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Introduction to American Studies:
American Intellectual and Cultural History, History 26:510:551:01
Interdisciplinary Methods in the Study of Nation, Culture, Power, American Studies 26:050:501
Fall 2019
Conklin 324
Meeting Time: Tuesday, 5:30-8:10 pm

Summary:

This graduate seminar is intended to introduce graduate students to scholarship in American Studies. We will be reading influential older articles and books; theoretical work that has had a particularly significant impact on American Studies; and more recent scholarship that begins to highlight the issues with which scholars of American Studies are currently engaged.

Objectives and Goals:

Students will consider the following questions:

- What is interdisciplinary study? What are some of the different methods, approaches, and assumptions that scholars who identify with American Studies bring to interdisciplinary work?
- Where has the field of American Studies been, and where is it going? What are the debates animating the field-- particularly with regard to nation, culture and power--and why?
- How do we, as scholars of American Studies, read and write in the “language” of the field? What skills are necessary to analyze different kinds of primary and secondary sources, including written texts, material objects, visual, oral and aural cultures, and more?

Required Books:

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (REVISED EDITION), NY: Verso, 1991; 1983)
- Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (NY: Basic Books, 1994)
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, v. 1: An Introduction* (Vintage, 1990)
- McAlister, Melani. *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and US Interests in the Middle East Since 1945* (University of CA, SECOND EDITION, 2005; orig. 2001)
- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (NY: Vintage, 1993)
- Ngai, Mae. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America: Updated Edition* (Princeton, 2014; orig. 2004).

Note: We will only be reading sections of Morrison and Ngai; these sections will be available on BB, so while these books are wonderful to own if you can, purchase is optional.

Required Films:

- Out in the Night* (2014)
The Ten Commandments (1956)

Grading and Class Requirements:

The requirements are designed to develop (and strengthen) reading, writing, and verbal skills. This course requires students to read books not only for content, but for how a given author forges an argument, interprets and uses evidence, and organizes the subject matter. The course requires students to write papers that not only summarize a subject in clear prose, but which grapple with how and why scholars have approached a subject in the ways that they have. This *historiographical* approach to reading and writing may be very different from what you’ve done in the past; some people compare it to learning a new language, and it is a process that requires patience, effort, and persistence. Finally, this course requires students to come together as a scholarly community.

- Participation and Questions on Readings (20%)
- Response papers (12%)
- One article/book review essay, 5-6 pages (20%)
- One short essay/close reading of primary source, 3 pages (12%)
- Final Essay, approximately 15 pages, double spaced, (250 words pp), footnotes required, including paper proposal and draft (36%)

1. Participation and Questions. 20%

This crucial component of the class includes:

- Attendance, completing assignments by the designated dates, and thoughtful participation in class discussions. Your comments must suggest that you've done the reading thoughtfully and thoroughly (including attending to footnotes/endnotes). **Please let me know in advance if you will not be in class.** Because participation is so important, missing more than two classes will affect your final grade. **Any student who misses four or more class sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences may not earn credit in this class.** Such students should withdraw to avoid getting an F. Arriving late or leaving early is disruptive to other students, and is only acceptable in an emergency situation. Repeated late arrivals and/or early departures will also affect the participation grade.

- Depending on class size and interest, we may include required oral presentations/starting questions. If so, 2 students each week will work together to start the seminar discussion. Students will offer a **brief** overview (10 minutes maximum) and three to four questions to the class as a starting point for our discussion. MORE TBA.

- Three sets of questions. At any three points in the semester, you must post several questions on blackboard based on the weekly assignments. These questions must be posted by Tuesday at NOON; each week, you should all plan to check bb before class to see what questions have been posted. I encourage you to respond as well, but this is not required.

2. Response papers (12%)

- Four 2-page response papers (double spaced). At four points during the semester you will submit a response to any of the readings. Use these responses to test out ideas and ask questions, to react to what you've read ("pro" or "con"), and to stretch your writing "muscles." You may respond to the "big picture" idea or argument in a given reading, or you may hone in on a specific passage, theme, or intervention that you think is particularly important and worth considering further. I also encourage you to use these response papers to answer one of the questions listed below in the article/review essay assignment. A first response is *required* by **September 10**. You must submit the other responses roughly every other week during the semester, based on whether you are in "Group 1" or "Group 2"; please note that you must submit the response on the week that we are discussing the material you write about. While I prefer to receive these responses before class via bb, you may bring hard copy to class and then also submit on blackboard. You will not get a letter grade on these responses, but I will respond about content and style, and these responses "count" toward your grade.

3. Article/book review essay (5-6 pages), 20%.

With a focus on one article or book, write an essay in which you evaluate the required reading (secondary sources only), and offer your own thesis about this reading. To develop your thesis, consider the following questions:

1. What questions does this book or article seek to answer? What are the author's main concerns? What story does this author seek to tell?

