

American Studies 423  
**The Search for Community**  
Spring 2013  
Tuesday 4:00-6:45pm  
EC 011

Instructor: Dr. Carrie Lane  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30-2:30pm, Thursdays 11:30-12:30am, and by appointment  
Office Location: 413 University Hall  
Telephone: 657-278-7359  
Email: [clane@fullerton.edu](mailto:clane@fullerton.edu)

**Course Description:**

This upper-level seminar offers an interdisciplinary exploration of the concept of community and its role in American culture. Drawing on works from anthropology, sociology, history, fiction, and film, we'll explore what constitutes community, how communities vary in form and function, and what draws people into and away from various social groupings. Course materials concern groups as diverse as Appalachian miners, African-American diner patrons, gay Asian Los Angelenos, dispossessed Midwestern farmers, Star Trek fans, isolated suburbanites, and hipster homesteaders. These communities are examined on their own terms and within the wider context of American cultural and political life. Students investigate different disciplines' methodological and theoretical approaches to the study of community and the advantages and challenges of interdisciplinary work through close and critical reading of course texts, vibrant class discussion, and extensive writing.

**Required Texts:**

Kathryn Dudley, *Debt and Dispossession: Farm Loss in America's Heartland*

Mitch Duneier, *Slim's Table: Race, Respectability, and Masculinity*

Eric Wat, *The Making of a Gay Asian Community* [web version free online; hard copies available used]

Kai Erikson, *Everything in Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*

Peter Lovenheim, *In the Neighborhood: The Search for Community on an American Street...*

Additional **Required** Readings on Titanium website

Books for this course are available for purchase at Little Professor Book Center (725 N. Placentia) and the University Bookstore. I do not require a specific edition of any of these books, so feel free to purchase used copies of older editions (I recommend the website Half.com for used books).

**Course Requirements:**

**Participation:** The success of this course depends on your contributions as seminar participants. I expect that you will come to class having completed all assigned reading for that day and prepared with questions and comments for class discussion. Failure to regularly participate will reduce your final grade. Students who are hesitant to speak in class should feel free to discuss their concerns with me. I will do my best to encourage and assist you however I can.

**Attendance:** Attendance is required at every seminar, and any absence must either be cleared in advance or be the result of serious, documented extenuating circumstances. You are expected to attend **each and every class**. Each student will be allowed **one** unexcused absence. After that, each absence will result in an immediate reduction of your final course grade by one-half a letter grade (5 percentage points). If you have

more than three unexcused absences, you will fail the course.

**Weekly Reading Responses:** For **seven** of the weeks in which there are assigned readings, you will post on Titanium some comments and/or questions in response to that week's readings. **These responses should demonstrate that you: a) did the reading; and b) thought about it.** Do not summarize the reading (we'll all have read it) but instead single out specific arguments or quotations that drew your attention and the issues or questions they prompted for you. If you bring in outside readings or examples to draw connections, be sure to briefly summarize them for those of us who haven't read them (i.e., no random name dropping of author X or book Y). I'll use your posts to help plan class discussions, so the more thoughtful they are, the better I can tailor this course around your interests and ideas. You can choose for yourself which weeks you'd like to post, but **you must post your comments by noon on the Monday before class**. Each post will receive between 0 and 3 points. You receive no credit for late postings.

**Theories of Community Paper:** In this brief paper (approximately 4 pages) you will engage with our first three weeks of readings on ideas about what community is and how it works. In your essay, summarize and compare at least three different conceptions or definitions of community presented in those readings and assess which you find most useful or convincing. If you'd like, you may incorporate specific examples from your own experiences or observations of American communities to support your conclusions.

**Your Community Study:** In addition to required course readings, each undergraduate will read one additional book about an American community of your choosing (historical or contemporary), although not one already covered in course readings or films. I hope that over the semester you will each serve as our resident expert on your community, referencing it when relevant during class discussions. I have provided a list of community studies at the end of this syllabus to spark your imagination. You may opt to study one of these communities or select another **with my approval**. No two students may read the same book, so be sure to run your selection by me as soon as possible.

