local, national, and global contexts
- Develop an advanced understanding of the theoretical approaches to the study of culture

Demonstrate advanced research, writing, and expressive skills to see connections among complex materials and to clearly communicate an understanding of the underlying meanings and causes of cultural/historical events.

- Design and carry out original interdisciplinary research projects on American culture
- Discover primary and secondary sources (hard copy as well as digital) using the library's resources
- Analyze and synthesize material from primary and secondary sources in order to create a coherent argument based on evidence
- Develop an original thesis and support that thesis through the thoughtful use of a variety of properly cited sources
- Communicate research findings through clear, well-organized written and oral presentations
- Develop advanced critical thinking, writing, and interpretive skills
- Develop the ability to adhere to scholarly conventions in research, writing and documentation

Become informed and engaged American citizens, able to situate current political and social issues within their historical and cultural contexts.

- Develop an advanced understanding of the historical origins and cultural significance of current movements for social change.
- Situate the historical and contemporary study of American culture in a global context, demonstrating an understanding of the ways American culture has been shaped by diaspora, colonialism, and globalization

Course Assignments and Grading Standards

Applied Practice Papers (2)

Twice in the course of the semester you will turn in a 3-5-page paper (double-spaced) in which you apply a subject area approach we have read about to a cultural text of your choice (a written, visual, or audio text, a material object, or a ritual or event). Your paper should 1) briefly summarize the text you have chosen; 2) briefly summarize the approach you are using AND explain why you think it is helpful or relevant for analyzing your chosen text; 3) offer an original analysis of the text.

For example, you could use what we learn about race, ethnicity, and class formation to analyze a news report on Ferguson. You could apply theories of popular culture and expressive forms to an analysis of a film or song or television show. After reading about natural and built environments, you could offer your own interpretation of the Cal State Fullerton campus as a space and place.

The two subject areas you choose are up to you. However, your practice paper must be turned in one week (or the next class meeting if there is a holiday/break) after we discuss the particular area.

Sources Paper

You will write a 12-15-page paper (double-spaced) that identifies a focused topic of your choice and surveys the relevant secondary scholarship related to this topic. Your paper must include an extended introductory section that describes your topic in detail and explains how and why you think it is an “American Studies” topic (you must integrate at least three of our course readings in this section). Your paper must also include an annotated bibliography of at least twelve sources (a minimum of ten scholarly articles and two books) that are relevant to the understanding of your topic. What have other scholars already said about your topic and/or about the broader questions it raises? This section will require you to conduct independent research using library databases and resources.

You must have your topic approved ahead of time. Please plan on scheduling an appointment with me to discuss your ideas.

Participation

Required attendance and class participation make up 20% of your final grade. Graduate seminars work best when students are actively engaged with the classroom community, concepts, and coursework. Please come to every class prepared to 1) describe the central argument or theme of the assigned reading; 2) assess the reading for its relative strengths and limitations; 3) raise questions about the reading; 4) connect the course readings to one another; 5) connect the reading to your broader understanding of contemporary and historical issues in American culture; 6) relate the reading to your own experience and/or areas of expertise.

Applied Practice #1	20%
Applied Practice #2	20%
Sources Paper	40%
Participation	20%

A+ 97-100; A 93-96; A- 90-92; B+ 87-89; B 83-86; B- 80-82; C+ 77-79; C 73-76; C- 70-72; D+ 67-69; D 63-66; D- 60-62; F 0-59

Classroom Community—Policies and Etiquette

It is unacceptable to arrive late or to leave class early. If you must leave class early because of an appointment that cannot be missed, make sure that you tell me before class begins.

Cell phones must be on silent or off (not vibrate) and stowed out of sight. No phones on your desk. No text messaging or posting to social media during class. If you do so, you will be asked to leave.

Laptops may only be used for notetaking or consulting assigned readings that you have already downloaded from Titanium; going online is not permitted in class.

An assignment is considered late if it is not turned in at the beginning of the class session in which it is due. Late assignments will be lowered one mark **per day** (NOT per class meeting) after the due date (for example, C to C-).

For this course, +/- grading will be used. No extra credit will be offered. Keep all graded work so that any discrepancies can be easily and fairly straightened out.

