

American Studies 501 THEORY AND METHODS

California State University, Fullerton
Fall 2017
Tuesdays, 7:00-9:45 PM
UH-319

AMST 501-01, #15477

Instructor: Adam Golub, Ph.D.

Email: agolub@fullerton.edu

Phone: (657) 278-5899

Office Hours (UH-415): Mondays, 3:00-5:00; grad advising: Tuesdays 3:00-5:30; and by appointment

Course Description

This seminar introduces graduate students to the interdisciplinary field of American Studies. It examines a range of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of American culture, and it helps students cultivate and practice the American Studies “habit of mind.” It also explores the history and development of American Studies as a discipline and public practice. Throughout the semester, you will learn how to formulate questions, analyze culture, make connections, and produce and share knowledge like an American Studies thinker.

Required Texts

Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian*, Yale University Press, 1999

Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*, Harvard University Press, 2001

John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford University Press, 1989

Colin R. Johnson, *Queer as Folk: Gender and Sexuality in Rural America*, Temple University Press, 2013.

Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, Wesleyan University Press, 1994

Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*, University of California Press, 2001

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
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Course Assignments and Grading Standards

Applied Practice Papers

Three times in the course of the semester, I will ask you to practice applying what we are studying to a cultural text of your choice. We will do this with three of our habits of mind (HOM): close reading; text and context; and cultural work. I would like you to use the same primary source for all three assignments, so you can build on the work you do before. You can, for example, select a film or a song or an advertisement or a material object or a statue or a photograph or a political speech or a work of literature... it's up to you (check with me if you are unsure about your selected text/idea). It can be contemporary or historical. These practice papers should be brief and to the point: 2-3 pages each, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins. In the first paper you will offer a close reading of your text, then in the second paper you will place it in context, and finally you will try to interpret the cultural work of your text.

Discussion Forum

Each week, I will post a prompt on the discussion forum on our 502 Titanium site. The prompt will be related to the topic and reading for the upcoming class. I would like you to respond to the prompt no later than Sunday at midnight, and I would like you to reply to at least two of your classmates' posts by no later than Monday at midnight. Each forum response should be 1-2 paragraphs long (a few sentences is too short) and should demonstrate that you have done the reading and thoughtfully reflected on the question. The replies to your classmates should be thoughtful, respectful, and approximately one paragraph long. Your posts and responses may also include questions about the readings or about what others have written.

Posts to the discussion board will be graded and should always be carefully written and proofread. Each week, your posts will be graded out of a possible 10 points: up to 5 points for your individual post, and up to 5 points for your responses to your classmates.

For your own response to the prompt:

5 points will be given for postings that are specific, cite the reading, and clearly demonstrate understanding of key issues;

3 points will be given for postings that show partial understanding of the reading but fail to notice or to remark on key issues;

1 point will be given for postings that are poorly written, too short, unclear, vague, and/or repetitive of other's postings and show minimal comprehension of reading;

0 points will be given for posting that show no evidence of having done the reading.

For your responses to your classmates' posts:

5 points will be given if your responses are thoughtful, clear, and contribute to the discussion in productive ways;

3 points will be given if your responses are clear and thoughtful but lacking in detail or originality;

1 point will be given if your responses do not demonstrate understanding of the reading or prompt or add little of substance to the discussion;

0 points will be given if you do not respond to classmates or are late with your responses.

There will be 13 discussion forums; you are required to engage with at least 10. Which ten you choose is up to you.

Participation

Required attendance and class participation make up 20% of your final grade. M.A. 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(s); 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.

501 Portfolio

In this course, we will focus on your scholarly training as well as your pre-professional development. To that end, I am asking you to submit a portfolio at the end of the semester that includes documents related to both areas. The documents in your portfolio should all be bound together, in a three-ring binder or by another professional-looking method.

Contents

- 1) A research proposal for a topic or question you are interested in at this stage in your graduate work. Your proposal should describe your topic/question and then explain how your topic relates to/address each of the habits of mind (identity and culture; close reading; text and context; change over time; cultural work; collaboration, pedagogy, and public engagement). You do not need to conduct extensive research for this project during this semester; just some preliminary explorations of potential sources, both primary and secondary. We will discuss the proposal requirements in detail over the course of the semester. I would like you to talk to me about your topic ahead of time so I can approve it and we can discuss it.
- 2) Your up-to-date CV (we will spend time in class talking about the CV)
- 3) A draft of a conference abstract that you could potentially submit based on your research proposal (we will spend time in class talking about how to write conference abstracts)
- 4) A concise paragraph that you could use in a cover letter or job interview explaining what American Studies is and why you are pursuing a Master's degree in American Studies.
- 5) A short reflective essay on what you have learned this semester. What do you believe to be your strengths at this point in the program? What are your "next steps" as an American Studies thinker?

Applied Practice Papers	30% (10% each)
Discussion Forum	10%
Participation	20%
501 Portfolio	40%

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 Disabled Student 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 plan a CSUF experience to 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. <http://www.fullerton.edu/DSS>

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/>]. Cheating is defined as obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for work by the use of any dishonest, deceptive, fraudulent, or unauthorized means, or helping someone commit an act of academic dishonesty. (UPS 300.021). Examples include, but are not limited to:

Unacceptable examination behavior: communicating with fellow students, copying material from another student's exam or allowing another student to copy from an exam, possessing or using unauthorized materials, or any behavior that defeats the intent of an exam.

Plagiarism: taking the work of another and offering it as one's own without giving credit to that source, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near-verbatim form.

Unauthorized collaboration on a project, homework or other assignment where an instructor expressly forbids such collaboration.

