AMERICAN STUDIES 201
INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN STUDIES
DEFINING “AMERICA”

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DIFFINING “AMERICA”

What does it mean to be “American”? How does one define nation? Why do ideas about nation change over time? How have various points of contact—whether through slavery, colonization, imperialism, labor or globalization—added complex dimensions to the meaning of America? Who is considered American and who is not? Is citizenship natural? Fixed? Created? Who has fought for inclusion and how have various revolutions in U.S. history altered conceptions of what it means to be American?

This course examines shifting conceptions of “America” and “Americans” through four periods in U.S. history. Beginning with the Revolutionary Era (1776-1824), we investigate the birth of American national culture and the conflicts of race, class, and gender that shaped the nation’s founding. We will then explore the American frontier, U.S. imperialism, and Progressivism (1876-1920) that came to define the American character at the turn of the century. The Cold War and Civil Rights (1945-1965) will be our next stop where we will consider how nuclear anxieties, popular media, and protest culture shaped and challenged the meaning of American democracy. We will end our investigation by looking at neoconservatism, racial violence, technology, and the Gulf War that redefined the nation on the eve of the millennium (1980-2000). Each unit builds upon the other to explore the shifting and fluid boundaries of American civilization and culture.

Throughout the semester, we will analyze an array of materials including essays, speeches, legal cases, songs, poems, paintings, photographs, novels, comics, and films. Assigned readings will help us draw connections between these materials and broader themes such as U.S. exceptionalism; frontiers; the question of empire; war; immigration; citizenship; class, race, gender, and ethnic formations; sexuality; and democracy. The readings and assignments are designed to introduce students to American Studies methods. The course highlights how interdisciplinary approaches open paths to histories that are rich, diverse, and complex; and how culture is serious business with the power to shape, inform, and intervene in politics.

GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENT
American Studies 201 meets the General Education “American History, Institutions and Values” Requirement (D.3)

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING GOALS
This course provides an introduction to American Studies themes and interdisciplinary methods. The study of culture, race, gender, and class will be central to our inquiry. This course fulfills the General Education Requirement D.3 by teaching students to:
• understand the diverse histories of the United States from multiple perspectives
• recognize how cultural, intellectual, ethical, economic, and political struggles have shaped American society, past and present
• understand the historical development of American institutions and values and their impact on the lives of Americans
• recognize the ways in which diverse groups have developed and challenged American society, institutions, and values
• critically assess how the government and constitution shape American society
• understand the U.S. in the context of global politics and events
• analyze a range of primary source materials, engage in critical and constructive discussions, and communicate effectively in writing

REQUIRED TEXTS
The following book is required for this course and can be purchased at the campus bookstore:
• Ronald Takaki, Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19th Century America
  (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000)
• All other required readings are available on TITANium. Please print these readings and bring with you to class on the assigned days.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS
Participation and Discussion Leaders (10% of final grade)
Your opinion matters and we want to know what you think! To get the most out of this class, it is essential that you take part in class discussions, small group activities, etc. In addition to daily participation, each of you will be responsible for acting as a “discussion leader” once during the semester. Approximately five students will act as discussion leaders per session. Refer to the course schedule below to see the available dates.

Each discussion leader will:
1. Meet outside of class to coordinate with fellow discussion leaders. Since there will be approximately five of you per session, you can divide the readings and plan your questions so that what you present in class is not redundant.
2. Share brief comments about the readings (around 2 minutes for each presenter). Rather than a summary of the readings, we want to know what you thought about them. What was interesting or surprising and why? Do you agree or disagree with the author and why?
3. Ask 1 to 2 questions sparked by the readings that you’d like for our class to discuss.

