American Studies 601
INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN STUDIES
Bill Mullen
Class meeting time: W. 1:30-4:20
Location: Beering B206
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Office Hours: T. 2-4

Course Description: American Studies 601 offers 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 tackles the problem first named in the essay by American Studies founding member Henry Nash Smith, namely, “Can American Studies Develop a Method?” To this end, American Studies 601 provides a grounding for American Studies 602, 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 20th 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?
---How can American Studies scholars relate to and participate in social justice movements? How can our work reach the streets and change people’s lives?
Textbooks: Are available at on-line bookstores and at Von’s Books.

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 Requirements:

Teach for a Day:
20 percent of final grade

Each of you will be responsible for teaching a one hour seminar lesson during the term on a topic/reading of your choosing. See 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

Annotated Bibliography:
Due Week XII
20 percent of grade
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.

**Mid-term Essay**  
**Due Week IX**  
**20 percent of final grade:**

In Week VIII, 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. By week *six*, you must hand in to me a 250 word abstract describing the paper. The abstract should explain why you think the ‘problem’ in the essay is worth examining and what your proposed ‘solution’ to the problem is. In other words, what is the value of the argument you want to make for other scholars thinking about this issue.

**Research Requirements:**

You must use a minimum of six 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.

**Final Essay:**  
**Final essay is due the last day of class: Wednesday, December 4th.**  
**40 percent of final grade.**
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.

**Course Schedule:**

**Week I:** Aug. 21 Introduction *The Past, Present and Futures of American Studies*

**Week II:** Aug. 28th: Read in *Keywords* “America” by Kirsten Silva Gruesz and “Exceptionalism” by Donald E. Pease; Read *Zinn* Ch. 1-5; Read in *Maddox* "Can ‘American Studies’ Develop a Method?” by Henry Nash Smith and Commentary by Buell and “Myth and Symbol in American Studies” by Bruce Kuklick and Commentary by Segal.

**Week III:** Sept. 4th: Read in *Keywords* “Nation” by Alys Weinbaum and Read *Zinn* Ch. 6-10; Read in *Maddox* “Blackface Minstrelsy and Jacksonian Ideology” and Commentary by Lott and Gene Wise “Paradigm Dramas in American Studies: A Cultural and Institutional History of the Movement” with Commentary by Mechling.

**Week III:** Sept. 11th Philip Deloria. *Playing Indian*. Read in *Zinn* 524-539; Read in *Keywords* “Indian” by Robert Warrior and “Performance” by Susan Manning.


**Week V:** Sept. 25th: Amy Kaplan *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*. Read Zinn Ch. 11-14. Read in *Keywords* “Empire” by Shelley Streeby, “Domestic” by Rosemary Marangoly George and “Capitalism” by David F. Ruccio.

**Week VII:** Oct. 9th. George Lipsitz *American Studies in a Moment of Danger.* Read Zinn Ch. 15-19. Read in *Keywords* George Yudice “Culture,” and Carla Kaplan “Identity.”


**Week IX:** Oct. 30th Patricia Hill Collins. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment.* Read in Maddox Barbara Welter “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860.” Read in *Keywords* “Gender” by Judith Halberstam and “Race” by Roderick Ferguson.

**Week X:** Nov. 6th *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. Read in Maddox Nina Baym “Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors” and Commentary by Margaret McFadden. Read in *Keywords* “Slavery” by Walter Johnson and “Literature” by Sandra Gustafson.


**NOTE: MICHELLE ALEXANDER WILL LECTURE AT THE BLACK CULTURAL CENTER NOVEMBER 14TH at 7:30 p.m.**

**Week XII:** Nov. 20th Inderpal Grewal. *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diaspora, Neoliberalisms.* Read Zinn Ch. 21-24. Read in *Keywords* “Diaspora” by Brent Hayes Edwards and “Globalization” by Lisa Lowe. **Annotated Bibliography Due.**

**Week XIII:** Nov. 27th. Michelle Alexander *The New Jim Crow.*
Week XIV: Dec. 4th: Celebration of Your Work! Informal roundtable discussion of your papers and the seminar. Prepare to give a brief (10 minute) presentation of your paper. We want to know how you came to the topic, what your primary argument and findings are, and how you see the paper relating to the field of American Studies. Tell us how the paper also reflects your sense of the purpose or importance of American Studies scholarship either for other scholars, or for what George Lipsitz calls ‘aggrieved communities.’ FINAL PAPERS DUE in Hardcopy.