

## **American Studies 601**

Bill Mullen

Class meeting time: T. 3-5:50

Location: REC 103

Office 315 Heavilon Hall

Office Phone: 494-3735

e-mail: [bvmullen@purdue.edu](mailto:bvmullen@purdue.edu)

Office Hours : T. 1-3; Friday 1-2

**Textbooks:** Are available at on-line bookstores and at Von's Bookshop, West Lafayette, 315 W. State Street West Lafayette.

**Attendance:** Attendance is crucial to your success in the course. American Studies 601 is a heavily participatory course. Discussion counts. You will be evaluated on your participation in the course, which includes attendance. Any unexcused absence or lateness will result in a 1 point reduction from your final grade. Please contact me in advance by phone or e-mail if you know you will miss a seminar.

**Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism:** Is grounds for failing the course.

**Course Description:** American Studies 601 is a history of the field of American Studies, with special attention to debates, themes and problems that have generated change in the field over time. The course also tackles the problem first named in the essay by American Studies founding member Henry Nash Smith, namely, "Can American Studies Develop a Method?" The answer to this question lies in the ability of American Studies scholars to define her/his own interdisciplinary practices, assumptions and ideas, and to articulate them clearly through scholarly pursuit. To this end, American Studies 601 provides a grounding for American Studies 602, a course in American Studies Methodology which you will take next term.

**Here are some of the questions we will address on a recurring basis:**

*---What are some of the ideological assumptions embedded in the history of American Studies as a field?*

*---How does one develop a 'method' of doing American Studies?*

*---What are some of the challenges, problems and opportunities inherent in doing interdisciplinary studies?*

*---What is American 'exceptionalism' and is it real?*

*---What is the relationship between the idea of "America" and the development of the non-U.S. world?*

*---What is/are 'transnational' means of doing and understanding the field of American Studies?*

*---What are the implicit politics of doing an "Area Study" like American Studies and examining the history and culture of the world's dominant empire and imperialist power in the 20<sup>th</sup> century?*

*---What does American Studies tell us differently about the history of race and racism, sex and sexism, gender and gender inequality, queer life and homophobia, capitalism and exploitation, social activism and mass movements?*

*---What does American Studies teach us about the idea of 'culture,' especially mass and popular culture?*

### **Course Requirements:**

**Teach for a Day:** Each of you will be responsible for teaching on one hour seminar lesson during the term on a topic/reading of your choosing. See attached sign-up sheet. The objective of this assignment is for you to sharpen your teaching skills by illuminating key issues, problems and ideas in our readings. You must organize a carefully planned teaching lesson using at least *\*two\** readings from the day's seminar. Your teaching should include at least one handout and may use other supplements from other media. Your teaching will be evaluated on the following criteria:

---level of preparation

---quality of handout and supplemental materials

---degree of interaction with the rest of class

---how well you open up critical issues, themes and ideas in the reading for discussion

### **20 percent of Final Grade**

#### **Annotated Bibliography:**

An annotated bibliography is a list of secondary scholarly materials with a brief, one paragraph description of the contents. Your task is to gather 10 secondary scholarly sources organized around one theme or issue in American Studies: gender, the internet, religion, Civil Rights etc. You must provide a full scholarly citation of each source and an annotation. You must provide one hard copy of the assignment to me on the due date and send your completed bibliography to everyone else in the seminar by e-mail on the due date. For examples of an annotated bibliography see the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) website: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/> For this assignment you may use either MLA or APA format.

#### **Due Week XII**

20 percent of grade

#### **Mid-term Essay:**

In Week IX, after Fall Break, you must submit an 8-10 page essay on a topic, theme or problem of your choosing. The essay should address at least *\*one\** issue or theme to emerge from our reading from the first half of the course. The essay should attempt to locate the problem or theme within the field of American Studies. The essay's thesis should present an argument, or interpretation, of the topic. That is, the essay should not be descriptive.

I plan to meet with each of you by week VIII to discuss your essay topic. For that meeting please prepare an abstract of your essay with working title. The abstract should be no longer than 250 words. We will use your abstract as the basis for our meeting.

### **Research Requirements:**

You must use a minimum of eight secondary sources for the mid-term essay. Please use either APA or MLA format for citation and Works Cited. The essay grade will be penalized 5 points for each date late.

