

American Studies

American Beliefs and Cultural Values
AMS 130- M/W/F 9:00-9:50.am.
Fall 2006
ARH 318
Office Hours: M/W/F 3:15-4:45pm

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Special Appointments on Tues: 3:15-4:45

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to key cultural themes in American life. Our purpose is to explore primary American beliefs and cultural values as they have evolved on this continent and have been expressed in sermons, histories, governmental documents, music, popular images, poems, essays, autobiographies, films and literary and non-literary forms. We will examine, as comprehensively as possible, the past and current cultures and traditions of the dominant and marginalized peoples who came to call themselves “Americans.” Class meetings will combine specific reading assignments, lectures, student presentations, and class discussions.

Texts:

Richard P. Horwitz, The American Studies Anthology (2001)
Benjamin Franklin, The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (1993)
Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America (1956)
Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1968)
Jack Weatheford, Native Roots (1991)
Reserved Readings and Handouts- Provided by Dr. Scott

Films:

- Eyes on the Fries
- Store Wars: When Wal-Mart Comes to Town
- House of the Land and Fog
- Super Size Me

Requirements:

A. Writing: There will be two formal writing requirements. Both papers (5-7 pages) must be neatly typed, doubled-spaces and proof-read twice. The first paper will be an argumentative essay in which you engage a specific issue raised in our consideration of eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century tensions in American Beliefs and Cultural Values. The second paper will be a film review and critiques of conflicting visions of American culture in the 21st century. Papers are due in class and are not accepted if late unless instructor approved.

B. Oral Presentations: Each student will do three or four in-class presentations. You will be teamed up into assigned groups and asked to make creative group presentations or lead class discussions on assigned readings as well as make a handout out your presentation. There will be no make-up opportunity with presentations.

C. Examinations: Take-home mid-exam and in-class scheduled final examination.

D. GRADING:

The course grade will be based on overall performance. Percentages: attendance and class participation and assignments 10%, two papers 30%, midterm 30%, and final 30%.
Total=100%.

E. Academic Honesty: You must abide by the rules on plagiarism, outlined in the Student Handbook (p.49-50 in 03-04), which require that you “acknowledge explicitly any expressions, ideas, or observations that are not” your own. In the case of cooperatively produced work, you must indicate who produced which part of the data or product. If you are unsure of your obligations, please see me.

F. Instructor’s E-mail Policy: I believe e-mail is a convenient privilege and a technological wonder for enhancing learning but it is NOT a substitute for face-to-face interactions with your instructor. Use the e-mail for urgent class matters to communication with your classmates about assignments. Otherwise, I expect frequent visits during my office hours.

WEEK	MWF DAYS	WEEK	MWF DAYS
1	Aug 25	9	Oct 23, 25, 27
2	Aug 28, 30, Sep 1	10	Oct 30, Nov 1, 3 * Take Home exam due
3	Sep 4, 6, 8	11	Nov 6, 8, 10
4	Sep 11, 13, 15	12	Nov 13, 15, 17
5	Sep 18, 20, 22	13	Nov 20, 22
6	Sep 25, 27, 29	14	Nov 27, 29, Dec 1
7	Oct 2, 4, 6	15	Dec 4, 6, 8
8	Oct 9, 11, 13	EXAMS	WEEK of Dec 13-15
BREAK	Oct 13-22		

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction to the Course Goals and Objectives: America as a New World
Lecture: What is Interdisciplinary Studies, the history of American Studies and the multi-cultural roots of American cultures?
American Studies Anthology (ASA), Introduction xvii-xxxi

Week 2: Our European Retentions: Freedom and Exclusion
Lecture: Why did Europeans leave Europe and what are our Puritan, Quaker and Cavalier roots?
(ASA) Readings 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9

Week 3: America as an Independent Nation
Who is America for?
(ASA) Readings 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16

Read: Native Roots

Week 4: Our Native American Retentions: Colonization and Genocide
 Discussion of Weatherford's, *Native Roots*
 RR: Zinn, "Columbus, the Indians, and Human Progress"
 RR: Wilkinson, "Indian Tribes and the American Constitution"

Read: *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*

Week 5: America as a Place to Belong: The Quintessential American Role Models
 Assignment on New Jack City-Music
 Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*
 (ASA) 17, 18, 19, 20, 21

Handout for First Writing Assignment: (Covers Weeks 1-6)

Read: *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

Week 6: Our African Retentions: Slavery and America as a Place to Belong Part 2
 Douglass, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*
 (ASA) 22, 23, 24, 25, 26

First Paper due: Oct. 9th, by 4:00 pm

Read: *Democracy in America*

Week 7: America as a Land of the Free
 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*
 (ASA) 27, 28, 29, 30, 31

Week 8: America as a Land of the Free Part 2
 (ASA) 32, 33, 34, 35, 36
 Great Speeches Assignment

Break: October 13th-22nd

Week 9: America as Empire
 (ASA) 37, 38, 39, 40, 41
 Great Speeches Assignment

Take-Home Mid Exam: (Covers Weeks 7, 8, 9)
Due: Oct. 30th by 4:00 p.m.

Week 10: America as Empire Part 2
 (ASA) 42, 43, 44
 Great Speeches Assignment

Week 11: America as Culture
 What is culture? What is American culture?
 (ASA) 45, 46, 47, 48

Week 12: America as Popular Culture
 What is popular culture? Theory and Practice
 Lecture, RR and handout on Popular Culture
 Music, poetry, newspaper and internet assignments

Handout for Second Paper: (Covers Weeks 10, 11, 12)

Week 13: America as Global Culture
 What is globalization? How does it operate as a cultural process?
 Lecture, RR and handout on Globalization

Photo Assignment Handout

Second Paper Due: Nov. 29th by 4:00pm

Week 14: America as Photography and Film
 What is the link between culture, photography and film?
 Discussion of the assigned films
 Pop Quiz

Internet Assignment for the final week! (Three groups)

Week 15: “Bringing it All Together”: American Studies in the 21st Century: Projections and Reflections!
 (ASA) 49
 Presentations on the Assignments:
 Who are the “New” Americans now? A local perspectives: changing demographics in Iowa Internet Assignment
 Why does the world love and hate us? Internet Assignment
 Where is American Studies going in the future? Internet Assignment

**In-class scheduled Final Exam: (Covers weeks, 1, 13, 14, and 15)
 Tuesday, December 12th from 9am –noon**