2. With whom is the author in dialogue? What intervention is this author trying to make? In other words, what is the larger professional, intellectual, and political context in which the author develops these questions, tells the story, and approaches this topic?

3. What METHODS does the author employ? What are their sources? Why these and not others? How does the author use these sources and organize information to answer the main questions and forge an analysis?

4. What are the primary benefits and/or problems with this method of doing research? What is most and least convincing about how the author uses the evidence and develops the argument? What might a given approach allow, and/or disallow?

5. What do you like and not like about this book/article, and why?

Note: You absolutely do not need to focus in depth on all 5 of those questions to write a successful review essay, but these are the types of questions you should have in mind as you write an essay that has a thesis and does not simply summarize the book or article; indeed, **these are the questions you should be asking yourselves as you do the required reading each week.**

You must submit this essay the week the material you are writing about is the topic for class discussion; each student will sign up for what week they will submit this review essay within the first week of the semester.

4. Primary source close reading essay (3 pages), 12%.

With a focus on one primary source, write a short essay in which you develop a thesis about this source based on your close reading and contextualization of it. While I would prefer that you write about one of the required primary sources on the syllabus that we will have read up to that point (Frederick Douglass, Ann Petry, Ralph Ellison, Gloria Anzaldúa's poetry, the film, *The Ten Commandments*), if you would like to write about a primary source that is required later in the semester (Fado music or the film *Out in the Night*), OR about a primary source that one of the scholars we've read draws on but is not required, you may do so—IF you are in touch with me first to discuss and get written permission.

- Due: **Tuesday, October 8, bb.**

3. Final essay. (36%)

Draw on 2-3 secondary sources to write a 15-page comparative book/article review essay. This essay should address the five questions above and consider them with a focus on several sources. All of the sources may come from the syllabus and the required readings we have done together, or you may write about one source from the syllabus and 1-2 sources that are not on the syllabus but relate in some way to the issues and themes that you want to consider. If you are going to look beyond the syllabus, you must plan ahead and discuss the options you are considering with me in advance and receive written permission. You may draw on the recommended readings to develop your comparative frameworks (many of which are by R-N faculty), but you are not restricted to that list.

- 1- 2-pg. proposal: **Monday November 25.**
- Draft: **SATURDAY, December 7.**
- Peer Review: **Tuesday, December 10.**
- Final essay: **Sunday, December 15, NOON.**

Finally, while I assume that you have some familiarity with the events in the periods we will be discussing, we all have our gaps. If you are not familiar with events in a given historical era-- and that's okay! -- you may find it helpful to consult textbooks. (Textbooks have certain problems, but they can also be very useful). Options include (among others), Mari Jo Buhle et al., *Out of Many*, Mary Beth Norton, et al., *A People and a Nation*, and Jacqueline Jones, et al., *Created Equal*; for a useful collection of essays oriented toward political history Manisha Sinha, ed., *Contested Democracy: Freedom, Race and Power in American History* (2007).

For those of you who have some familiarity with American Studies and/or want to immerse more deeply in conversations about the field, I also suggest Philip Deloria and Alexander Olson, eds, *American Studies: A User's Guide* (2017).

A few other important points about citizenship and community.

--Rutgers University treats cheating and plagiarism as serious offenses. In your papers, you must cite and provide a reference for all language **and/or** ideas that are not your own. While this should be understood in a graduate seminar, it is important to note that violations of the university honor code will be prosecuted to the full extent that is permitted. As graduate students, you must take the initiative and ask questions about what to cite, and how to cite sources correctly if you have any questions about what is or is not plagiarism.

--In this course, 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.**

--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.

--Technology. Please turn cell phones off and **put phones (etc.)**, away before class begins. You may **not** use phones to read and refer to required materials during class. If you take notes or read your sources from a laptop, please remember that only that document or required sources may be open. Texting or emailing or otherwise using technology in an inappropriate way at any time during class is absolutely **prohibited**. Again, this should be a given in a graduate seminar, but it worth emphasizing. If I see a student using technology in inappropriate ways during class, that student will be marked as absent for the day.

--Food and drink are permissible as long as neither is disruptive. We will usually (though not always) have a 5-10-minute break.

-- 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>. 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>.

For more information please call the office of Disability Services at (973) 353-5375, go to the office in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, suite 219, or contact them at: odsnewark@rutgers.edu.

--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. 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>

--Finally, note that this syllabus is a work in progress and we will very likely be making modifications along the way, based both on scheduling issues and *your* interests and priorities. I will communicate with all of you via bb, so please make sure that you receive email through blackboard regularly.

Schedule of Classes

Tuesday, September 3.

Introductions and Terms. What was/is American Studies?

• Janice Radway, "What's in a Name?" (Presidential Address, November 20, 1998), *American Quarterly* 51 (March 1999): 1-32.

