Summary
In this graduate research seminar, students will learn how to research and write an original essay on any aspect of transnational American Studies (or will continue to build research/writing skills you already have). For the first half of the semester we will focus on readings by scholars working with different approaches and from different subdisciplines. The second half of the semester will be oriented more toward the research and writing process. Through workshops, small groups, and one-on-one meetings, students will consider how to develop research questions and define research topics, how to find sources, and how to interpret these sources. We will also focus on how to outline, draft, write, and revise seminar papers in ways that that incorporate these research techniques.

The seminar is designed for graduate students to develop skills in three areas:
1. Content and historiography: Students will explore topics that concern scholars who “do” transnational American Studies; the methods that scholars writing about politics, economics, music, religion, and/or sexuality (among others) use to research and write about these subjects; and the sources that they use to do so.
2. Research and writing: Students will research and write original scholarship on any topic having to do with transnational American Studies.
3. Professionalization: Students will learn to listen to and respond to each other—both remotely in writing, and in synchronous discussions. With regard to research, students will work together—reading, evaluating, discussing and critiquing each other’s work.

In other words, the goal of this seminar is for each of you to do the work of historians and be a historian yourself.

NOTE: This is not a graduate readings seminar and is not a comprehensive survey of transnational American Studies (if such a thing even exists!). Because this is a research seminar, we are focusing on a few topics in more depth—with attention to questions of research and method—more than we are trying for coverage. Consequently, we will not be engaging with a great many topics and questions that are important to this field. You will likely develop a paper topic that has little to do with the content of the required readings. Further, regardless of your topic, to write an effective research paper, you will need to read a great deal that is off of the syllabus. Please plan accordingly.

Required Texts
All required readings are available on blackboard or as ebooks. That being said, we will be reading a fair amount of several books; if you are able, you might prefer to buy these:
• Paul Farber, A Wall of Our Own: An American History of the Berlin Wall (UNC, 2020)
• Lynn Thomas, Beneath the Surface: A Transnational History of Skin Lighteners (Duke, 2020)

Format, Grading, and Requirements
Format: Each week during the first half of the semester will have two components.
--Online asynchronous requirements based (usually) on your analysis of primary sources. You can do this work at any point as long as:
  - 1. Your initial online submissions are completed by Saturday (time TBD);
- 2. Your responses to posts from peers are complete before class on Tuesday, but preferably by Sunday night. Please post on the discussion board, organized by date.

--Synchronous meetings to discuss secondary sources. We will meet remotely each Tuesday at 5:30. That meeting will focus on secondary sources.

**Grading and Requirements:**

- **Attendance and Participation in Synchronous Discussions (20%)**
- **Discussion Board Posts: Asynchronous responses to primary sources, and responses to other posts (20%)**
- **One article review essay (25%)**
- **Final essay (35%)**

1. **Attendance/Participation (20%)**
   This crucial component of the class includes:
   - Attendance and consistent participation in synchronous class discussions. Your comments must suggest that you’ve done the reading thoughtfully and thoroughly (text and notes). I expect you to have your camera on for these meetings; it is a requirement unless you are in touch with me to make other arrangements. You should treat these meetings as you would a “regular” in-person class; that means that you should be sitting up; and you should not be texting, making dinner, responding to emails, or engaging in any other tasks during our remote discussions. It is also important that you have the required readings with you during our discussions, whether that means printing out hard copy or having multiple windows open. All of this should be a “given” in a graduate seminar, but it is worth emphasizing.
   - This is not a passive learning environment, and simply showing up on zoom will not be enough to succeed in this component of the course. Because participation is so important, missing more than two classes will affect your final grade. If you miss one synchronous meeting, that will be an excused absence, no questions asked. If you miss more than one, you must be in touch with me for it to be an excused absence.

   - That being said, these are challenging times and challenging circumstances. If possible, please let me know in advance if you will not be in class, OR if you have cannot access our online discussions, OR if you need to be on mute and/or turn your camera off because of where you are and what is going on around you.

2. **Asynchronous Discussion Board Posts and Responses to Primary Sources (20%)**
   - **Posts:** Each week I will post several questions to guide your reading/listening/watching—usually, though not always about primary sources. You must read/listen to/watch, and then respond to one of these questions. At any one point during the semester, you may generate your own question and answer that, if you prefer. Post your answers to these questions on the bb discussion board by **Saturday**, at the latest. Answers should be 2-3 paragraphs. Although these are not essays, please write these posts in full sentences and with attention to grammar, punctuation, etc.