Student Accommodations

CSUF complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act by providing a process for disclosing disabilities and arranging for reasonable accommodations. On the CSUF campus, the Office of Disability Support Services has been delegated the authority to certify disabilities and to prescribe specific accommodations for students with documented disabilities. DSS provides support services for students with mobility limitations, learning disabilities, hearing or visual impairments, and other disabilities. Counselors are available to help students meet their individual needs. Prior to receiving this assistance, documentation from a qualified professional source must be submitted to DSS. For more information, contact DSS in UH 101; 657-278-3117.

Academic Integrity

Integrity is an essential component of all students' academic experience. Students who violate university standards of academic integrity are subject to disciplinary sanctions, including failure in the course and suspension from the university. Since dishonesty in any form harms the individual, other students, and the university, policies on academic integrity are strictly enforced. I expect that you will familiarize yourself with the academic integrity guidelines found in the current student handbook. <http://www.fullerton.edu/handbook/>

Campus Emergency Procedures

In case of an earthquake or other emergency, students should be familiar with campus emergency procedures: http://www.fullerton.edu/emergencypreparedness/ep_students.html.

Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Date	Topic / Due
T, Aug. 26	<p>Introduction to Course</p>
T, Sep. 2	<p>Studying Work, Consumption, and Leisure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roy Rosenzweig, <i>Eight Hours for What We Will</i> <p>What is American Studies? part 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Encyclopedia of American Studies</i>, “American Studies: An Overview”
T, Sep. 9	<p>Theorizing Race in American Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nikhil Pal Singh, “Rethinking Race and Nation,” from <i>American Studies: An Anthology</i>, ed. Radway et al. (2009), 9-16. • Walter Johnson, “Turning People Into Products,” from <i>American Studies: An Anthology</i>, ed. Radway et al. (2009), 329-337. • Ramon Gutierrez, “Community, Patriarchy and Individualism: The Politics of Chicano History and the Dream of Equality,” from <i>Locating American Studies: The Evolution of a Discipline</i>, ed. Lucy Maddox, 353-381. • Min Zhou, “Are Asian Americans Becoming White?” <i>Contexts</i> 3:1 (Winter 2004): 29-37. • <i>Encyclopedia of American Studies</i>, “Multiculturalism”
T, Sep. 16	<p>Studying Race, Ethnicity, and Class Formation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linda Gordon, <i>The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction</i> <p>What is American Studies? part 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Encyclopedia of American Studies</i>, “American Studies: Approaches and Concepts”

T, Sep. 23	<p>Theorizing Gender and Sexuality in American Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judith Halberstam, “Drag Kings: Masculinity and Performance,” from <i>Popular Culture: A Reader</i>, ed. Guins and Cruz, 429-440. • Leslie McCall, “The Complexity of Intersectionality,” <i>Signs</i> 30:3 (2005): 1771-1800 • Bryce Traister, “Academic Viagra: The Rise of American Masculinity Studies,” <i>American Quarterly</i> 52:2 (2000): 274-304 • <i>Encyclopedia of American Studies</i>, “Gender and Culture” <u>and</u> “Gay and Lesbian Literature and Studies” 	
T, Sep. 30	<p>Studying Gender and Sexuality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George Chauncy, <i>Gay New York</i> 	
T, Oct. 7	<p>Theorizing Transnational American Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John G. Blair, “First Steps toward Globalization: Nineteenth-Century Exports of American Entertainment Forms, from <i>Here, There and Everywhere: The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture</i>, ed. Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elaine Tyler May, 17-33 • Robin D.G. Kelley, “How the West Was One: The African Diaspora and the Re-Mapping of U.S. History,” from <i>Rethinking American History in a Global Age</i>, ed. Thomas Bender, 123-147 • Amy Kaplan, “Left Alone With America: The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture,” from <i>Cultures of U.S. Imperialism</i>, ed. Kaplan and Donald Pease, 3-21. • Organization of American Historians, “The LaPietra Report: A Report to the Profession” (on rethinking American history in a global age), September 2000. 	