- **Presentation:** Near the end of the semester, each student will give a **5 minute presentation** on the community they read about. You will tell the class about the community, describe what you most liked and disliked about the book, and note at least two connections between your book and course readings.
- **Final Paper:** At the end of the semester you'll write a **7-10 page paper** in which you analyze the additional community you elected to study with regard to course readings and themes. Your paper will inform the reader about that community and consider it in comparison to other communities we studied in class, as well as to our initial readings about the nature and definition of community. Each paper will have its own original argument, and should incorporate the additional book and **at least three** course readings.

**Graduate Students:** For all requirements outlined above (except the final paper), 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. In lieu of the final paper described above, graduate students will complete a research paper on a community of your choosing (historical or contemporary). In the process of preparing this research paper you are required to:

- Individual meeting with me to discuss which community you plan to study, what you want to learn about it, and how you plan to go about studying it (e.g., archival research, ethnography, pop culture analysis).
- Prepare a **research proposal** of approximately 3 pages outlining the community you would like to study and what sources you plan to use (you will ultimately be required to use at least 7 independent sources).
- Make steady progress on your research paper throughout the semester. Midway you'll submit a brief **project update** outlining what you have done so far, the sources you'll use, and a preliminary outline.
- Give a **5-minute presentation** about your community noting connections to at least two course readings.

- Write a **15-20 page research paper** that makes an original argument about the community you studied, incorporates at least three required course readings (in addition to seven outside sources), and reflects thoughtful analysis and **significant** independent research using both primary and secondary sources.

**Email and Titanium:** I will communicate with you by email throughout the semester, so you need to regularly check whatever email account Titanium has on record for you.

**Grading Procedures:**

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.

**Undergraduates**

Reading Responses	20%
Theories of Community Paper	15%
Presentation	5%
Final Paper	40%
Seminar Participation	20%

**Graduate Students**

Reading Responses	20%
Theories of Community Paper	15%
Presentation	5%
Final Paper (inc. proposal & update)	40%
Seminar Participation	20%

Extensions must be requested well in advance of the assignment deadline. There is no make-up work in this class without a written documented excuse.

A 93-100%	B- 80-82%	D+ 68-69%
A- 90-92%	C+ 78-79%	D 63-67%
B+ 88-89%	C 73-77%	D- 60-62%
B 83-87%	C- 70-72%	F 59% or lower

The +/- grading system will be used; no extra credit will be offered. Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade for every unexcused day overdue. Keep all graded assignments so that any discrepancies can be easily and fairly straightened out. I reserve the right to add or modify assignments over the course of the semester.

**Academic dishonesty:** 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** and will result in a failing grade on that exam/assignment, as well as possible removal from the course or suspension from the university.

**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 the Office of Disabled Student Services (DSS), located in UH-101 and at 657-278-3112, in order to receive prescribed accommodations appropriate to their disability.

**Emergency Procedures:** See [http://www.fullerton.edu/emergencypreparedness/ep\\_students.html](http://www.fullerton.edu/emergencypreparedness/ep_students.html).

## Course Schedule

### 1/29 Introduction: Who Are You People?

- No Reading

**In Class:** My Communities exercise

### 2/5 What is Community? [all Titanium]

- Roland Warren, "Older and Newer Approaches to the Community"
- Kai Erikson, "Villages"
- Benedict Anderson, "Census, Map, and Museum," *Imagined Communities* (1983)

\*\*\* **Don't forget**—this is the first week you can post to our Response Forums on Titanium

### 2/12 Where Did It Go? [all Titanium]

- Zygmunt Bauman, *Community*, "An Overture" and Ch. 1
- Ray Oldenburg, "The Problem of Place in America"
- Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital"

### 2/19 Does It Exist Online? [all Titanium]

- Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community*, excerpts
- Stephen Marche, "Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?"