   - **Responses:** Each week you are required to respond to two posts from other students. These are due at any point before our synchronous meetings on Tuesday, but I encourage you to respond by **Sunday** (so that you have time to complete the secondary source reading). Please respond to a post for a question that you did NOT answer yourself for that week. These responses can be shorter than your posts (1-2 paragraphs), but again, you should write in full sentences. For each response, please note an idea that you agreed/liked/appreciated in your peer’s post (and explain why); and/or offer one way in which you disagreed (and why); and/or explain how you might have answered the same question differently.

   - **NOTE:** Each of you may take a “pass” and skip this assignment (both posting and responding) ONCE. This does not mean that you are not required to complete the reading that week. It may be most useful to use this option on the week that you submit your essay.

3. **One article/book review essay (25%)**
   Please choose two readings and write a **comparative essay**, 5-7 pages, evaluating both content and method. This paper should NOT simply summarize the articles/book chapters, but must analyze them in relation to each other. As you develop your own thesis about these readings, consider the following:
   - what questions does each scholar ask and does how each locate themselves in relation to larger debates in the field/s?;
• what is the thesis of each article?
• what sources does each scholar draw on to answer these questions and develop the thesis?
• how might the story and/or argument be different had each author considered other sources?
• how does each scholar read and interpret these sources? what other avenues of research does each article invite, and what sources might you look to if you were to explore further?
• do you find the argument/s persuasive? why or why not?
• how does considering these articles in relation to each other affect your evaluation of either one independently?

(NOTE: These are the questions you should be asking yourselves as you do the required reading each week.)

These questions suggest that the essay should focus on issues of research and method, with attention to sources, evidence, argument and narrative, and the assumptions (implicit or explicit) that each scholar may make about transnational approaches. You certainly need not answer all of these questions (nor could you do so in 5- pages!), but these are the types of issues that should inform your analysis and shape your thesis.

You may submit this essay at any point until February 25. You may draw on articles from different weeks of class; indeed, I encourage you to think across the themes of each week if you are so inclined. But please submit the essay on the day that one of the articles you are writing about is assigned (I do not want to receive an essay about the Berlin Wall and South Korea in late February; but, if you write about the music and the Cold War-era jazz tours and Fado music, then you can submit that essay on Feb. 16).

4. Final Essay (35%) 20 pages.
This portion of your grade will be determined not only by the final product (though of course, the final paper matters), but also by the quality of each student’s engagement with the overall process. This includes:
• Jan. 26. Preliminary brainstorming session (no written work required)
• Feb. 2. Second brainstorming session: A one-paragraph description of possible topic AND/OR a primary source of interest with a brief explanation is required.
• Monday, March 1. Preliminary pre-proposal: a brief description of your preliminary topic with both tentative questions and possible primary sources.
• Saturday, March 6. Research Paper Proposals Due (date/time TBD).
• Saturday, March 20. Source analysis
• Saturday, March 27. Preliminary thesis summary
• Saturday, April 3. Draft I
• Saturday, April 24. Draft II
• May 4. Final essay

Steps along the way include writing/revising drafts and peer review-- during which each student will read, comment on, and discuss drafts at two different stages along the way toward completion. This attention to the revision and RE-revision process will allow us to consider the following: How do we revise drafts effectively? How do we make choices about revision based on potentially competing responses to drafts? When is it necessary to do more research in order to revise, and when is it most important to focus on issues of organization and writing style?

Policy on Academic Integrity, Cheating and Plagiarism
As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University’s educational and research missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community. The entire Academic Integrity Policy can be found here: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/.

Rutgers University treats cheating and plagiarism as serious offenses. Cheating is both a moral and an ethical offense. It violates both your own integrity and the ethics of group commitment: when you cut corners and cheat, you undermine those students who took the time to work on the assignment honestly. As a standard minimum penalty, students who are suspected of cheating or plagiarism are reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Pending investigation, further penalties can include failure of the course, disciplinary probation, and a formal warning that further cheating will be grounds for expulsion from the University.
Please learn to resist the urge to cut and paste, either literally or figuratively, by using other people's ideas. If I find that you have used other people's ideas (e.g., Wikipedia, Amazon reviews, book jacket descriptions, etc.), I will not accept the assignment because I will not be able to consider it your own work. You will get a failing grade for that assignment and will not be able to make it up.

All students are required to sign the Rutgers Honor Code Pledge. To receive credit, every assignment must have your signature under the following phrase: “On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this assignment.”

