

American Studies 301  
**American Character**

Spring 2006  
MWF 11:00-11:50am  
H110

Instructor: Dr. Carrie Lane Chet  
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**Course Description:**

This course asks students to ponder what it means to be an American. It investigates whether there is such a thing as an overarching American character and culture, and along which schisms—including region, race, religion, class, and gender—Americans are divided. The course is organized around coming-of-age narratives from various eras of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, including novels, memoirs, films, and cultural histories. Each work is chosen to reflect the historical era it concerns as well as the unique experience of growing up in America as a member of a specific racial, ethnic, religious, class, or gender background. Like all American Studies classes, this course is intended to enhance students' understanding of the workings of American culture and hone their ability to think critically and write clearly. Students will be asked to engage critically with the world around them, interpreting contemporary cultural debates and events through frameworks and concepts introduced in the course. Active participation will be encouraged, and students are expected to engage in close and critical reading of course texts and extensive writing.

**Required Texts:**

Anzia Yezierska, *Bread Givers*

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

Gus Lee, *China Boy*

Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media*

Additional Required Readings in Packet

Books for this course are available for purchase at Little Professor Book Center (725 N. Placentia). I do not require a specific edition of any of these books, so feel free to purchase used copies of older editions. The course packet is available at CopyCo (2438 E. Chapman). All books and readings are also available on reserve at the library.

**Course Requirements:**

This course will entail a combination of lecturing and class discussion. I expect that you will come to class having completed all assigned reading for that day and prepared with questions and comments for class discussion. This class has a heavier reading load than most GE courses, but the readings—mostly novels and memoirs—tend to move quickly. I do not take attendance, but it is essential that you attend class consistently, as exams will cover material from readings, lectures, and discussions, and I do give pop quizzes. While class

participation is not directly reflected in your grade, logic should tell you that participation will bode well for you, while absences and silence will not. If you do miss a class, you should obtain class notes from one or more of your fellow students and keep an eye on the Blackboard site for any assignments.

I will communicate with you by email throughout the semester, so you need to regularly check whatever email account Blackboard has on record for you.

**Quizzes:** I will give a number of in-class pop quizzes to assess your completion and understanding of that week's readings. You will receive zero points for any quizzes you miss. I will drop your lowest quiz grade at the end of the semester.

**Assignments:** Over the course of the semester each student will write two short papers (3 pages each) as well as a short review of a film of their choosing about coming of age in America.

**Exams:** The final exam for this course, which will take place on May 24 from 12-1:50pm, will be cumulative (covering the entire semester) and will consist of short answer and essay questions. I will conduct a review session before the exam and circulate a study guide. Make-up exams will be offered only in the case of serious and documented extenuating circumstances.

In grading your assignments and exams, I will pay close attention to both substance and form (grammar, spelling, organization, and clarity of expression). In evaluating the substance of an essay, I will examine whether you have demonstrated a critical understanding of course materials **and** presented and substantiated a coherent thesis or argument.

I reserve the right to modify and add assignments throughout the semester.

### **Grading Procedures:**

Movie Review	10%
Quizzes	20%
Short Papers	30%
Final Exam	40%

A = 90-100%

B = 80-89%

C = 70-79%

D = 60-69%

F = 59% or lower

The +/- grading system will be used. No extra credit will be offered for this course. Keep all graded assignments so that any discrepancies can be easily and fairly straightened out.

Academic dishonesty (including plagiarism, cheating, and other violations of academic integrity) will not be tolerated under any circumstances and will result in a failing grade on that exam/assignment, as well as possible removal from the course or suspension from the university.

### **General Education Learning Goals:**

American Studies 301 meets the General Education "Implications, Explorations, and Participatory Experience in the Social Sciences" requirement (III.C.2). Courses in this category draw upon, integrate, apply, and extend knowledge and skills previously acquired in Category III. C. Disciplinary Learning: Social Sciences and require completion of appropriate courses in Category III. C. 1 as a prerequisite to enrollment. As such, this course will

prepare students to: understand broad, unifying themes in the social sciences from cross-disciplinary perspectives; solve complex problems that require social scientific reasoning; relate the social sciences to significant social problems or to other related disciplines; and, when deemed appropriate, to apply disciplinary concepts from the social sciences in a variety of settings, such as community-based learning sites and activities.

This course also meets GE Learning Goals for Cultural Diversity, and will prepare students to: understand that culture is socially constructed and fundamental to social interaction; appreciate the complex relationships that gender, ethnicity and class bring to a discussion of society and culture; understand that because we live in an inter-connected world, we need to understand the diversity and relationships within and among cultures; and recognize and evaluate how one's cultural history affects one's sense of self and relationship to others.