### **20 percent of final grade**

#### **Final Essay:**

The Final essay for the course should be a 20-25 page paper. The final paper may be completely different in topic and thesis than the mid-term, or it may be an extension and elaboration of that paper. The essay should provide a deeper, more complex and more detailed argument than the mid-term. Important to the paper is not simply 'length' but the development and sustainment of a strong, clear thesis.

You must use a minimum of 15 secondary sources for the paper. The final essay may be in either MLA or APA format.

Final essay is due the last day of class: Tuesday, December 8<sup>th</sup>.

The Final essay will be accompanied by informal in-class reports on your research and writing. These will take place the final two weeks of class. The in-class report should provide the class with a summary of your thesis and argument; a brief account of your research method, and come with a one-page handout illustrating some important aspect of the essay.

40 percent of final grade.

## Course Schedule:

### Week I:

Tuesday Aug. 25<sup>th</sup>: Introduction. "What Is? What Was? What Will Be American Studies?"  
Begin discussion of Slotkin, Regeneration Through Violence.

### Week II:

Tuesday September 1<sup>st</sup>: Slotkin, Regeneration Through Violence. **Maddox:** Henry Nash Smith, "Can American Studies Develop a Method?" **Keywords:** America, Culture, Literature.

### Week III:

Tuesday, September 8<sup>th</sup>: Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Idea in America. **Maddox:** R. Gordon Kelly, "Literature and the Historian" and Bruce Kuklick "Myth and Symbol in American Studies." **Keywords:** Environment, West.

### Week IV:

Tuesday, September 15<sup>th</sup>: Annette Kolodny, The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters. **Maddox:** Nina Baym, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors." **Keywords:** Gender, Sex.

### Week V:

Tuesday September 22<sup>nd</sup>: Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. **Maddox:** Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860." **Keywords:** Slavery, South. **Guest speaker:** Sanae Tokizane, Professor of American Studies, Chiba University, Japan, Visiting Scholar, Yale University.

### Week VI:

Tuesday September 29<sup>th</sup>: Toni Morrison, Beloved. **Maddox:** Alexander Saxton, "Blackface Minstrelsy and Jacksonian Ideology." **Keywords:** Race, White.

### Week VII:

Tuesday, October 6<sup>th</sup>: Alan Trachtenberg, The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age. **Maddox:** Warren Susman, "History and the American Intellectual: Uses of a Usable Past." **Keywords:** Corporation, Property.

**Week VIII:** October 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>: **Fall Break**

### Week IX:

Tuesday Oct. 20<sup>th</sup>: Philip Deloria, Playing Indian. **Maddox:** Gene Wise, "Paradigm Dramas in American Studies." **Keywords:** Indian, Performance.

**Week X:**

Tuesday Oct. 27<sup>th</sup>: Jose Saldivar, Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies. **Maddox:** Ramon Gutierrez, "Community, Patriarchy, and Individualism: The Politics of Chicano History and the Dream of Equality." **Keywords:** Border, Mestizo/a.

**Week XI:**

Tuesday, Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup>: George Lipsitz, American Studies in a Moment of Danger. **Maddox:** Amy Kaplan's Reply to Lipsitz essay. **Keywords:** Ethnicity, Identity.

**Week XII:**

Tuesday Nov. 10: Michael Denning, Culture in the Age of Three Worlds. **Maddox:** Robert Berkhofer, Jr. "A New Context for a New American Studies?" **Keywords:** Liberalism, Capitalism, Globalization.

**Week XIII:**

Tuesday, Nov. 17: Inderpal Grewal. Transnational America: Feminisms, Diaporas, Neoliberalism. **Maddox:** Alice Kesler-Harris, "Cultural Locations: Positioning American Studies in the Great Debate." **Keywords:** Diaspora, Domestic.

**Week XIV:**

Tuesday Nov. 24: Arnoldo Cruz-Malave and Martin Manalansan: Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism. **Maddox:** Kevin J. Mumford, "Homosex Changes: Race, Cultural Geography and the Emergence of the Gay." **Keywords:** Queer, Colonial.

**Week XV:**

Tuesday, Dec. 1: In-class reports I.

**Week XVI:**

Tuesday Dec. 8: In-class reports II.

**Note:** The final in-class reports should provide a 10-15 report on your Final paper. The report should be informal, and give the class an understanding of how you came to your topic, what kind of research you conducted, what your main argument is, and how you see the paper fitting into the field of American Studies. Do your best to take us \*inside\* of your thought process and your best to make us \*interested\* in what you have done. You may bring a handout if you'd like.

Final papers due Thursday, Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> to my IDIS mailbox by 3 p.m.