T, Oct. 14	<p>Studying the National and the Global</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melani McAlister, <i>Epic Encounters</i> <p>What is American Studies? part 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Encyclopedia of American Studies</i>, “Transnationalism and American Studies” and “Transnationalism in American Studies” 	
T, Oct. 21	<p>Theorizing Popular Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stuart Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing “The Popular,”” from <i>Popular Culture: A Reader</i>, ed. Guins and Cruz, 64-71. • Albert Murray, “The Blues Idiom and the Mainstream of Contemporary Life,” from <i>The Omni-Americans: Black Experience and American Culture</i>, 54-66. • Janice Radway, “Interpretive Communities and Variable Literacies: The Functions of Romance Reading,” <i>Daedalus</i> 113:3 (Summer 1984), 49-73. • Herman S. Gray, “Television and the Politics of Difference,” from <i>American Studies: An Anthology</i>, ed. Radway et al. (2009), 433-441. • <i>Encyclopedia of American Studies</i>, “Popular Culture” 	
T, Oct. 28	<p>Studying Expressive Forms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tricia Rose, <i>Black Noise</i> 	
T, Nov. 4	<p>Studying Natural and Built Environments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William Cronon, <i>Changes in the Land</i> <p>What is American Studies? part 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sherry Lee Linkon, “Going Public: Teaching and Learning in the Community,” <i>American Quarterly</i> 58:1 (2006): 229-236. 	

T, Nov. 11	<i>Veterans Day – no class meeting</i>	
T, Nov. 18	<p>Theorizing Institutions and Discourse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michel Foucault, <i>The History of Sexuality, An Introduction, Vol. 1</i> 	
T, Nov. 25	<i>Thanksgiving recess</i>	
T, Dec. 2	<p>Studying Institutions and Ideals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joan Jacobs Brumberg, <i>Kansas Charley: The Boy Murderer</i> <p>What is American Studies? part 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leila Zenderland, “Constructing American Studies: Culture, Identity, and the Expansion of the Humanities,” in Hollinger, ed., <i>The Humanities and the Dynamics of Inclusion Since World War II</i> (2006) 	
T, Dec. 9	Conclusion of Course	
TBD	Sources Paper Due	

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 2014

Ten Tips for Reading in Graduate School

1. *Read the whole book.* If you are pressed for time one week, then at minimum read the introduction, the first chapter, a middle chapter, and the conclusion, AND have a basic idea of what the chapters that you didn't read were about. Do this only on rare occasions. Get in the habit of pacing yourself, finishing whole books, and rewarding yourself for doing so. *Always* read assigned articles—make time.
2. *Read the footnotes.* Know what sources the author has consulted. Take note of any archives and/or collections the author has visited. How convincing do you find the evidence to be in supporting the author's argument? Do you agree with the author's interpretation of the evidence? How does the author make use of secondary sources in the footnotes?
3. *Understand the scholarly context.* How does this book or article fit into a larger scholarly conversation about this topic? What has already been said about this topic? How does the author fit his/her own work into this larger dialogue?
4. *Write a précis.* Write up a concise summary of the book or article, in your own words. Be able to explain in your own words what the reading is about.
5. *Talk about what you are reading.* Talk to other people about what you're reading. Practice engaging in dialogue about the book or article even before you come to class.
6. *Observe the writing style.* Pay attention to how authors organize and present their arguments, how they transition between paragraphs and chapters, how they integrate quotations and evidence and theory. Reading helps you become a better writer. Think about the prose as much as the content.
7. *Have something to say.* Always come to class prepared to ask at least one question about the reading AND offer at least one connection to previous concepts/readings in the course. If you want to offer an opinion about the book, avoid simply saying, "I liked it," or "I didn't like it because the writing was bad," or "It was boring." Be specific. Talk in concrete terms about argument, organization, evidence, use of theory, style, and so on.
8. *Apply the framework.* As you read, ask yourself how you could apply this author's questions, methods, and/or theories to another topic. "How could I do a similar study of ___?" or "What if I applied this framework to an analysis of ___?" Along similar lines, ask yourself if there are alternative ways to get at the topic explored in this book. What other approaches might work?
9. *Make a timeline.* Keep a running timeline of U.S. history on your computer. Add people, events, inventions, publications, etc. as you read various books. This helps you get a sense of chronology and change over time and can help you see patterns in U.S. cultural history.
10. *Think like a teacher.* If you were going to teach this book to a class of undergraduates, how would you teach it? How would you engage students with this material? What kind of class would you assign it for? Even if you don't plan on going into teaching as a career, it is helpful to learn how to present material to a group of people in an engaging and creative manner. In fact, it can help you learn the material better—you need to know something in order to teach it to others.