**For more information on the American Studies Department, see: <http://hss.fullerton.edu/amst/>.**

### Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>
1/30	Course Introduction	
2/1	Course Introduction	<i>Bread Givers</i> , Foreword and Intro
	<b>ASSIGNMENT:</b> bring newspaper article on coming of age in America	
2/3	Intro to American Studies	<i>Bread Givers</i> , 1-34
<b>Immigration, Industrialization, and the American Dream</b>		
2/6	Immigration and the American Dream	<i>Bread Givers</i> , 35-66
2/8	Immigration and the American Dream	<i>Bread Givers</i> , 67-88
2/10	Immigration and the American Dream	<i>Bread Givers</i> , 89-110
2/13	New York's Lower East Side	<i>Bread Givers</i> , 111-138
2/15	Progressive Era Reform	<i>Bread Givers</i> , 139-172
2/17	Progressive Era Reform	<i>Bread Givers</i> , 173-201
2/20	<b>PRESIDENT'S DAY: NO CLASS</b>	
2/22	Labor and Culture	<i>Bread Givers</i> , 202-256
2/24	Labor and Culture	<i>Bread Givers</i> , 257-297
<b>Race, Mobility, and the Culture of Jazz</b>		
2/27	The Great Northward Migration	<i>Invisible Man</i> , 1-70
3/1	The Great Northward Migration	<i>Invisible Man</i> , 71-135
3/3	The Great Northward Migration	<i>Invisible Man</i> , 136-195
3/6	Harlem Renaissance	<i>Invisible Man</i> , 196-250
3/8	Harlem Renaissance	<i>Invisible Man</i> , 251-355
3/10	Harlem Renaissance	<i>Invisible Man</i> , 356-408
3/13	Jazz and African-American Culture	<i>Invisible Man</i> , 409-461
3/15	Jazz and African-American Culture	<i>Invisible Man</i> , 462-512
3/17	Jazz and African-American Culture	<i>Invisible Man</i> , 513-581
<b>DUE: PAPER ONE</b>		
<b>Fashion, Dance, and Discrimination</b>		
3/20	The Zoot Suit Riots: FILM <i>Zoot Suit</i>	Pagán excerpts (in packet)
3/22	The Zoot Suit Riots: FILM <i>Zoot Suit</i>	Pagán excerpts (in packet)
3/24	The Zoot Suit Riots: FILM <i>Zoot Suit</i>	Sanchez article (in packet)

**\*\*\*SPRING BREAK\*\*\***

4/3	WWII Los Angeles and Zoot Suit Culture	Primary documents on the Zoots (in packet)
4/5	WWII Los Angeles and Zoot Suit Culture	
4/7	The Zoot Suit Riots	Kelly article (in packet)

**Masculinity, Sports, and American Manhood**

4/10	The Korean War	<i>China Boy</i> , 1-54
4/12	Asian-Americans and the Model Minority	<i>China Boy</i> , 55-117
4/14	Asian-Americans and the Model Minority	<i>China Boy</i> , 119-164
4/17	Boxing, Race, and American Manhood	<i>China Boy</i> , 165-202
4/19	Boxing, Race, and American Manhood	<i>China Boy</i> , 203-261
4/21	Boxing, Race, and American Manhood	<i>China Boy</i> , 263-322

**DUE: PAPER TWO**

**Feminism, Popular Culture, and June Cleaver**

4/24	Popular Culture and American Studies	<i>Where the Girls Are</i> , 1-42
4/26	Postwar Cult of Domesticity	<i>Where the Girls Are</i> , 43-98
4/28	Postwar Cult of Domesticity	<i>Where the Girls Are</i> , 99-138
5/1	Roots of Feminism	<i>Where the Girls Are</i> , 139-161
5/3	Roots of Feminism	<i>Where the Girls Are</i> , 163-191
5/5	Roots of Feminism	<i>Where the Girls Are</i> , 193-219
5/8	Backlash: The ERA	<i>Where the Girls Are</i> , 221-244
5/10	Backlash: Beauty and Consumerism	<i>Where the Girls Are</i> , 245-268
5/12	Backlash: I'm Not a Feminist But...	<i>Where the Girls Are</i> , 269-307

**DUE: MOVIE REVIEW**

**Conclusion**

5/15	The American Character	
5/17	The American Character	
5/19	<b>Review Session</b>	
5/24	<b>FINAL EXAM: 12-1:50pm</b>	