

Fall 2016
AMST 501
Tuesday 7-9:45pm
Classroom: UH 319
Office Hours: MW 9:30-10:30am; Tu 5:30-6:30pm; & by appt.

Dr. Carrie Lane
Office: UH-413
Email: clane@fullerton.edu
Telephone: 657-278-7359

Course Syllabus

Course Description:

This seminar introduces graduate students to the field of American Studies. It examines a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches scholars use in the study of American culture. It also explores the history and development of American Studies as a discipline and scholarly enterprise. The course introduces key theoretical and methodological approaches to American Studies research along with concrete examples of texts incorporating those approaches in the study of a wide range of topics. Class time will be spent discussing various approaches in depth. In written assignments, students will have the opportunity to apply American Studies theories and methods to topics of their choice. The overarching goal of this course is to enhance students' ability to discuss, research, write, and think critically about American culture.

American Studies Department MA Student Learning Objectives:

- Students will demonstrate an advanced understanding of how scholars approach cultural evidence, critically evaluating scholarly theories and methods.
- Students will demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of cultural processes in history, analyzing the dynamics of diverse cultural interactions and change over time.
- Students will design and carry out an original interdisciplinary research project at an advanced level, communicating their own conclusions in a clearly-written essay.

Text(s) and other course materials required or recommended:

1. Gregory Colon Semenza, *Graduate Study for the 21st Century*, 2nd edition (Palgrave)
2. Peter Singer, *Marx: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford UP)
3. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1* (Vintage)
4. Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945*, Updated Edition, with a Post-9/11 Chapter (UC Press)
5. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition (Verso)
6. George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (Basic Books)
7. James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (Yale UP)
8. Shane White and Graham White, *Stylin': African American Expressive Culture from Its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Cornell University Press)
9. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford UP)

10. Alice Goffman, *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* (Chicago UP)
11. Additional required readings available online through Titanium course website.

Grading Standards and Criteria:

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%

The +/- grading system will be used. There are no exams for this class, only a series of written assignments. Keep all graded assignments so that any discrepancies can be easily and fairly straightened out. At this point in time I do not plan to offer any extra credit assignments for this course. If I do decide to offer an extra credit option, it will be equally available to all students. There are no make-ups for missing assignments. Requests for extensions will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and should be submitted to me in writing at least 24 hours before the assignment's due date. Extension requests submitted on or after a due date are not extensions; they are late papers.

Assignments

Response Papers	10%
Applied Practice Paper #1	20% Due 10/4
Applied Practice Paper #2	20% Due 11/8
Review Essay	30% Due 12/16
Participation	20%

Response Papers (10 total): Due all weeks in which reading is assigned

Each week you will turn in a 2-3 page typed, double-spaced response to the week's readings. To initiate each class meeting, I will ask at least one student at random to begin the day's discussion by reading their response paper and posing their discussion question to the class. Your response papers should answer the following questions for that week's reading. (If there are multiple readings for a week you may choose to focus your response on just one.)

- **Problem:** What question or issue motivated the author to write this text? To what general audience or discipline is the text directed?
- **Argument/Intervention:** What argument is the author making regarding her or his subject matter and/or about a specific theoretical approach? What does the author want us to DO or THINK after reading this?
- **Implications:** How does this week's reading add to your understanding of American Studies as a field? What is the reading's potential impact on your own areas of interest?
- **Discussion Question:** Choose one of the items above and write a question that it raises, which could then be used to begin our discussion in class.

Your response may be written in prose form or as some kind of list. All students (whether or not you led discussion that class) will turn in your responses at the end of the class period. Late response papers will not be accepted. Each student may skip one response paper over the course semester during a week of your choosing.

Applied Practice Papers (2 total): Due 10/4 and 11/8

Twice in the course of the semester you will turn in a 3-5-page paper (double-spaced) in which you apply a specific theoretical approach to a cultural text of your choice (a written, visual, or audio text, a material object, or a ritual or event). Your paper should: 1) briefly summarize the text you have chosen; 2) briefly summarize the approach you are using AND explain why you think it is helpful or relevant for analyzing your chosen text; 3) offer an original analysis of the text. I will provide more specific instructions for each of these papers later in the semester.