Note that lectures and materials utilized in this course, including but not limited to videocasts, podcasts, visual presentations, assessments, and assignments, are protected by United States copyright laws as well as Rutgers University policy. As the instructor of this course, I possess sole copyright ownership. You are permitted to take notes for personal use or to provide to a classmate also currently enrolled in this course. Under no other circumstances is distribution of recorded or written materials associated with this course permitted to any internet site or similar information-sharing platform without my express written consent. Doing so is a violation of the university’s Academic Integrity Policy.

These copyright protections extend to original papers you produce for this course. In the event that I seek to share your work further, I will first obtain your written consent to do so. Finally, as the instructor for this course, I have the responsibility to protect students’ right to privacy. Classroom recordings of students will therefore be treated as educational records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the U.S. federal law that governs access to educational information and records. Instructors and students must provide notification if any part of online sessions is going to be recorded; such recordings cannot be circulated outside the course.

Support Services
Rutgers University Newark is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and to providing supports to further that mission of access and to foster student success.

Names and Pronouns:
An important part of creating a respectful learning environment is knowing and using the name you use, which may differ from your legal name, as well as the gendered pronouns you use (for example, I go by she/her/hers). Please feel free to let me know your name and/or the pronouns you use at any time.

Covid-related Resources: These two links provide a comprehensive list of available resources: [https://www.newark.rutgers.edu/covid-19-operating-status#SupportingOurStudents](https://www.newark.rutgers.edu/covid-19-operating-status#SupportingOurStudents); and [https://myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/covid19](https://myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/covid19).

Students with Disabilities: Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter barriers due to disability. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact ODS, register, have an initial appointment, and provide documentation. Once a student has completed the ODS process (registration, initial appointment, and documentation submitted) and reasonable accommodations are determined to be necessary and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be provided to the student. The student must give the LOA to each course instructor, followed by a discussion with the instructor. This should be completed as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [ods.rutgers.edu](http://ods.rutgers.edu). Contact ODS: (973) 353-5375 or ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

Counseling Services: Counseling Center Room 101, Blumenthal Hall (973) 353-5805 or [http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu/](http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu/)

Students with Temporary Conditions/Injuries: Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury that is adversely affecting their ability to fully participate in their courses should submit a request for assistance at: [https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu](https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu).
Students Who are Pregnant: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist students with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy: (973) 353-1906 or TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

Rutgers Learning Center (tutoring services)
Room 140, Bradley Hall
(973) 353-5608
https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/learning-center

Writing Center (tutoring and writing workshops)
Room 126, Conklin Hall
(973) 353-5847
nwc@rutgers.edu
https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/writing-center

Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance
Rutgers faculty are committed to helping create a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. Rutgers has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The University strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the University. To report an incident, contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance: (973) 353-1906 or TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. To submit an incident report: tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm.

Please be aware that all Rutgers employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as advocates, counselors, clergy and healthcare providers as listed in Appendix A to Policy 10.3.12) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the University. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the University’s Title IX Coordinator. If you wish to speak with a staff member who is confidential and does not have this reporting responsibility, you may contact the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance at (973)-353-1918, or at run.vpva@rutgers.edu. Learn more about the office here: http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu/vpva

Citizenship and Community
We will be reading and discussing material on which we may not all agree; some of the themes and imagery we encounter in the sources may seem offensive or otherwise controversial. In this context especially, it is crucial for us to combine the free expression of ideas with respect for each other. This is your community and your class; each one of you has a responsibility to that community.

Finally-
Please keep in mind that this syllabus is a work in progress and there may well be some changes along the way. We all need to be flexible and patient—with ourselves and with each other-- given all of the uncertainty in our lives and in the world.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Tuesday, Jan. 19: Introductions and Preliminary Questions: What is Transnational American Studies?
-Synchronous Discussion:
• American Studies Association Conference 2019 program, skim with a focus on when/where transnational American Studies comes up.

Read two out of the next three:
Before we meet:

- Please review/skim the ASA conference program to see how/when/where the subjects of transnational American Studies appear. Some questions to consider as you do so: Do you notice any recurring themes in sessions that engage with transnational work? Which of these sessions interest you most? Least? Why? Choose one session where you might be interested to learn more: what questions would you ask? What primary sources would you look to for additional research?
- Please read two of the three other essays (by Kaplan, Kelley and Ngai) with a focus on what their main arguments are.
- How would you compare how Amy Kaplan talked about the “absence of empire in the study of American culture” in 1993 OR how Robin Kelley talked about the limitations of diaspora to how/if these subjects mattered to the 2020 American Studies Association conference?