• Shelly Fisher Fishkin, "Crossroads of Culture: The Transnational Turn in American Studies: Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, 12, November 2004," *American Quarterly* 57:1 (2005): 17-57.

• Mary Rizzo, "Reading Against the Grain, Finding the Voices of the Detained," *Museums and Social*

Issues 12:1 (March 2017), 26-32.

- Philip Deloria and Alexander Olson, eds, *American Studies: A User's Guide* (2017), "Introduction," pp. 1-19.

Recommended Reading: Lucy Maddox, ed., *Locating American Studies: The Evolution of a Discipline* (1998); Janice Radway and Penny Von Eschen eds., *American Studies: An Anthology* (2009); Glenn Hendler and Bruce Burgett, eds., *Keywords in American Cultural Studies* (2d edition, 2014); Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91:5 (Dec. 1986): 1053-1075; Barbara Fields, "Slavery, Race, and Ideology in American History," *New Left Review* 1, 181 (May-June 1990): 95-118.

Tuesday, September 10.

Nation and Nationalism, I: Theorizing and Imagining "Belonging"

- Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, excerpts

- Frederick Douglass, "The Meaning of July 4th for the Negro," Speech, July 5, 1852.
<http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/douglassjuly4.html>

- Selected poetry by Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands* (1987)

- Nina Baym, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors," *American Quarterly* 33 (1981): 123-139. (NOTE: This is a "classic" essay with interesting connections to Anderson, but the other three are the main readings for this week, and we may not have time to discuss this article in detail. More TBA.)

Recommended Reading: Tim Raphael, *The President Electric: Ronald Reagan and the Politics of Performance* (2009); Cathy Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (1987; 2d edition, 2004); Homi Bhaba, ed., *Nation and Narration* (1990); Arjun Appadurai, *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition* (2013) (and his *Modernity at Large*); Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth* (2002); Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (1999); Pekka Hamalainen and Benjamin Johnson, eds, *Major Problems in the History of North American Borderlands* (Major Problems in American History Series), (2011).

Tuesday, September 17.

Nation and Nationalism, II: Race, Nation, Cities

- Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, excerpts.

- Anne Petry, "In Darkness and Confusion" (1946), reprinted in Abraham Chapman, ed., *Black Voices: An Anthology of Afro-American Literature* (1968), pp. 125-159.

- Farah Jasmine Griffin, *Harlem Nocturne: Women Artists and Progressive Politics During World War II* (2013), chapter 2, pp. 79-131.

- Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, excerpts (chapter 25 and epilogue).

If you are not familiar with the novel at all, please see a brief summary (ie, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Invisible-Man>). You might also want to refer to quick overview on the violence in Harlem in 1943, as both Ellison and Petry are offering fictional accounts of these events.

Group 1 Response Paper.

Recommended Reading: Barbara Foley, *Wrestling with the Left: The Making of Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man* (2010); John Keene, *Counternarratives* (2015); Robert Snyder, *Crossing Broadway: Washington Heights and the*

Promise of New York City (2014); Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood* (1989); Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982); Farah Jasmine Griffin, *'Who Set You Flowin'?: The African American Migration Narrative* (1996).

Tuesday, September 24.

Empire, I: Mapping the Terrain

- Amy Kaplan, "Left Alone with America: The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in Kaplan and D. Pease, eds., *Cultures of U.S. Imperialism* (1993), pp. 3-21.

- Edward Said, *Orientalism*, excerpts

- Ann Laura Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies," *Journal of American History* 88 (December 2001): 829-865.

- Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (1999), pp. 1-37.

Group 2 Response Paper

Recommended Reading: Laura Lomas, *Translating Empire: Jose Marti, Migrant Latino Subjects, and American Modernities* (2009); Alex Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary* (2014); Hisham Aidi, *Rebel Music: Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture* (2014); Anna Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (2002).

Tuesday, October 1.

Empire, II: Historicizing Empire and Orientalism

- McAlister, *Epic Encounters*, chapters TBA

- Film: *Ten Commandments*

Group 1 Response Paper

Recommended Reading: Jack Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture 1776-1882* (2001); Sadia Abbas, *At Freedom's Limit: Islam and the Postcolonial Predicament* (2014); Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (2002); Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middle Brow Imagination* (2003); Susan Carruthers, *Cold War Captives: Imprisonment, Escape and Brainwashing* (2009); Adria Imada, *Aloha America: Hula Circuits through the U.S. Empire* (2012).

Tuesday, October 8.

No Class

- Primary Source essay due. (Note: If you want to analyze a primary source that we will be getting to in the second half of the semester, you may do so, but you must get permission in advance and read/watch ahead.)

Tuesday, October 15.

Sexuality, I: Theorizing Sexuality

- Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, excerpts.

