American Studies 602
Critical Race Theory and Contemporary U.S. Literature and Culture

Bill V. Mullen
bvmullen@purdue.edu
ext. 43735

What does culture really mean? Why does culture really matter? This course will examine the relationship between works of literature, sociology, criticism, history, media studies, women’s studies and American Studies that take up these questions with great urgency. The course will explore aspects of contemporary culture rich in contested definition and meaning: legal, racial, sexual, interpretive, academic, social. We will come to terms with culture and cultural criticism as sites of argument, debate and social transformation. In doing so, we also explore academic disciplinarity and interdisciplinary as both “problems” and “solutions” in response to the questions: What does culture really mean? Why does culture really matter?

Students in the course will be expected to lead one class discussion, write one extended seminar paper, produce a critical bibliography, and conduct at least one piece of original research ‘unrelated’ to the University or University setting.

The goal of the course is to give students from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds familiarity with tools useful to cracking open their own interests and research.

Required Readings:

American Studies References and Resources

*Raymond Williams  Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*  Oxford UP 0195204697
*American Studies in a Moment of Danger*  George Lipsitz  0816639493

Literature

*The Street*  Ann Petry  Houghton Mifflin  0395901499
*Bastard Out of Carolina*  Dorothy Allison  Plume  0452269571
*The New World Border: Prophecies, Poems and Loqueras for the End of the Century*  City Lights  Guillermo Gomez Pena  0872863131

Media Studies/Gender Studies

*Working Girls: Gender and Sexuality in Popular Cinema*  Yvonne Tasker  Routledge 0415140056

Critical Race Theory
Critical Race Theory  Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic  NYU Press 0814719317
Border Matters: Remapping American Culture Studies  Jose Saldivar  University of California Press  0520206827
Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America  Tricia Rose  Wesleyan UP  0819562750
Are We Not Men: Masculine Anxiety and the Problem of African American Identity  Philip Brian Harper  Oxford  0195126548

Sociology/Anthropology

Women Without Class: Girls, Race, and Identity  Julie Bettie  University of California Press  052023548

History

Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000  Melani McAlister  University of California Press  0520228103

Music and Films to be selected for study in collaboration between the instructor and the class. These will not be for purchase.