Analytical Essay (25% of final grade)
In accordance with GE policies, this course has a writing component. In addition to the midterm and final exam essays, you will be responsible for writing one formal, analytical essay. Select either “Unit I: The Revolution and Establishing Nation, 1776-1824” OR “Unit II: American Frontiers and Progressive Ideals, 1876-1920” about which to write. In a 3 to 4-page essay, describe three events, characteristics, or circumstances that defined the meaning of “America” during your selected era. Using information from lectures and assigned readings, write a clearly organized essay that has a specific thesis and thoughtfully analyzed primary and secondary sources that support and further your thesis. You do not need to do outside research for this paper—you are to use information from the lectures and assigned readings.
Consider the following when writing your essay: What ideals characterized “America” during that era? Describe some of the themes that helped define the nation (for example: frontier, democracy, civilization, technology, etc.). Were certain groups considered to be “American” and others not? If so, why were some groups considered to be “other” and what did they do to fight for inclusion?

Additional instructions for the essay and a writing workshop will be given in class.

- **Essays due October 29th**: Please print your essay and bring it with you. All essays are due at the beginning of class.
  *Late essays will be reduced 1/3 of a letter grade for each day it is late.*
- **(Optional) Rewrites due November 19th**: After you’ve received a grade for this paper, you have the option to rewrite it. All rewritten work is due November 19th.
  *No late papers will be accepted.*

**Midterm Examination, Tuesday, October 8** (25% of your grade)
The in-class midterm exam will be a combination of ID, short answer, and short essay questions based on readings, lectures, films, and discussions covered through Tuesday, October 1st.
Bring a blue book.

**Final Examination, Tuesday, December 17, 5-6:50 pm** (40% of your grade)
The in-class final examination will be a combination of ID, short answer, and one long essay question. The final will be cumulative, but with a heavy emphasis on materials from the second half of the class. Like the midterm, you will be expected to reflect knowledge of the lectures, discussions, readings, and films. Students must engage fully with each of these components in order to receive the highest marks.

Bring a blue book. You may also bring one-page of notes for the essay portion of the exam. These notes may include an outline for your essay that includes a thesis statement, topic sentences for the body paragraphs, and bullet points to signal what you plan to discuss in each paragraph. It may not be the entire essay written out in advance. You will turn these notes in with the final exam.

*Extensions and make-up exams will only be given if there is an emergency. If an emergency arises, you must talk to me before the day of the exam or the essay due date.*

**Grading Structure**
- Participation and Discussion Leaders: 10%
- Analytical Essay: 25%
- Midterm Exam: 25%
- Final Exam: 40%

Grades are calculated using a standard scale:
- A+: 98-100; A: 93-97; A-: 90-92; B+: 88-89; B: 83-87; B-: 80-82; C+: 78-79; C: 73-77; C-: 70-72; D+: 68-69; D: 63-67; D-: 60-62, and F: 0-59

**Course Policies**
We all play a critical role in the success of this class. By following the codes of conduct below, we will learn how to think critically and analytically, and how to productively articulate our thoughts. We will also learn how to actively listen, build upon each other’s ideas, and create a democratic space where a multitude of perspectives are welcomed and valued.
By taking this course, you agree to:

- Attend class regularly
- Arrive on time
- Complete all of the assigned readings before coming to class and bring the assigned text and/or print outs of the readings to class
- Actively engage in discussions
- Participate and contribute to group activities
- Be fully present when you are in class (i.e. turn off cell phones, no texting, no web surfing, no wandering in and out of the classroom, etc.)
- Keep up with the materials covered in lecture. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate and come to office hours with any questions
- Do your own work. See the “Academic Honesty” section below.
- Come to my office hours with any questions, concerns about your performance in the class, etc. My office hours are Tuesdays 2:30-3:30, Thursdays 2:30-4:30, and by appointment.

A note about contacting me via email: I prefer that you come to my office hours, but if you have a quick question feel free to email me. Before you contact me, please refer to your syllabus (also available on TITANium) to see if you can find the answer there. I will do my best to respond within 24 hours for emails received M-F. For emails sent after 5pm on Fridays or over the weekend, I will respond the following Monday.

Phone policy: No phones will be allowed in class. Please turn them off and keep them in your bags.

