

INTRO TO AMERICAN STUDIES
Fall 2011
Wednesday and Friday 10:50/329

Course Code: AMS 101
Course Id: 00492
Course Credit: 3
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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course is an interdisciplinary investigation into the history and culture of the United States of America. It will study some of subject areas common to American Studies, including beliefs and values, racial, ethnic and gender relations, identity formation, social inequality, popular culture, politics, government and business, religion and foreign policy. It is designed to help students get a comprehensive picture of American culture and society, literature, history, and politics and government by examining them from different perspectives. The course is also aimed at honing skills in critical thinking and communicating your thoughts orally and in writing.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Be on time!

Do not sleep in class!

Remain until class is dismissed!

If you leave the room for more than 15 minutes during the class, you will be automatically regarded as absent for that day's class.

Turn off cell phones, beepers, pagers, and other electronic devices! This rule automatically implies that you cannot play any games on your cell phones or any other electronic devices during the class. Students, who disrupt the class and deprive other students of the opportunity to learn, will be asked to leave the room immediately.

Do not carry on private conversations during class!

Respect other students in class!

MAKE-UP WORK AND LATE PAPERS

Make-up examinations will be given only in cases of extreme emergency. You are expected to notify me as soon as possible and to discuss your circumstances with me. Do not otherwise assume that you will be permitted to take a make-up exam. **Late papers and assignments are not accepted!**

I AND X GRADES

I and X grades will be given only in extraordinary cases of an emergency nature such as serious illness, hospitalization, or the death of a close family member. In these cases of extreme emergency, you must notify me as soon as possible. You must provide an appropriate medical or legal documentation indicating your reasons. **DO NOT expect to get I or X grades just because you do not feel like attending the class or doing the course work!! X is an administrative grade, which means that a student is dropped from the course by instructor. So, don't ask or beg for X grade!!**

ATTENDANCE (10%)

DO NOT MISS CLASS! You are expected to attend all classes. Always plan to arrive on time, having completed the assigned readings and prepared for discussions. If you are seriously ill or must miss a class for some emergency reasons, you need to provide an appropriate medical or legal documentation indicating an excused absence. Unexcused absences will significantly lower your course grade.

PARTICIPATION (15%)

Fifteen (15%) percent of your grade for this course is determined by your participation in class discussions. You are expected to participate in class discussions and encouraged to raise questions. Class participation can help improve your grade. It will NEVER lower your grade. DO PARTICIPATE IN THE DISCUSSIONS!

QUIZZES (15%)

Fifteen (15%) percent of your grade for this course is determined by pop quizzes that will be given throughout the semester. They will be administered only during the first 20 minutes of class and be based on that day's reading assignments or films. SO, DO THE READINGS!! You may use your notes during the quizzes. YOU MAY USE ONLY YOUR OWN NOTES AND STUDY GUIDES! YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED TO USE XEROX COPIES OF YOUR FRIEND AND/OR CLASSMATE'S ANSWERS AND NOTES. Failure to do so will result in F for the quiz. There will be no make-up quizzes administered to absentees. No extra time is given to students who come late to class on those days.

PRESENTATION (20%)

Team Presentation: 6 – 7 teams (2 – 3 persons in each) have to choose a topic that you as a group have to choose from the provided list. After doing a thorough research on a chosen topic, you will be given 15-20 minutes to present your research findings and to lead the class discussion on a fixed date. You need to study the topic thoroughly in order to deliver and explain your material effectively, answer your classmates' questions, and engage them into the class discussion. An outline of your presentation and list of sources should be submitted **a week before the presentation is due**. If you do not submit the outline, you will not be allowed to make your presentation. Additional guidelines on how to make an historical presentation will be provided during the second week of the semester.

MIDTERM EXAM (20%)

The midterm exam will be an in-class exam consisting of several short essay questions. All questions are of equal value. The detailed instructions will be provided before the midterm exam.

FINAL EXAM (20%)

The final exam will be a take home exam consisting of several essay questions. All questions are of equal value. The detailed instructions will be provided before the final exam. YOUR FINAL EXAM WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED UNLESS YOU SUBMIT YOUR TEXTBOOK.

