

## *Introduction to American Studies*

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01:050:101:01  
Ruth Adams Bldg. 001  
MW6, 5:35 – 6:55PM

“Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,  
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows, robust, friendly,  
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.”  
—Walt Whitman

### **Objectives:**

This course is an introduction to the interdisciplinary field of American Studies and an in-depth examination of a few central moments in 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century American cultures. Focusing on the tropes of “movement” (from geographic, social, political, cultural, musical, and so forth) and “containment,” students will learn to analyze key texts in American cultural studies. Literary works to film, music and art, as well as political essays: this breadth of texts—e.g., Keroac’s *On the Road*, Kushner’s *Angels in America*, Coppola’s *The Godfather*, Cisneros’ *The House on Mango Street*, essays, photography, and other works—will allow students to learn about different approaches and methodologies to the discipline.

Importantly, through the use and approach of primary sources, pictures, films, and other material, emphasis will be placed on students’ analytical skills, reading, writing, and communication of interdisciplinary scholarship.

### **Readings:**

- Burgett, Bruce, and Hendler, Glenn. *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*
- Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*
- Baldwin, James. *The Fire Next Time*
- Morisson, Toni. *Beloved*
- Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*
- Keroac, Jack. *On the Road*
- Kushner, Tony. *Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches*

[Books may be purchased at the Douglass Co-op Bookstore.]

### **Internet information:**

Visit <<http://amerstudies.rutgers.edu/>> for useful information about American Studies.

SAKAI: <<https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal>>

### Activities and Grading:

[1] 2 scheduled examinations: 20% each = 40%

[2] 1 at-home assignment: 20%

[3] Final examination: 25%

[4] Class attendance and participation: 15%

- ◆ Students are asked to engage in all class discussions, if not with commentary on the readings, certainly by asking questions. Although this is a lecture course, it is designed for intellectual exchange: every student is responsible for reading and preparing the assigned texts *before* class meetings.
- ◆ All exams and assignments must be turned in on time; no material will be accepted late unless appropriately justified. In cases in which late material cannot be justified with an appropriate explanation, excuse or other documentation, students will be docked a whole grade per day that the assignment is late.
- ◆ *The professor reserves the right to give impromptu quizzes during the semester.*

### Grading Scale:

92→100=A; 87→91=B+; 81→86=B; 77→80=C+; 70→76=C; 60→69=D; 0→59=F

### Academic Integrity:

Except for collaborative assignments officially approved by the instructor in advance, all work that a student submits must be his/her own independent effort. Students must cite properly all outside sources consulted in preparing written assignments. Students should review the university policy on Academic Integrity (see the website for the Office of Student Judicial Affairs: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>). The Writing Program maintains a web site that defines and discusses plagiarism: [http://wp.rutgers.edu/courses/201/plagiarism\\_policy/](http://wp.rutgers.edu/courses/201/plagiarism_policy/). This site clarifies many issues regarding the University's policy on academic integrity. Failure to comply with this policy can result in failure of the course.

This course will require supplementary research. Remember that

*Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by appropriate indentation and must be properly cited in the text or in a footnote. (from University Regulations)*

Any questions about what constitutes plagiarism should be discussed with the professor. For information on proper documentation, consult "Acknowledging Sources," the guide prepared by the Rutgers American Studies Department, which is available online. If you have further doubts regarding citation, please consult the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (6<sup>th</sup> Ed. or later) to resolve any problem. Prof. Sifuentes-Jáuregui has a copy available for reference.

### Office hours:

Students are strongly advised to consult with the professor about any problems that might arise regarding any text, class discussion, exam questions, and the like. **Office hours are Wednesdays between 2:00 and 4:00 PM—or by appointment.** Do not bottle up all questions for the session before exams or essays are due.

**Course of study:**

<b>January</b>		
W 21	Introduction	
M 26	American Studies and Methodologies	Smith, "Can American Studies Develop a Method?" (**) Geertz, "Thick Description" (**) Read entry from <i>Keywords</i> : "Culture" (** denotes article found in SAKAI)
W 28	Nation	Anderson, "Introduction" to <i>Imagined Communities</i> (**) <i>Keywords</i> : "Nation" and "America"
<b>February</b>		
M 2	Exceptionalism  Guest Lecturer: Prof. Michael Rockland	Toqueville, selections from <i>Democracy in America</i> (**) <i>US Constitution</i> : <a href="http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html">http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html</a> <i>Keywords</i> : "Exceptionalism" and "Democracy"
W 4	Autobiography and Identity	<i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave</i>
M 9		<i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave</i> <i>Keywords</i> : "Slavery," "Abolition"
W 11	Racial Formations	Baldwin, <i>The Fire Next Time</i> : "My Dungeon Shook" Omi and Winant, <i>Racial Formations</i> (**) <i>Keywords</i> : "Race"
M 16	Guest Lecturer: Prof. Leslie Fisbein	Baldwin, <i>The Fire Next Time</i> : "Down at the Cross"
W 18	Slave Narratives and Science Fiction	<i>Blade Runner</i> , Scott, dir.
M 23		<i>Blade Runner</i> , Scott, dir.
W 25		Exam 1
<b>March</b>		
M 2	Captivity Narrative  Guest Lecturer: Prof. Louise Barnett	<i>The Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson</i> < <a href="http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/gutbook/lookup?num=851">http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/gutbook/lookup?num=851</a> >
W 4	Guest Lecturer: Prof. Matthew Backes	Rowlandson <i>Keywords</i> : "Indian" and "White"

M 9	Universalisms and particularisms	Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> , Part 1
W 11	Guest Lecturer: Prof. Nicole Fleetwood	Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> , Part 2 & 3
M 16 & W18	Spring break	
M 23	Capitalism	Melville, "Bartleby, the Scrivener" (**) Keywords: "Literature"
W 25		Exam 2
M 30	Spaces and Identity  Guest Lecturer: Prof. Angus Gillespie	Trachtenberg on the Brooklyn Bridge (**) Martí, "Coney Island" (**)
<b>April</b>		
W 1	Migration narratives	Cisneros, <i>The House on Mango Street</i> Keywords: "Citizenship," "Immigration"
M 6	Ethnicities	<i>The Godfather</i> , Coppola, dir.
W 8	The American <i>Flâneur</i>	Keroac, <i>On the Road</i>
M 13	Guest Lecturer: Prof. Ann Fabian	Keroac, <i>On the Road</i>
W 15	On the Question of Privacy  Guest Lecturer: Prof. Allan Isaac	<i>Roe v. Wade</i> : <i>Lawrence v. Texas</i> : Keywords: "Body" and "State"
M 20	Porn	Meese Report (selections) (**) (Take home assignment due)
W 22	American Complex	Kushner, <i>Angels in America</i>
M 27	Containing Political Narratives	<i>Boogie Man: The Lee Atwater Story</i> , Forbes, dir.
W 29	Appropriation and (Global) American Culture	<i>Paris is Burning</i> , Livingston, dir. (select scenes) Madonna, "Vogue" Keywords: "Globalization"
<b>May</b>		
M 4		Review for Final Examination <b>Final exam Friday, May 8, 4 to 7pm</b>

Film screenings: Prof. Sifuentes will announce film screening for each of the films shown. Students may attend these screens or may opt to rent the films privately prior to the class discussion.

Final note: This "course of study" may be subject to change.