Please post one question, observation, or comment about the ASA 2019 conference program, and one question, observation, or comment about any one of the other three readings on the discussion board in advance of our first meeting on Jan. 19.

**Tuesday, Jan. 26: The Cold War, I: Walls**

- **Asynchronous written assignment, due by Saturday 1/23:**
  - Required posts about primary sources, and responses to posts (preferably by Sunday 1/24, but definitely by 1/26):

Questions: Choose one of the questions below and respond by Saturday, 2/7. Please attend to the specifics in the texts and provide at least 1-2 examples from the source to support your points.

1. How does Davis first encounter and describe the Berlin Wall? What stands out about what she says AND how she says it?
2. How –if at all- does Davis make sense of what’s going on around her in East and West Germany in relation to events in the U.S.?
3. What story does the song “The Real Ambassador” tell? Who is the narrator and from whose perspective does Louis Armstrong (and/or others) sing? What are two ways that the song answers the question of who is the “real” ambassador?

- **Synchronous Discussion:**

**ALSO:** Come to class prepared for a preliminary brainstorming session. We will share ideas on topics and sources

**Tuesday, February 2: The Cold War, II: Occupation and Empire**

- **Asynchronous written assignment, due by Saturday 1/30:**
  - Required posts about primary sources, and responses to posts (preferably by Sunday 1/31, but definitely by
2/2): TBA.

• Plus, prepare and post 2 questions for Kornel Chang who will be joining us for part of class on Tuesday.

-Synchronous Discussion:


• More TBA

DUE: Please prepare a one-paragraph description of a possible topic or questions for your research paper, OR identify and describe a primary source that interests you from which you may build your research questions. We will have a second brainstorming session for paper topics, addressing content, sources, method.

Also: Class workshop on research with research librarian Natalie Borisovets (tentative)

Tuesday, February 9: Religion and Transnational Politics

-Asynchronous written assignment, due by Saturday 2/7:

• Required posts about primary sources, and responses to posts (preferably by Sunday 2/8, but definitely by 2/9):
  - • “Special Report: The Untold Story, South Africa,” Fundamentalist Journal, October 1985, pp. 1-16. Please focus on:
    o • Jerry Falwell, Why Did We Go to South Africa?”, p. 1;
    o • Deborah Huff, “Special Report: Falwell and Jackson Debate South Africa,” p. 16;
    o • Look at 1-2 other stories and pay attention to the visuals, all in James Owens, “Divestment: Churches Act to Thwart Apartheid,” Report from the Capital, April 1985, p. 11 (and see cover).

Questions: Choose one of the questions below and respond by Saturday, 2/7. Please attend to the specifics in the texts and provide at least 1-2 examples from the source to support your points.

1. The Jackson Falwell joint appearance on Nightline in 1985, according to one review that week, was the “rhetorical equivalent of a wrestling match,” and “appeared to be a draw.” On what basis might someone watching in 1985 have come to either of those conclusions? (Draw on at least two specifics.) Do you agree or disagree and why?

2. What logic, images, and/or assumptions do Falwell and Jackson share (if any)? Aside from their conclusions about divestment, how/where are they the most different in their approaches, their analyses and assumptions, or the ways they represent themselves?

3. How does Falwell answer the question “Why did we go to South Africa?” in his essay? What stands out not just about the content of his piece, but about how he builds his argument—his language, imagery, implied tone, etc.?

• Plus, prepare and post 2 questions for Melani McAlister who will be joining us for part of class on Tuesday.

-Synchronous discussion:


**Tuesday, February 16:**  Music in Motion  
**Asynchronous written assignment, due by Saturday 2/13:**  
- Required posts about primary sources, and responses to posts (preferably by Sunday 2/14, but definitely by 2/16): TBA.  
- Plus, prepare and post 2 questions for Kimberly DaCosta Holton, who will be joining us for part of class on Tuesday.  

-Synchronous discussion:  
- More TBA  

Also: **Class workshop on research with research librarian Natalie Borisovets (tentative)**

---

**Tuesday, February 23.**  Beauty, Business, Borders  
**Asynchronous assignment, due by Saturday 2/20:**  
- TBA  

-Synchronous discussion:  
- Lynn Thomas, *Beneath the Surface: A Transnational History of Skin Lighteners* (Duke, 2020), chapters to focus on TBA  

**DUE, Monday March 1:**  Preliminary paper topic.  Please submit/post a paragraph describing what you would like to research.  This paragraph should include 2-3 questions you want to explore further, 2 primary sources you have identified as potentially useful, and 2 relevant secondary sources.  