### 2/26 Or Only in Our Memories?

- Kathryn Dudley, *Debt & Dispossession*, Preface & Chapters 1-4

**In Class:** Free Write on America's Nostalgia for Small-Town Life

**DUE:** Theories of Community Paper

### 3/5 Are Individualism and Community Antithetical?

- Kathryn Dudley, *Debt & Dispossession*, Chapters 5-8

### 3/12 Why Do People Join Communities?

- Mitch Duneier, *Slim's Table*, Parts I & II (we'll discuss next week)

**In Class:** Watch *Trekkies*

**For Grad Students:** Project Proposal is Due

### 3/19 And Why Else?

- Mitch Duneier, *Slim's Table*, Parts III & IV

**3/26 Is There Such a Thing as “The” Gay Community? [all Titanium]**

- Eric Wat, *The Making of a Gay Asian Community*

\* \* \* **SPRING BREAK** \* \* \*

**4/9 Can You Grow Your Own Community?**

- Kai Erikson, *Everything In Its Path*, Introduction & Parts I-II (discuss next week)

**In Class:** Listen to “Bicycling Brothers Search America for Community Spirit”

**In Class:** Watch America Recycled “The Montana House” and “Idyll Dandy Acres”

**4/16 Can Communities Die?**

- Kai Erikson, *Everything In Its Path*, Part III

**For Grad Students: Project Updates are Due**

**4/23 In-Class Presentations**

**4/30 In-Class Presentations**

**5/7 What Do We Want to Do about All This?**

- Peter Lovenheim, *In the Neighborhood*

**5/14 No Class: FINAL PAPERS DUE**

## Community Studies

Feel free to choose a study from this list or to select another text about an American community of your choosing. If you do choose something not on the list, be sure to contact me for my approval of the text. You will meet individually with me in Week 5 to discuss your selection.

Elijah Anderson, *A Place on the Corner*

Rich Benjamin, *Searching for Whitopia: An Improbable Journey to the Heart of White America*

Phillipe Bourgeois, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*

George Chauncey, *Gay New York*

John Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*

Kathryn Dudley, *End of the Line: Lost Jobs, New Lives in Postindustrial*

Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins, *Celebration, U.S.A.: Living in Disney's Brave New Town*

Frida Kerner Furman, *Facing the Mirror: Older Women and Beauty Shop Culture*

Herbert Gans, *Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community*

Willard Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880–1920*

Faye Ginsberg, *Contested Lives: The Abortion Debate in an American Community*

Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men*

Maria Kefalas, *Working-Class Heroes: Protecting Home, Community, and Nation in a Chicago Neighborhood*

Madhulika Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian: An Immigrant Community in NYC*

Alex Kotlowitz, *There Are No Children Here*

Jonathon Kozol, *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation*

Elliot Liebow, *Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men*

Jose Limón, *Dancing with the Devil: Society and Cultural Poetics in Mexican-American South Texas*

Kenneth Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years*

Setha Low, *Behind the Gates: Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America*

Robert and Helen Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture*

Jay MacLeod, *Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations of Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood*

Sarah Mahler, *American Dreaming: Immigrant Life on the Margins*

Melba Patillo McCoy, *Black Picket Fences*

Barbara Myerhoff, *Number Our Days: Triumph of Continuity & Culture among Jewish Old People in an Urban Ghetto*

David Neiwert, *Strawberry Days: How Internment Destroyed a Japanese American Community*

Katherine Newman, *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*

Gilda Ochoa, *Becoming Neighbors in a Mexican American Community: Power, Conflict, and Solidarity*

Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, *Inside Deaf Culture*

Padma Rangaswamy, *Namaste America: Indian Immigrants in an American Metropolis*

Andrew Ross, *The Celebration Chronicles: Life, Liberty, & the Pursuit of Property Value in Disney's New Town*

Carol Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*

Carol Stack, *Call to Home: African-Americans Reclaim the Rural South*

William Whyte, *Street Corner Society*

Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco*