Description
This reading and discussion seminar provides an introduction to the methods, approaches, and interpretations that have significantly shaped the field of American Studies. Reading a selection of established and more recently published texts, we will examine broad themes—for example, slavery, westward expansion, empire, industrialization, immigration, civil rights—and pay close attention to the different analytical categories—race, class, political economy, gender, sexuality—that practitioners in the field have employed in the study of U.S. history, culture, and society. Readings average 250 pages per week and students will be expected to write and turn in a short response paper each week.

Course Requirements
I. Participation and Discussion (20%)
Class meetings consist of discussions with students debating historical evidence, research methods, and interpretations. Active participation and listening is expected for each session.

II. Critical Response Papers (40%)
Students will be required to write a 1-2 page response to the reading each week. The paper is due via e-mail prior to class. Late papers will not be accepted.

III. Final Historiographical Essay (40%)
For the final essay, students will have the opportunity to explore one of the major historiographical issues/questions raised in the class in depth, analyzing and synthesizing several texts of your choosing. (15-20 pages).

Required Texts
• Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism (Verso, 1983)

• Walter Johnson, Soul by Soul (Harvard University Press, 1999)

• Linda Gordon, The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction (Harvard, 2001)

• Tiya Miles, Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom (Berkeley, 2015).

• Michael Denning, Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working Class Culture in America (Verso, 1998)


• Regina Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy: Prison and the Uneven History of Modern America* (Chicago, 2008)

• Ruth Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley, 2007)

**Attendance**  
Attendance is mandatory. Two unexcused absences lower your final grade by one letter grade. Any student who misses four or more sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences will not earn credit in this class. Such students should withdraw to avoid getting an F.

Class absence may be excused in case of illness requiring medical attention, curricular or extracurricular activities approved by the faculty, personal obligations claimed by the student and recognized as valid, recognized religious holidays, and severe inclement weather causing dangerous traveling conditions. All other absences including those due to a job or an interview will NOT be excused. For further detail on university regulations on class attendance see [http://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/nwk-ug_0608/index.html](http://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/nwk-ug_0608/index.html)

**Academic Honesty and Plagiarism Policy**  
All written work submitted by students should be their own. Students need to be careful about distinguishing their own ideas and writings from other sources. Plagiarism includes quoting or paraphrasing from another source without properly citing it. Plagiarism is grounds for automatically failing the course. Further details can be found here [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/policy-on-academic-integrity](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/policy-on-academic-integrity).

**Students with Disabilities**  
Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: [https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines](https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: [https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form](https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form). For more information please contact Kate Torres at (973) 353-5375 or in the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, in suite 219 or by contacting odsnewark@rutgers.edu.

**COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS**

**Week 1**
Sept 10  
Course Overview
**Week 2**
**Sept 17**
**Defining the Terms**

Barbara Fields, “Slavery, Race, and Ideology in American History.”


**Week 3**
**Sept 24**
**Slavery and the Problem of Agency**


Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*, 101-121.

**Week 4**
**Oct 1**
**The Indian in American Life**


**Week 5**
**Oct 8**
**Performing Race and Class**


**Week 6**
**Oct 15**
**The Jim Crow South**


**Week 7**  
**Empire**  
**Oct 22**


**Week 8**  
**The Gendered West**  
**Oct 29**


**Week 9**  
**The Immigrant in American Culture**  
**Nov 5**


**Week 10**  
**Deviance and Sexuality**  
**Nov 12**


**Week 11**  
**The Cold War**  
**Nov 19**


Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 1-7 and 207-249.


**Week 13**  
**Civil Rights Movement**  
**Nov 26**
Martha Biondi, “Brooklyn College Belongs to All of Us.”


**Week 14**
**Dec 3**  
**Neo-Liberalism and the Prison-Industrial Complex**


**Week 15**
**TBD**

**Dec 10**