Documentary falsification, including forgery, altering of campus documents or records, tampering with grading procedures, fabricating lab assignments, or altering medical excuses.

Campus Emergency Procedures

Students should be familiar with campus **emergency procedures**: prepare.fullerton.edu

Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Date	Topic / Reading Due	Papers/Forum Due
T, Aug. 22	Introduction to Course: The American Studies Habit of Mind	
T, Aug. 29	Why Study America? A Brief History of the Inquiry and the Movement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary source packet: excerpts from John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity” (1630); J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, <i>Letters from an American Farmer</i> (1782); Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The American Scholar” (1837); Sarah Margaret Fuller, “American Literature: Its Position in the Present Time and Prospects for the Future” (1846); “The Declaration of Sentiments” (1848); Frederick Douglass, “What To the Slave is 4th of July?” (1852); Walt Whitman, Preface to <i>Leaves of Grass</i> (1855); Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893); W.E.B. DuBois, <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> (1903) • <i>Encyclopedia of American Studies</i>, “American Studies: Approaches and Concepts” http://eas-ref.press.jhu.edu/view?aid=525 • Gene Wise, “Paradigm Dramas in American Studies: A Cultural and Institutional History of the Movement,” <i>American Quarterly</i> 31:3 (1979) • Elaine Tyler May, “The Radical Roots of American Studies,” <i>American Quarterly</i> 48:2 (1996): 179-200. 	Forum #1
T, Sep. 5	HOM #1: Culture and Identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gwyn Kirk and Margo Okazawa-Rey, “Identities and Social Locations,” from <i>American Identities</i>, ed. Lois Rudnick et al (2006) • Carla Kaplan, “Identity,” from <i>Keywords for American Cultural Studies</i>, ed. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler (2007) 	Forum #2

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benedict Anderson, excerpt from <i>Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism</i> (1991) • Robert Bellah, et al, “The Pursuit of Happiness,” from <i>Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life</i> (1985) • Daphne Carr, “Head Like a Hole” and “Down In It,” from <i>Nine Inch Nails’ Pretty Hate Machine</i> (2011) • Robin D.G. Kelley, “The Riddle of the Zoot: Malcolm Little and Black Cultural Politics During World War II,” from <i>Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class</i> (1994) 	
T, Sep. 12	<p>HOM #2: Close Reading: Themes and Silences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul Lauter, “Dinosaur Culture: From Mansfield Park to Jurassic Park,” From <i>Walden Pond to Jurassic Park: Activism, Culture, and American Studies</i> (2001) • Daniel O. Lawler, “Placing Asterisks: An Approach to American Studies,” <i>The English Journal</i> 97:6 (July 2008): 54-58. 	Forum #3
T, Sep. 19	<p>HOM #3: Text and Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jane Tompkins, “Introduction: The Cultural Work of American Fiction,” <i>Sensational Designs</i> (1985) • Eric Greene, excerpt from <i>Planet of the Apes as American Myth: Race and Politics in the Films and Television Series</i> (1996) • Janice Radway, “Interpretive Communities and Variable Literacies: The Functions of Romance Reading,” <i>Daedalus</i> 113:3 (Summer 1984), 49-73. 	<p>--Forum #4</p> <p>--Practice Paper #1</p>
T, Sep. 26	<p>HOM #4: Change Over Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter N. Stearns, “Defining Happy Childhoods: Assessing a Recent Change,” <i>Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth</i> 3.2 (2010) 	Forum #5

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joan Jacobs Brumberg, excerpt from <i>The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls</i> (1997) • Lawrence Levine, “William Shakespeare and the American People: A Study in Cultural Transformation,” <i>The American Historical Review</i> 89:1 (1984) • Paul Boyer, “Exotic Resonances: Hiroshima in American Memory,” from <i>Hiroshima in History and Memory</i>, ed. Michael J. Hogan (1996) 	
T, Oct. 3	<p>HOM #5: Cultural Work</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. • Dick Hebdige, “Subculture and Style,” from <i>The Cultural Studies Reader</i>, ed. Simon During (1993) • George Lipsitz excerpt from <i>Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture</i> (1990) • Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, excerpt from <i>The Politics and Poetics of Transgression</i> (1986) • Albert Murray, “The Blues Idiom and the Mainstream of Contemporary Life,” from <i>The Omni-Americans: Black Experience and American Culture</i> (1970), 54-66. 	<p>--Forum #6</p> <p>--Practice Paper #2</p>
T, Oct. 10	<p>HOM #6: Collaboration, Pedagogy, and Public Engagement</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. • Howard Zinn, “The Uses of Scholarship,” from <i>Howard Zinn on History</i> (2011) 	Forum #7

T, Oct. 17	Race and Identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philip Deloria, <i>Playing Indian</i> 	--Forum #8 --Practice Paper #3
T, Oct. 24	Race, Region, and Family <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linda Gordon, <i>The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction</i> • Writing the CV 	Forum #9
T, Oct. 31	Space, Place, and Memory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John F. Sears, <i>Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century</i> 	Forum #10
T, Nov. 7	Gender and Sexuality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colin R. Johnson, <i>Just Queer Folks: Gender and Sexuality in Rural America</i> • Writing the Conference Abstract 	Forum #11
T, Nov. 14	Studying Expressive Forms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tricia Rose, <i>Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America</i> 	Forum #12
T, Nov. 21	<i>No Class: Thanksgiving Recess</i>	
T, Nov. 28	Transnational American Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melani McAlister, <i>Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000</i> 	Forum #13
T, Dec. 4	Conclusion of Course	
TBA	501 Portfolio Due	

Adam Golub
American Studies Department

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.