American Studies 101: “America” as Idea

This course introduces students to the interdisciplinary field of American Studies. Employing literature, essays, law, film, history, visual culture, philosophy, and politics, the class will examine the concept of “America” in its global, national, community, and bodily/psychic permutations. Students will engage with primary and secondary sources of all kinds. The goal of the course is to expose students to intellectual and creative possibilities in the field of American Studies, as well as providing incoming majors with key concepts and analytical tools to prepare them for more advanced courses. Emphasis will be placed on students’ analytical skills, close reading, writing, and verbal articulations of interdisciplinary scholarship.

Readings: YOU MUST BRING ALL PRINTED READINGS TO CLASS

Articles®: on SAKAI Resources marked by ®  
Text: Anders Stephanson, Manifest Destiny, Hill and Wang, 1995  
Novels: Ruth Ozeki, My Year of Meats, Penguin, 1998  
   Willa Cather, Professor’s House, Vintage (1925), 1990  
   Anzia Yezierska, Salome of Tenements (1923), Univ of Illinois Press, 1995  
   Nella Larsen, Passing in Quicksand and Passing (1929), Rutgers UP, 1995  
Film: Field of Dreams, Paris is Burning, Savage Acts, Lest We Forget, Food, Inc

Requirements: 1) Active reading, listening, and participation (including short exercises) in lecture-discussion. I call on people; 2) Midterm; 3) Final; 4) 5 quizzes; 5) 4 inquiry quips according to groups (A-D); 6) attendance/participation.
   • This is a lecture-discussion course. Attendance and participation are important in our work in the course. You are allowed 3 absences for any reason whatsoever; each subsequent absence will result in a 3-point deduction in the final. Repeated excessive lateness (>15min) will count as absences. Excuse notes are unnecessary.
   • Please email if you wish to meet during office hours. Emails answered only on M/W 9a-6p.
   • Note: there are no “minus-grades” at Rutgers.
   • All special accommodation requests must be brought to my attention the first two weeks.
   • All cell phones and hand-held devices must be turned off.

Department Learning Goals Met by this Course:

Students will be able to understand key concepts in American Studies and synthesize an interdisciplinary dialogue among the different disciplinary methodologies that compose American Studies investigation of American culture across time and space in the history, politics, literature, and arts of the peoples of the United States, as well as the Americas. Students will endeavor to write concisely, speak articulately; and think critically, analytically, and creatively.

COURSE SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
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<tr>
<td>INTRO Jan 20</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Jonathan Edwards, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (1741) excerpt in class; Oprah; Jerry Springer Concept: Sovereignty</td>
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<td><strong>Week</strong></td>
<td><strong>Concept</strong></td>
<td><strong>Readings</strong></td>
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2. Anderson: “Imagined Communities” |
| **Group B**<br>Concept: Culture/Nation | | | |
| **Week 2**<br>Feb 1, 3 | **Group C**<br>Concept: America as Brand | Novel: Ruth Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, to p 83 | Speaker 1: Prof. Angus Gillespie on Ideology of Abundance
Film: *Food, Inc* |
| **Week 3**<br>Feb 8, 10 | **Group D**<br>Quiz 1*
| Ozeki, to 284
Film: *Food Inc* | Ozeki, to end 361 |
| **Nation/Expansion**<br>Week 4<br>Feb 15, 17 | **Group B**<br>Concept: Border | 1. Frederick Jackson Turner, “Significance of the Frontier” (1893)*
2. Stephanson, 89-111 |
| **Group C**<br>Concept: “War and Masculinity” | Film: *Savage Acts* | |
| **Week 5**<br>Feb 22, 24 | **Group D**<br>Concept: Internment | Foreign Policy as Domestic Issue 1) Legal Case: Korematsu v US (1942)*; 2) Bayoumi, *How does it feel to be a Problem, “Rasha” only* (2008) | Speaker 2: Prof. Louise Barnett on Vietnam and Iraq
1. Roosevelt, “Strenuous Life” |
| **Week 6**<br>Mar 1, 3 | **Group A** | Cather, Willa. *Professor’s House*, 1925, to 160<br>Quiz 2* | Cather to 258 |
| **Week 7**<br>Mar 8, 10 | **Group C**<br>Concept: Spaces as Text | Trachtenberg, “Brooklyn Bridge as a Cultural Text” | MIDTERM |
| **Community/Race**<br>Week 8<br>Mar 22, 24 | **Group A**<br>Concept: American Masculinity as American Pastime | Film: *Field Of Dreams* | Film: *Field of Dreams*
Speaker 3: Prof. Michael Rockland |
ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:
1) Reading: Approximately 80 pages/week. I call on people during lecture.
2) Inquiry quips: In order to facilitate discussion each student, according to the assigned group (A-D) as shown above, will submit via SAKAI in the DROPBOX a question (inquiry quip) by midnight on the next day’s assigned reading. This quip brings up a question, an issue, or connections, that relates to the reading/film of the week.