- Darnell Moore, et. al. "A Community's Response to the Problem of Invisibility: The Queer Newark Oral History Project," *QED* 1 (2014): 1-14.

- Required film: *Out in the Night* (2014)

Group 1 Response Paper

Recommended Reading: Whit Strub, *Obscenity Rules* (2013); Jason Cortes, *Macho Ethics: Masculinity and Self-Representation in Latino-Caribbean Narrative* (2014); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (1990); Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings* (2003); J. Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011); Jose Munoz, *Cruising Utopia* (2009); Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization* (1996); Nan Alamilla Boyd et.al., eds., *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History* (2012).

Tuesday, October 22.

Sexuality, II: Historicizing, Producing, and Policing Sexuality

- Chauncey, *Gay New York*, excerpts.
- Timothy Stewart-Winter, “Queer Law and Order: Sex, Criminality, and Policing in the Late Twentieth-Century United States,” *Journal of American History* 283 (June 2015): 61-72.
- Optional: “History of Sexuality and the Carceral State,” moderated by Regina Kunzel (March 2016), Part I and Part II:
<http://notchesblog.com/2016/03/10/histories-of-sexuality-and-the-carceral-state-part-1/>
<http://notchesblog.com/2016/07/05/histories-of-sexuality-and-the-carceral-state-round-2/#more-8412>

Group 2 Response Paper

Recommended Reading: Timothy Stewart-Winter, *Queer Clout* (2016); Whit Strub, *Perversion for Profit* (2014); Margot Canaday, *The Straight State* (2011); Phil Tiemeyer, *Plane Queer* (2013); Allan Berube, *Coming Out Under Fire* (1991); Regina Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy: Prison and the Uneven History of Modern Sexuality* (2008); Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide-Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (2005); John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* (1983;1998).

Tuesday, October 29.

Race and Ethnicity, I: Laws, Courts, and Intersectionality

- Kimberle Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of 139-167; also reprinted in David Kairys, ed., *The Politics of Law: A Progressive Critique 195-217* (2nd ed. 1990).
- Peggy Pascoe, “Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of ‘Race’ in Twentieth-Century America,” *Journal of American History* (1996): 44-69.
- Nancy Maclean, “The Leo Frank Cases Reconsidered: Gender and Sexual Politics in the Making of Reactionary Populism,” *Journal of American History* (Dec. 1991): 917-948.

Optional: Kimberle Crenshaw, “The Urgency of Intersectionality,” *TedTalk*, October 2016,
https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality?language=en

Group 1 Response Paper.

Recommended Reading: Jyl Josephson, *Rethinking Sexual Citizenship* (2016); Danielle McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance—A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (2011); Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (2010); Kimberle Crenshaw, et.al, eds., *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement* (1996); Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality and the Law in the North American West* (2012); Jennifer Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality* (2019).

Tuesday, November 5.

Race and Ethnicity, II: Performance, Community, and Cultural Production

• Kimberly DaCosta Holton, "Fado in Diaspora: Online Internships and Self Display Among YouTube Generation Performers in the U.S.," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 53 (2016): 210-232.

• Dwight Conquergood, "Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research," *Drama Review* 46, 2 (Summer 2002): 145-156.

• MORE TBA.

Group 2 Response Paper.

Recommended Reading: Salamishah Tillet, *Sites of Slavery: Citizenship and Racial Democracy in the Post-Civil Rights Imagination* (2012); Lila Gray, *Fado Resounding: Affective Politics and Urban Life* (2013); E. Patrick Johnson, ed., *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* (2003); Dwight Conquergood, *Cultural Struggles: Performance, Ethnography, Praxis* (2013); Shannon Jackson, *Lines of Activity: Performance, Historiography, Hull House* (2001); Tiya Miles, *Tales from the Haunted South: Dark Tourism and Memories of Slavery from the Civil War Era* (2015);

Tuesday, November 12.

Race and Ethnicity, III: Immigration

• Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, excerpts, and Ngai, *NYT* article:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/19/opinion/travel-ban-upheld-supreme-court.html>

• Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*, excerpts

Group 1 Response Paper

We will also check in and discuss paper topics and paper/proposal writing. Please come prepared for a brainstorm session.

Recommended Reading: Kornel Chang, *Pacific Connections* (2012); Rachel St. John, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border* (2012); Belinda Edmondson, *Caribbean Middle Brow: Leisure Culture and the Middle Class* (2009); Alicia Schmidt Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (2008).

Tuesday, November 19.

TBA

We will also use this class to talk more about final essay topics.

Group 2 Response Paper

Tuesday, November 26.

No class. Tuesday is Thursday

Final Essay Proposal, Due by NOON, (bb)

Tuesday, December 3.

TBA

Group 1 Response Paper

First Draft Due, Saturday December 7

Tuesday, December 10: Peer Review
Readings TBA

Final Essay Due, Saturday December 15, NOON.