Review Essay: Due 12/16

You will write a 12-15 page double-spaced essay explaining how scholars have analyzed a specific problem or theme related to American culture. These essays only consider secondary sources, and trace how different scholars have interpreted a given topic. You must integrate at least 10 scholarly sources (including books and articles) into your essay. The goal is to review, synthesize and organize the literature on a subject, rather than complete an original primary source-based research paper. Ultimately, your essay should consider which research questions have been deemed most important, what methodologies have been most fruitful and influential, and what conflicts over interpretation have shaped the ways scholars have studied this specific topic. Your essay should begin with an extended introduction that describes your topic in detail and explains why it is an American Studies topic (this section should incorporate at least 3 course readings—these do not count toward your required secondary sources). You must have your topic approved ahead of time. Please schedule an appointment with me to discuss your ideas.

Instructor Classroom Management Procedures:

Attendance: You are expected to attend every class meeting for the entire meeting period. Students who miss more than two classes or are consistently late to class will be ineligible for "A" grades.

Participation: Seminars are most valuable when all members take part. They are also most effective when all voices and perspectives are welcome. Your participation and respectful attention to others' participation are the basis of this grade.

In-Class Conduct & General Advice: You are graduate students, and as such I hold you to a high standard of performance and conduct. I should not have to remind you to complete readings or assignments, or to come to class prepared to engage in thoughtful and specific discussion about the required texts. I should not have to monitor your in-class behavior. I expect that you will conduct yourself with maturity and professionalism and that you will give this class your full attention during all meetings.

Phone Policy: Please turn phones off and keep them in your bag. If need to make or receive a call during class time, please leave the classroom in order to do so.

Computer Policy: You may not take notes on computers or audio record lectures unless specifically authorized to do so by Disability Support Services. Studies have confirmed that people retain far more information when they write rather than type their notes. Typing up notes, even verbatim, decreases students' retention of the material presented. In short, I ban computers from my classroom not because I am an ogre or a Luddite but because I truly believe it helps you learn.

Office Hours: I 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 don't hesitate to drop by with questions or to mull over something you've been thinking about. If you're struggling in the class, contact me sooner rather than later so we have time to work together to improve your performance before the semester ends.

Rights & Resources:

The following links provide important information to you, as a student, concerning your rights and responsibilities, as well as emergency preparedness. Please review these carefully.

[**University Policy on Academic Dishonesty**](#)

[**Disabled Student Services**](#)

[**Emergency Policies**](#)

Class Schedule

8/23 Introduction

Reading: None (but start Semenza early—there's a heavy reading load next week)

8/30 Graduate School

Reading: Semenza, *Graduate Study in the 21st Century*, Intro, Ch. 1-6, 9, &
Afterword (Chapters 7, 8, 10-12 are optional)

DUE: Goals for Graduate School (2-3 pages, double-spaced)

9/6 American Studies

Reading: Wise, "Paradigm Dramas in American Studies"
Smith, "Can 'American Studies' Develop a Method?"
Zenderland, "Constructing American Studies"

9/13 Class and Capitalism

Reading: Singer, *Marx: A Very Short Introduction*

9/20 Discourse

Reading: Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*

9/27 Empire and Transnationalism

Reading: McAlister, *Epic Encounters*

10/4 Grad Student Advice Panel & CV Workshop

Reading: None

**DUE: Applied Practice Paper #1
Draft of your Curriculum Vita (3 hard copies)**

10/11 Identity and Community

Reading: Anderson, *Imagined Communities*

10/18 Gender and Sexuality

Reading: Chauncey, *Gay New York*

10/25 Resistance and Performance

Reading: Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*

11/1 Race and Material Culture

Reading: White and White, *Stylin'*

11/8 Academic Research, Writing, and Revision

Class begins with a **library workshop in PLN 303 at 7pm.

Reading: TBD

DUE: Applied Practice Paper #2

11/15 Neoliberalism

Reading: Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (you may skip ch. 5)

* * * **11/22 - NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK** * * *

11/29 Hyperincarceration and Structural Violence

Reading: Goffman, *On the Run*

12/6 Conclusion and Celebration

DUE: Revised Goals for Graduate School

12/16 DUE: Review Essay (hard copy due to AMST Dept. Office [UH 313] by 4:30pm; electronic version due to Titanium by 11:59pm that evening)