

American Studies 350
Theories and Methods in American Studies
Fall 2015
MW 11:30-12:45 in EC-011

Instructor: Dr. Carrie Lane
Office Hours: MW 10:00-11am & by appointment
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Description: This undergraduate seminar is intended to familiarize you with some of the core theoretical and methodological approaches to American Studies and to give you a sense of the various ways to do American Studies and be an American Studies scholar. In this course, you will learn about the discipline's history and the nature of interdisciplinary research. Course readings are drawn from a variety of disciplines and concern topics as diverse as lava lamps, boxing, funerals, and eyeliner. Each reading demonstrates a different way to study and think about American culture, and prompts you to identify the benefits, challenges, and implications of particular theories and methods. By the semester's end, you will be prepared to describe what American Studies is, to read critically in American Studies and related disciplines, to engage in lively and informed debate about American culture, and to undertake innovative, interdisciplinary scholarship of your own.

Required Texts:

- Lydia Alix Fillingham, *Foucault for Beginners*
- Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*
- Additional required course readings are available on our Titanium site

All books are available at Little Professor Book Center (725 N. Placentia); to save money look for used copies at half.com. Let me know **immediately** if you have any trouble getting the books.

Requirements and Participation: Your grade will depend on a number of small but intellectually challenging assignments, as well as on class participation. In order to pass this class you must stay up to date on all readings and assignments and actively participate in class discussion. If you are disinclined to speak in class, you may participate in other ways, such as emailing me questions and comments on the week's readings no later than 24 hours before class. I encourage you to seek support and assistance from me and from your classmates. If at any point you fall behind or feel overwhelmed by course readings or assignments, contact me as soon as possible so I can help you catch up.

Attendance: You are expected to attend every class. Although any absence will negatively affect your participation, you are allowed three unexcused absences. After that, each absence, with an exception for critical and documented emergencies, will reduce your final course grade by 10% (one letter grade). **After five absences you will be dropped from the class.**

Assignments & Extensions: In preparing for the semester, **please read the entire course syllabus and schedule carefully before the first day of class.** Mark all deadlines in your calendar so you do not accidentally miss an assignment. An assignment is considered late if it is not turned in at the beginning of the class session in which it is due. Normally, late assignments will be penalized by one letter grade per day overdue. Every student is entitled to ONE extension on a paper's due date with no questions asked. To get the extension, all you have to do is email me with the request at least 12 hours before the assignment is due. I will decide the length of the extension on a case-by-case basis. Never simply skip an assignment. Details on each of the assignments below will be provided in class.

Historical Documents Paper (3-4 pages): For this assignment you will select three primary documents from a specific historical era and analyze them within their historical context and using Gail Bederman's arguments from *Manliness and Civilization*. **Assignment Goal:** Learn how to analyze documents within their historical and cultural context; learn how to apply a scholar's argument to a new document.

Object Analysis (3-4 pages & in-class presentation): For this paper you'll select an object and analyze it within its cultural and historical context. **Assignment Goal:** Learn how to think about objects as cultural evidence.

Mini-Ethnography (6-8 pages): For this assignment you'll use observation and interviews to study an aspect of US culture that is unfamiliar to you. In addition to describing and analyzing the culture you will reflect on the experience of conducting ethnographic research in an unfamiliar setting. **Assignment Goal:** Learn how to conduct interviews and participant-observation; learn how to analyze a culture through the worldview of its members.

Letter of Application (1 page): In this final assignment, you will have to write a (no more than 1 page) letter of application to your dream job (or grad school) that explains why American Studies prepares you for that position. **Assignment Goal:** Prepare you for the job market and/or graduate school application process; allow you to consolidate what you've learned about American studies over the semester and apply it in a practical context.

In grading your assignments and exams, 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.

Grading Procedures:

Historical Doc Paper	25%	250 points
Object Analysis	25%	250 points
Ethnography	30%	300 points (paper = 250; proposal = 25; update = 25)
Application Letter	10%	100 points
Participation	10%	100 points
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	100%	1000 points

The +/- grading system will be used. Keep all graded assignments so that any discrepancies can be easily and fairly straightened out. This course satisfies the University's Upper-Division Writing Requirement. Earning a grade of C or better is necessary to meet this requirement. At this point in time I do not plan to offer any extra credit assignments for this course.

A	92-100%	B-	80-81%	D+	68-69%
A-	90-91%	C+	78-79%	D	62-67%
B+	88-89%	C	72-77%	D-	60-61%
B	82-87%	C-	70-71%	F	Under 59%

Office Hours: I strongly encourage you to attend office hours or to schedule an appointment if those hours do not work 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 pleasure for me to get to know you and your intellectual interests, so never hesitate to drop by with questions or to mull over something you've been thinking about. If you're struggling in the class, please contact me sooner rather than later so we have time to work together to improve your performance before the semester ends.

Phone Policy: Please turn phones off and keep them in your bag.

Computer Policy: You are not permitted to take notes on computers or audio record lectures unless specifically authorized to do so by Disability Support Services.

In-Class Conduct & General Advice:

- Stay on top of the reading. Once you fall behind it's hard to catch up.
- Get to class on time. I make most important announcements in the first 5 minutes. If you need to arrive late or leave early please notify me in advance.
- **No texting.** No sleeping. No doing anything other than paying attention to what your classmates and I have to say about the subject matter at hand.

- Don't be shy with questions—I'm happy to answer them, big or small. However, be sure to check the syllabus, website, and/or assignment sheets before contacting me in case the answer is already available (e.g., When is the paper due? What are we reading this week?).

