Week 1 – January 9
Introduction
Today we will go through the syllabus and begin a discussion about doing American Studies research. What characteristics mark the field of American Studies? How does one begin an interdisciplinary inquiry? What do you want to find out in the course of your investigation, and how do you think others will benefit from your findings?

In class: “Press Release,” Part I
Handouts of articles by Fishkin, Morrione, and Fouché

Week 2 – January 16
Kinds of Research
Not all projects are alike—just take a look at an issue of American Quarterly and you will find a variety of articles. Some attempt to map a field, while others explicate theory. Some are monographic; others seek insight into a cultural moment through an individual’s life or a revealing event. As you read the articles, think about the kind of project the author has undertaken and the assumptions the author made prior to research. Be ready to identify the “topic” of each article, but also think about the larger implications of each piece. Each article has a subject as well as an issue of larger significance. Does the author start with a topic and move to a problem, or does the author start with a problem and introduce a specific topic that helps illuminate the nature of the problem? The discussion will focus on the work American Studies scholars do—both in writing for others and in reading and analyzing published work.

Readings:


Handout—“Press Release,” Part II

**Week 3 – January 23**
Research Proposals
Today, students will turn in short (3-6 pages) research proposals. Your proposal should introduce the problem you plan to investigate and why you believe it needs to be examined. What work has been done on this project to date—including three to five full citations of scholarship related to the problem and explain what each does and does not do. What is your plan of attack? How is yours an interdisciplinary American Studies project? If you are building on work you have done in another graduate course, please provide a copy of the final paper from that course. Be prepared to make a short presentation of your proposal in class and to turn in your updated “press release.”

**Week 4 – January 30**
Role Models
An important aspect of scholarship involves paying attention to how others research and write and learning from the models they provide. I’d like each of you to identify a book or article that you find satisfying and that you think provides a good role model for the kind of work that you plan to do. What is it about this piece that you especially admire? The writing style? The assumptions the author makes? The creative analysis of evidence?

**Week 5 – February 6**
No Class today. You should be working on your individual project. I will be in UNIV 329 during the class period and available for consultation.

**Week 6 – February 13**
No Class today. You should continue working on your project. I’ll be in UNIV 329.

**Week 7 – February 20**
The Art of Narration
Regardless of the kind of research problem you are tackling, at the end of the process you will be working on some sort of narrative. You already should be thinking about your imagined audience and how you plan to give them access to your insights. We will spend this meeting talking about writing, explaining, and narrative connections. I have found that conversations with scholars often are more deeply informative of the work than the final written outcome—sometimes the author is obsessed with “sounding smart” or hasn’t quite figured out how to convey the most significant insights, while, by contrast, the conversationalist tells the story of the research. Be prepared to tell the class about a formative event in your life.

**Week 8 – February 27**
Update
Where are you in the research process? What problems (if any) have you encountered? What surprises have you encountered? Has the research led to a project somewhat different from your original proposal? For class, bring in a copy of your working Bibliography (or Works Cited), divided into Primary and Secondary sources. Each entry should be in proper bibliographic form (identify the citation system you are following).

Week 9 – March 6
No Class today—continue working on your project. I will be in UNIV 329 if you need to see me.

Spring Break

Week 10 – March 20
No Class today—continue working on your project. Remember the first draft is due NEXT WEEK! I will be in UNIV 329, available to meet with you.

Week 11 – March 27
First Draft
This is a non-negotiable deadline. Even if your paper is not where you want it to be, you must hand in what you have so far. In fact, bring three copies of the draft—one for me and two for classmates who will read the draft in preparation for a workshop next week. It will be a relief to read someone else’s prose and to take a break from your own project. As you read your classmate’s paper, identify the elements that you admire and that you think have been done particularly well; summarize the main points you got from reading it; and take time to identify specific elements that you think need improving.

Week 12 – April 3
Workshop
No one owns knowledge—it is co-created. This seminar meeting will be a hands-on workshop, where in groups of three, you will help one another think about revisions that need to be made before the final draft is turned in. Bring your marked copy of a classmate’s paper to class to return to the author.

Handout: Instructions for the final “Press Release,” which is due on April 24.

Week 13 – April 10
No Class today.

Week 14 – April 17
No Class today.

Week 15 – April 24
Final Presentations
Each student makes a 10-minute presentation—a “press conference” so to speak.
Finals Week – May 1
Final Papers are due by 12:00 noon—either leave them in my mailbox in UNIV (second floor, main office of the History Department), in BRNG 1289 (the IDIS office) or in person in UNIV 329.

Ground rules for the Seminar
1. Attendance and participation are especially crucial in this seminar. We will not convene each week, so when we do, we must be ready to take full advantage of our time together.

2. Honest exchange is also essential in a course where each of you will be working on a major research project, but civility, generosity, and a helpful spirit must keep honesty from slipping into cruelty. I insist that we show respect for each member of the seminar at all times.

3. Finally, I look forward to learning from each of you; the project you undertake in AMST 630 represents the culmination of your course of study and will reflect a sustained effort on your part to make sense of an issue, subject, or problem. Make sure it is your contribution—avoid any form of academic dishonesty. We will discuss this issue at various points in the semester. For the purpose of discussion, academic dishonesty includes practices that take credit for research and writing that were actually done by someone else. Specifically, it means quoting published work without using quotation marks and/or without citing the source from which the language is taken; it means paraphrasing someone else’s work without acknowledging that you relied on their work; and it means taking the structure of an argument made by someone else without acknowledging that you have done so. If you ever have any questions about when you need to cite the work of others, please don’t hesitate to ask. Academic dishonesty will result in failure in AMST 630.