A note about computers and tablets: We live in a digital age (hooray!) but it can distract you and those around you from learning (boo!) So let’s make a deal: I will do my utmost to keep you engaged and will allow you to use computers and tablets if they are being utilized to enhance your learning. Please only use these devices for note taking and following along with the powerpoint presentation. I know it seems impossible to stay off Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. but out of respect for me and your classmates, please refrain from checking into your social media world—I promise you that it will still be there when class is over!

Student Accommodations: If you have a disability or special need for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please inform the instructor and contact the Office of Disability Support Services as early as possible in the term. The Office of Disability Support Services is located in University Hall 101. For more information, call (657) 278-3117 or visit their website at http://www.fullerton.edu/DSS/

Academic Honesty: Academic honesty is essential to maintaining an optimal learning environment. Cheating on exams or assignments is, of course, not permitted. Plagiarism—taking the work (words, ideas, concepts, data, graphs, artistic creation, etc.) of another whether that work is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near verbatim form and offering it as one’s own without giving credit to that source—will result in an automatic F on the assignment and will be reported to the campus Judicial Affairs Officer. All students are expected to understand and abide by the University’s policies on Academic Dishonesty: http://www.fullerton.edu/senate/documents/PDF/300/UPS300-021.pdf
Writing Center: The Writing Center offers all registered students the opportunity to receive writing assistance. In half-hour long sessions, students work with a tutor to create and/or improve specific assignments and, more importantly, to improve their overall writing skills. Tutors and students can work together to develop strong thesis statements, decide upon the best organization for a paper, improve sentence structure, and build an argument with sufficient evidence, for example.

The Writing Center is located on the first floor of Pollak Library North. Walk past the research desk, turn left after the clusters of computers, and look for the Writing Center Sign near the northwest corner. For more info call (657) 278-3650 or visit: http://english.fullerton.edu/writing_center/index.asp
To schedule an appointment online go to: http://english.fullerton.edu/writing_center/appointments.asp

University Learning Center: The goal of the University Learning Center is to provide all CSUF students with academic support in an inviting and contemporary environment. The staff of the University Learning Center is carefully selected and trained to assist students with their academic assignments, general study skills, and computer user needs. The ULC is located in Pollack Library North, 2nd Floor. The services that the ULC provide to the CSUF students include an open computer lab, tutoring, workshops, online tutoring, and collaborative learning. The online tutoring option allows students to submit their paper for constructive feedback. http://www.fullerton.edu/ulc/


* NOTE: The contents of this syllabus are subject to change.
# Course Schedule

Takaki = Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19th Century America*

* = Readings available on TITANium as PDF’s. Please print and bring to class.

## Unit I: The Revolution and Establishing Nation, 1776-1824

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings due before class</th>
<th>Assignments and Exams</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Tu 8/27</td>
<td>Course Introduction &amp; Defining “America”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Tu 9/3</td>
<td>What is an “American”?</td>
<td>Read the entire syllabus. Come to class with any questions. Discussion leaders:</td>
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<td>*“Stories from the Revolution,” nps.gov</td>
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<td>*“Boston King,” PBS.org</td>
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<td>*“Abigail Adams, “Remember the Ladies,” PBS.org</td>
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<td>*“Declaration of Independence”</td>
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<td>*J. Hector St. John de Crevecoer, “What is an American?”</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Tu 9/10</td>
<td>Making the American Body: Technology, Race, and Gender</td>
<td>Discussion leaders:</td>
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<td>Takaki, Ch. 1, 2 &amp; 3 (p. 3-65)</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Tu 9/17</td>
<td>Between Civilization and Savagery. Writing Workshop</td>
<td>Discussion leaders:</td>
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<td>Takaki, Ch. 4 &amp; 5 (p. 69-107)</td>
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## Unit II: American Frontiers and Progressive Ideals, 1876-1920