**Tuesday, March 2:**  No class; required meetings. More TBA

---

**DUE, Saturday, March 6:** Research Paper Proposals.  
This proposal (approx. 2-3 pages), should discuss:  
1. the topic to be addressed and its relationship to transnational American Studies; what are your main questions?  
2. the secondary scholarship with which you will be in dialogue; what are the debates in the field/s with which you are engaging?  
3. the primary sources you plan or hope to find and investigate. You must consider what and where these sources are; consider the practical issues: are they available? can you make use of them in the time that you have?; and, what will your approach be to these sources?  
4. a brief—and preliminary--bibliography of primary and secondary materials. In addition to this list of sources, name and describe in a few sentences one article or book that you feel is a particularly significant jumping-off point for your work (whether as model or foil). This bibliography may be attached to the 2-3-page discussion.  

**Tuesday, March 9:** Proposal Workshop  
**Asynchronous assignment, due by Tuesday 3/9:**  

• Written peer review responses to proposals (more TBA)

**-Synchronous discussion:**

• Peer Review: Read and prepare written comments on two proposals (more TBA)

• We will also do some readings on the theme of contagion. More TBA

**Tuesday, March 16:** No class; spring break

**Tuesday, March 23: Research and interpretation**

- **Asynchronous assignment, due by Saturday, 3/20**
  
  • Required posts about your OWN sources, and responses to posts (preferably by Sunday 3/21 but definitely by 3/23).
  
  • This week, your written assignment is to offer a sources analysis based on your own research. Post or describe 1-2 primary sources that at this point, are particularly relevant to your project, and/or that you are wrestling with and trying to figure out (for whatever sets of reasons).

  In 1-2 paragraphs, briefly describe the source/s; then, consider its relevance to your topic and developing thesis. Some questions to consider: What information does it reveal and what kinds of questions does it generate? What kind of story do you think you will tell in which this source will play a part, and what kind of thesis will you develop in which this source will play a part? What other kinds of PRIMARY sources are you looking for to build a research paper drawing on the document and these questions? What types of secondary sources are you drawing on to answer these questions? How might the scholars we’ve read thus far this semester “use” and engage with this source? Finally—and of greatest importance for class--what challenges does this source pose, and/or what questions do you have about it? If possible, please photocopy and/or attach some form of a reproduction of the source to your response.

  Together, we will consider what questions do certain sources generate? How do we as scholars come up with answers to those questions? How do we evaluate what is said and not said in sources—whether they are written documents or, others? What can primary sources reveal, or obscure,?

  **NOTE:** if your source is long (a book, for example), please have a short excerpt in mind to discuss and write about.

- **Synchronous Meeting**

  • Required reading TBA

  • Discussion of sources and research

**Tuesday, March 30: No class, required meetings**

- **Asynchronous assignment, due by Saturday, 3/27 (no responses required)**

  • Preliminary thesis summary. How is your overall argument for the paper developing? What is your tentative thesis?

**DUE:** Saturday, April 4, Paper Draft 1 (time TBA).

**Tuesday, April 6:** Peer review

- **Asynchronous assignment, due by Saturday, 4/3**

  • Please posts your paper draft I.
- **Synchronous:**
  - Peer Review, including written responses to two drafts (more TBA)

**Tuesday, April 13: Revising Workshop**
- Readings TBA

**April 20:** No class/meetings
- Second drafts due, Sunday, April 25

**DUE: Saturday, April 24, Draft 2**

**April 27:** Peer review

**- Asynchronous written assignment, due by Saturday, 4/23**
  - Please post Draft 2.
  - Prepare written responses to two drafts (more TBA) by Tuesday, 4/27

**DUE: Tuesday, May 4, Final Essay**

**Important material that we will try to get to along the way:**

**Contagion**

**Asynchronous assignment, due by Saturday 2/20**
- To date, you have been studying primary sources that other scholars have located and studies. For this week’s assignment, please post 2-3 primary sources from our own era that you think are relevant and meaningful and shed light on lives today. Put yourself in the minds of historians 15-50 years from now who are looking back on 2020-2021. What sources would you want them to have, especially if they are studying Covid through the lens of transnational American Studies? You may post links, photos, text, video, clips, etc., Post your sources by Saturday, and responses to posts (preferably by Sunday, but definitely by Tuesday):

**Synchronous discussion:**

**AND ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:**