



American Studies 345
Theory and Practice of American Studies
Winter 2008
T, Th 10:15-11:55
Scoville 106

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Office Hours:
 (use signup sheet on office door)
 Tuesday, Thursdays 3-4
 Wednesday 10:00-12:00
 and by appointment

Course Description

This course is designed to explore a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to American Studies. Our readings were chosen to represent different approaches and methodologies to the study of American culture. Through those readings, we will explore how a variety of scholars from different disciplines “do” American Studies. You will meet different scholars, many of them members of the Carleton College faculty who animate important questions about American Studies, past and present, through the particular tools of their respective disciplines. The course is not designed to be an institutional history of American Studies or a chronological survey of the field; rather, it is a vigorous exploration of some of the central questions of methodology. It is also intended to inspire you to think about your own motives and goals in undertaking work in American Studies. By the end of the course, you should have a sharpened sense of the kinds of questions that can be pursued within the field of American studies and the kinds of methodologies that will be available to you as you move through your major and become an American studies scholar yourself.

Course Format

The class meetings will include mini-lectures, whole class discussion, small group discussions, videos, group presentations, and guest speakers. There will be occasional required out-of-class viewings of films and videos as well.

I assume that you have enrolled in this course out of a keen intellectual interest in a broad spectrum of issues related to American Studies. You are expected to attend every class, to keep current with the reading assignments, and to be an active and constructive member of the collective enterprise.

**Course
Readings**

All required texts are available in the Carleton bookstore. Several will be placed on reserve in the main library as well.

Required Texts

Shipler, *The Working Poor*

West, *Race Matters*

Waters, *Ethnic Options*

Putnam, *Bowling Alone*

Gitlin, *Media Unlimited*

Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*

Burgett and Hendler, *Keywords*

Lewis, *Race in the Schoolyard*

Miles, *Ties that Bind*

Other readings will be available on e-reserve or posted on MOODLE under the appropriate topic. Ereserves can be found at <http://ereserve.carleton.edu> and the password is Amst.

Moodle

We will be using Carleton's course management system MOODLE (<https://moodle.carleton.edu/>). We will be using the site to update our syllabus, announce events, list readings and assignments, to post handouts, to post and respond to questions about course texts, and to hand in and return assignments.

Course Requirements:**A written explication of each assignment will be provided on our MOODLE site**

Assignment	Due date	Percentage of Grade
Attendance and participation	Every day	10
Weekly MOODLE posting on Course Material	Weekly, beginning 1-10	10
Essay: who am I as an American Studies Scholar/cultural artifact assignment, including keywords	Tuesday, January 8 at the beginning of class	15
Historical Essay or Literary Analysis	Rolling deadline: Any time up through Wednesday January 30 at midnight	15
Cultural critique of feature film, documentary, or television program) or Creative critique: photo essay, video, YouTube or annotated soundtrack	Friday, Feb 20 at midnite	15
Group mini-ethnography of an American Place	Thursday, February 7	15
Final Synthesis paper / mini-comps proposal, including keywords	Draft Thursday March 6 Final version due at finals session of class Thursday, March 13 3-6 PM	20

Calendar

Theory and Practice of American Studies

(Topics listed below. Specific readings will be assigned by topic to ensure maximum flexibility. Reading lists for each topic will be posted on MOODLE. Additional readings will be distributed in class when possible or placed on e reserve or MOODLE.)

Topic 1- Course introduction

Methodologies of American Studies: How do we explore central questions about America?

Thu, Jan 3

Tue, Jan 8 Assignment due: cultural artifact assignment: who am I as an American Studies Scholar

Topic 2- Methodologies of Historical Analysis: fiction in truth?

Thu, Jan 10

Tue, Jan 15 **Guest: Assistant Professor of History Serena Zabin**

Thu, Jan 17

Topic 3- Methodologies of Literary Analysis: truth in fiction?

Tue, Jan 22

Thu, Jan 24 **Guest: Professor of English and American Studies Mike Kowalewski**

Tue, Jan 29

Wed, Jan 30 Assignment due: literary or historical analysis

Topic 4- Methodologies of Ethnographic Research and Case Studies

Thu, Jan 31

Feb 2-4- Mid-Term Break

Tues, Feb 5 **Guests: Visiting Instructor in Sociology /Anthropology Adrienne Falcon and her urban sociology class**

Thu. Feb 7 Assignment due: small group ethnography of an "American place"

Topic 5- Methodologies of Media

Tue, Feb 12

Wed, Feb 13 required viewing of *Nobody Knows My Name*

Thu, Feb 14 **Guest: Rachel Raimist, filmmaker, *Nobody Knows My Name* and doctoral student/instructor, U of Minnesota**

Friday, Feb 15-Monday, Feb 17- required viewing of one feature film and one documentary, TBA

Tue, Feb 19

Topic 6- Methodologies of Cultural Analysis

Thu, Feb 21 **Guests: Associate Professor of English and American Studies Adriana Estill**

Sunday, Feb 24 Assignment due: Film critique or creative assignment

Tue, Feb 26

Thu, Feb 28

Topic 7- Conclusions/ Synthesis

Tue, Mar 4 **Guests: Panel of American Studies seniors**

Thu, Mar 6 Assignment due: First draft of comps mini-proposal

Final Session

Thu, Mar 13 3:00 – 6:00 p.m.