Computer Requirements: To complete this course you must have regular access to a computer with a reasonably fast, reliable Internet connection. You should be comfortable navigating the Internet, downloading files, and sending emails with attachments. Make sure the email address Titanium has for you is one you check regularly or you'll miss critical communications.

Titanium: If you are not familiar with Titanium, you will need to review CSUF's Titanium support page for students: <http://oasis.fullerton.edu/resources.aspx>. This is also a good first place to check if you have technical questions or problems when accessing or submitting course material. If you are still unable to fix the problem, please contact the University's IT Help Desk via phone at 657-278-7777. If they are unable to help you, or if the technical error continues and interferes with your ability to complete course assignments, email me at clane@fullerton.edu.

Academic integrity: Academic dishonesty includes such things as cheating, inventing false information or citations, plagiarism, and helping someone else commit an act of academic dishonesty. When you use information from sources external to yourself, you must reference the source appropriately. **Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. You will fail that assignment and be reported to Judicial Affairs.** For more information on University policies and for tips on how to avoid plagiarism, see the following University website: <http://www.fullerton.edu/deanofstudents/judicial/Letter%20to%20Students.asp>. All papers must be submitted in hard copy and through TurnItIn on our Titanium site. As you probably know, TurnItIn checks for evidence of plagiarism and provides me with a score indicating what percentage of each student's essay can be found in its database of essays and Internet sources.

Students with special needs: Please inform me during the first week of classes about any disability or special needs you may have that may require specific arrangements related to attending class, carrying out assignments, or taking examinations. CSUF requires students with disabilities to register with Disability Support Services (DSS), located in UH-101 and at 657-278-3117, in order to receive prescribed accommodations appropriate to their disability.

Emergency Procedures: See http://www.fullerton.edu/emergencypreparedness/ep_students.html.

Policy on Selling Lecture Notes: Per California Education Code Section 66450, it is illegal to reproduce course lectures—including your own hand-written or typed lecture notes—for commercial purposes. Thus while you may occasionally loan another student your lecture notes when they have been absent, it is illegal to request money for those notes or to offer them for sale, online or in person. If you have any questions about this policy please contact me for guidance. Students who violate this standard are subject to disciplinary sanctions by the University, including failure in the course and suspension from the university. Any student who violates this code will be referred to the Dean of Students Office, Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action under the Student Conduct Code.

AMST 350 Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Due: <i>Readings are due Monday of each week unless otherwise noted.</i>
Mon 8/17 Wed 8/19	Introduction	None
Mon 8/24 Wed 8/26	History of American Studies	* 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)
Mon 8/31 Wed 9/2	Understanding Historical Context	* Lydia Alix Fillingham, <i>Foucault for Beginners</i> (2007)
*No class Mon 9/7 Wed 9/9	Understanding Historical Context	* Gail Bederman, "Introduction" and one additional chapter of your choosing, <i>Manliness and Civilization</i> (1996)
Mon 9/14** Wed 9/16	Understanding Historical Context	None Mon 9/14: Library Session in PLN 420
Mon 9/21 Wed 9/23	Assignment	 Wed 9/23: Bederman Paper Due
Mon 9/28 Wed 9/30	Analyzing Material Culture	* Ulrich et al., "A Board Game," "A Hand Plow," and "A Nostalgic Painting," in <i>Tangible Things</i> (2015) * Shannon Miller, "The Many Figures of Eve," in <i>American Artifacts</i> (2000)
Mon 10/5 Wed 10/7	Analyzing Material Culture	* Rebecca Shrum, "Selling Mr. Coffee," <i>Winterthur Portfolio</i> (2012) * Caetlin Benson-Allott, "How the

		Remote Control Rewired the Home," <i>The Atlantic</i> (2014) * Jonathan Rees, "The Huge Chill: Why Are American Refrigerators So Big?" <i>The Atlantic</i> (2013)
Mon 10/12 Wed 10/14	Assignment & Presentations	Mon 10/12: Object Analysis Due
Mon 10/19 Wed 10/21	Interpreting Culture	* Clifford Geertz (1973) "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture," pp. 3-30 in <i>The Interpretation of Cultures</i> * Harry Wolcott, <i>The Art of Fieldwork</i> , 2nd Edition (AltaMira 2005). pp. 79-114
Mon 10/26 Wed 10/28	Interpreting Culture	* Norma Mendoza-Denton (1996) "'Muy Macha': Gender and Ideology in Gang-Girls' Discourse about Makeup," <i>Ethnos</i> (61: 1-2): 47-63 * Mitch Duneier (1999) "Introduction" and "When You Gotta Go," <i>Sidewalk</i> Wed 10/28: Project Proposal Due
Mon 11/2 Wed 11/4	Interpreting Culture	* Alexa Hagerty (2014) "Speak Softly to the Dead: The Uses of Enchantment in American Home Funerals," <i>Social Anthropology</i> , 22:4 (November 2014): 428-442 * Anonymous, "Institutionalized Romance" (unpublished)
Mon 11/9 *No class Wed 11/11	Interpreting Culture	None
Mon 11/16 Wed 11/18	Careers in American Studies	* Colvin, "Humans are Underrated" * ASA, "American Studies Careers" * Ibson, "What's the Use? American Studies after Graduation" * Foster, "What to Do with a Degree in American Studies"

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Profiles of CSUF AMST alumni * FAQs: Applying to American Studies Graduate Programs * CSUF AMST Graduate Program Info <p>Mon 11/16: Project Update Due</p>
	** Fall Break 11/23-11/29 **	
Mon 11/30 Wed 12/2	Assignment & Presentations	Mon 11/30 Ethnographies Due
Mon 12/7 Wed 12/9	Conclusion & Presentations	Wed 12/9 Application Letters Due