6) Optional Credits: up to 15 points max for the semester added to midterm or final, whichever is lower
A) Outside Lecture: 5 points addition max (2 for simply attending, plus 3 more if you write a short coherent paragraph about the event) to midterm or final, whichever is lower
1) Feb 19: Re/Siting Asian American Studies, Alexander Library Teleconference room; attend ONE of four sessions. For schedule of each 1-hour session and info:

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<tr>
<th>Week 9</th>
<th>E Patrick Johnson, Pouring Tea: Stories from Black Gay Men in the South (excerpt)* Speaker 4: Prof. Ben Sifuentes on Race and Masculinity</th>
<th>Quiz 3* Nella Larsen, Passing, 1929, pp 143-178 Group D Concept: Whiteness and Race</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>1. Continue with Passing, to 242 2. Yezierska, Salome of the Tenements to p 58 Group A Concept: Immigration</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<td>Body/Psyche</td>
<td>Speaker 5: Prof. Leslie Fishbein on Yezierska’s Life and Work Read Salome to p 163</td>
<td>1. Yezierska, to end 184 2. Roosevelt, “American Ideals” Group B Quiz 4* (Godfather clip) Concept: Assimilation</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Film: Paris is Burning (71 min) Article: “Gender is Burning” Group C Concept: Body</td>
<td>Speaker 6: Prof. Nicole Fleetwood, &quot;Excess Flesh: Black Women Performing Hypervisibility.&quot;</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Film: Paris is Burning Continue with Gender is Burning * Quiz 5*</td>
<td>Film: Paris is Burning Madonna, Beyonce, and J Stepping Concept: Appropriation Group D</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>----- TBA Review</td>
<td>----- FINAL scheduled for May 7</td>
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http://amerstudies.rutgers.edu/events/resitingasamconference/schedule.html

2) Apr 1: E. Patrick Johnson, author of SWEET TEA: BLACK GAY MEN OF THE SOUTH, will be visiting Rutgers on April 1st, 2010 to present his performed version of sections from the book, POURING TEA. The presentation will take place at 4:30 in the Levin Theater.

3) I might announce other events during the semester.

B) 10 points max addition to midterm or final, whichever is lower: Voluntary 7-10 minute class presentation of a local monument as a cultural text or a cultural artifact (youtube clip, film, art, text, newspaper article) as example of America as Global, Imperial, National, Community, Racial, Ethnic, Body or Psychic IDEA. Presentation will consist of a short PowerPoint presentation, plus five questions and answers to be handed to me. Meet with me to discuss idea and to schedule presentation.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:
Except for collaborative assignments officially approved by the instructor in advance, all work 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 Center for the Advancement of Teaching: http://teachx.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html). The Writing Program maintains a website that defines and discusses plagiarism:
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.

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 promptly cited in the text or in a footnote. Acknowledgement is required when material from another source is stored in print, electronic, or other medium and is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one's words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: "to paraphrase Plato's comment ..." and conclude with a footnote identifying the exact reference. A footnote acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the reader of any preceding or succeeding paraphrased material. Information which is common knowledge, such as names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc., need not be footnoted; however, all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged. In addition to materials specifically cited in the text, only materials that contribute to one's general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography. Plagiarism can, in some cases, be a subtle issue.

Any questions about what constitutes plagiarism should be discussed with the faculty member. For information on proper documentation, consult Acknowledging Sources: http://amerstudies.rutgers.edu/documents/AcknowledgingSources.pdf, the guide prepared by the Rutgers American Studies Department, which is available on the American Studies Department web site and on the course Sakai web site.