GRADING

Grades will be determined by the quality of work demonstrated by each student.

GRADING PERCENTAGE SCALE

10% Attendance	A 93-100%	C 73-76%
15% Participation	A- 90-92 %	C- 70-72%
20% Presentation	B+ 87-89 %	D+ 67-69%
15% Quizzes	B 83-86 %	D 63-66%
20% Midterm exam	B- 80-82 %	D- 60-62%
20% Final exam	C+ 77-79%	F 0-59%

GRADING EXPLANATION

A, A-	Excellent work
B+, B, B-	Good, above average work
C+, C, C-	Average work
D+, D, D-	Poor, below average work
F	Failure, unacceptable work

REQUIRED READING

SCHEDULE OF READING ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS

Week	Dates	Topics
1	August 24	Introduction, syllabus review, and geographic overview of the U.S.
	August 26	Defining American Studies from the introduction, <i>American Cultural Studies</i> , pp. 1-7.
HISTORY		
2	August 31	No class- Independence Day!
	September 2	“The Way to Wealth,” Benjamin Franklin, pp. 28-35. “The Declaration of Independence,” Thomas Jefferson, pp. 688-691.
	September 7	<i>Slavery in Colonial America</i> : Betty Wood, “The Transatlantic Slave Trade,” pp. 16-31.
3	September 9	Video: <i>Amistad</i> , pt. 1.
	September 14	Video: <i>Amistad</i> , pt. 2.
4	September 16	John Horse and the Black Seminoles. Read website http://johnhorse.com/index.html
	September 21	“The Frontier Heritage,” <i>American Ways</i> , pp. 73-78.
SOCIETY AND CULTURE		
5	September 23	“The Power Elite,” C. Wright Mills, pp. 124-132.
	September 28	“The Transmission of American Culture,” <i>American Cultural Studies</i> , pp. 287-314.
6	September 30	“Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination,” bell hooks, pp.19-23.
	October 5	Film: <i>Great Debaters</i>
	October 7	“In God We Trust?: Religion in American Life,” <i>American Cultural Studies</i> , pp. 106-134.

7	October 12	“Becoming Hispanic,” Neil Foley, pp. 49-57.
	October 14	Presidential Proclamation, “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month” http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/presidential-proclamation-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-pride-month
8	October 19	Fall Break
	October 21	Fall Break
9	October 26	“How We Grew So Big?” Michael Lemonick http://www.time.com/time/subscriber/covers/1101040607/article/how_we_grew_so_big_diet01a.html
POLITICS, GOVERNMENT, AND BUSINESS		
9	October 28	“Government and Politics in the United States,” <i>American Ways</i> , pp. 142-15.
10	November 2	“Alberto Gonzales and the Lawyers of the Third Reich,” R.J. Gonzales, pp. 1-7.
	November 4	“Nickel-and Dimed,” Barbara Ehrenreich, pp. 111-118; “Is the U.S. Heading for ‘Developing Nations’ Inequality Levels?” Paul Harris, pp. 1-4.
11	November 9	“An Argument for Imperialism,” Sen. Albert Beveridge, and “The Opposition to Imperialism,” pp. 85-89
	November 11	“The Spread of Freedom,” <i>American Cultural Studies</i> , pp. 260-286.
12	November 16	“Twenty Things You Should Know about Corporate Crime,” Russell Mokhiber, pp. 1-7; “The Ballot or the Bullet,” Malcolm X, pp. 1-10.
LITERATURE		
12	November 18	Do You Know Where I Am?” Sherman Alexie, pp. 150-168.
13	November 23	“Cannery Night,” Kathleen De Grave, pp. 40-49;
	November 25	“Class,” Sherman Alexie, pp. 35-56.
14	November 30	“The Fire Poems,” Zandy et al., pp. 154-162.
	December 2	“One Good Man,” Sherman Alexie, pp. 209-238.
15	December 7	Video: <i>Smoke Signals</i> , pt. 1.
	December 9	Video: <i>Smoke Signals</i> , pt. 2.
16	December 14	Review Session
	December 16	Final Exam

*Changes to syllabus can be made upon discretion of the instructor.