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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Tu 9/24</td>
<td>Race and Gender after Reconstruction</td>
<td>Group presentations on DuBois and Gilman (we will discuss this assignment in class)</td>
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<td>Takaki, Ch. 8 &amp; 9 (p. 171-214)</td>
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<td>Half of the class will read: *W.E.B. DuBois, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings,” and “Of the Training of Black Men” (p. 67-81)</td>
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<td>The other half of the class will read: *Charlotte Perkins Gilman, <em>Yellow Wallpaper</em> (1892)</td>
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<td>*If you are writing on Unit I, begin writing a draft of your analytical essay.</td>
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<td>*Midterm study guides will be available on TITANium.</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Tu 10/1</td>
<td>The Frontier in American Culture &amp; Midterm Review</td>
<td>Discussion leaders:</td>
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<td>Takaki, Ch. 10 &amp; 11 (p. 215-279)</td>
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<td>*Frederic Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History”</td>
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<td>Come to class with study guide completed. Do you have any questions?</td>
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<td>Assignments and Exams</td>
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<td>Tu 10/15</td>
<td>Progressivism, Labor and Urban Reform</td>
<td>Jacob Riis, <em>How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York</em>, Introduction and Ch. 1, 2, 3, 9, 24 &amp; 25 (1890)</td>
<td><strong>Discussion leaders:</strong> If you are writing on Unit II, begin writing a draft of your analytical essay.</td>
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<td><strong>UNIT III: COLD WAR AND CIVIL RIGHTS, 1945–1965</strong></td>
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| Tu 10/22 | Cold War Fears at Home: The Bomb, Gender, and Sexuality              | * Elaine Tyler May, “Explosive Issues: Sex, Women, and the Bomb” (p. 89-108)  
* “Miss Atomic Bomb”  
* Whitney Strub, “The Clearly Obscene and the Queerly Obscene: Heteronormativity and Obscenity in Cold War Los Angeles” (p. 373-398) | **Discussion leaders:**                                                                 |
| Tu 10/29 | Fighting for Equal Rights                                           | * Cotton Seiler, “‘So That We as a Race Might Have Something Authentic to Travel By’: African American Automobile and Cold-War Liberalism” (p. 1091-1117)  
* César Chávez, “Sacramento March Letter, 1966”  
* Juan Francisco Lara, “En Memoria de César Chávez”  
* Allen Ginsberg, *The Howl* (1955) | **Analytical essays due at the beginning of class.**  
Discussion leaders:                                                                 |
| Tu 11/5  | Cold War Internationalism                                             | * Penny Von Eschen, “Ike Gets Dizzy” (p. 1-26)  

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| Tu 11/12   | Cold War & Civil Rights                         | * Leigh Raiford, “‘Come Let Us Build a New World Together,’” SNCC and Photography of the Civil Rights Movement,” (1129-1157)  
* Ruth Feldstein, “‘I Wanted the Whole World to See’: Race, Gender, and Constructions of Motherhood in the Death of Emmett Till,” (263-303) | Discussion leaders:                                        |
| week 12    |                                                 |                                           |                                                            |
* Marita Sturken, “AIDS and the Politics of Representation” (p. 145-182) | Discussion leaders:                                        |
| week 13    |                                                 |                                           |                                                            |
| Week 14    |                                                 |                                           |                                                            |
| Tu 12/3    | Rising Tensions and Discontent & begin Bowling for Columbine (film) | * Edward T. Chang and Jeannette Diaz-Veizades, “The Media, the Invisible Minority, and Race” (p. 59-80)  
* Tricia Rose, “Prophets of Rage: Rap Music and the Politics of Expression” (p. 99-145) | Discussion leaders:                                        |
| week 15    |                                                 |                                           |                                                            |
* The New York Times, “Revisiting Y2K: Much Ado About Nothing?” | Come to class with your study guide filled in. Any questions?  
Discussion leaders: |
| week 16    |                                                 |                                           |                                                            |
| Tu 12/17 5-6:50 pm |                                                 |                                           | Final Exam  
Bring a blue book.  
Bring a 1-page outline for the essay portion of the exam. |                                                            |