

American Studies 395-08
California Cultures
Fall 2007
Professor Elaine Lewinnek

Tuesdays, 4-6:45 pm in EC-011
Office hours: Mondays & Tuesdays 3:30-4 pm; Mondays 6:45-7:45; and by appointment
Office: UH 408
Phone: 714-278-3595
Email: elewinnek@fullerton.edu

American Studies 395 examines how various cultures have interacted in California's past and present. This class will go beyond the story of California's multiculturalism to ask broader questions about the powers of culture. We will consider how racialization, labor stratification, governmental programs, environmental politics, social movements, mass culture and subcultures have intertwined to create California identities. This course has three major themes:

- **Race.** Native Americans, Latinos, Anglos, Asians, African-Americans, and others have all shared California dreams. This course investigates how racialized identities have been formed and transformed, and how ideas about race have intersected with other ideas about labor, leisure, class, gender, space, and politics.
- **Land and labor:** From acorns to oranges to suburban subdivisions, multiple gold rushes have extracted value from the state we all live in. Considering the interaction of environment and economy is a key aspect to understanding the regional identity of California.
- **The everyday politics of culture.** Cultural artifacts both reflect and affect California identities. This course will teach you to analyze diverse primary sources, including advertisements, architecture, clothing, newspapers, novels, memoirs, movies, murals, music, paintings, plays, poetry, and photographs, exploring multiple perspectives as we investigate historical memory in California culture.

This is an interdisciplinary course, using techniques from the social sciences and the humanities to explore the cultural construction of California identities as well as the interactions among various California cultures. Completion of General Education Category III.C.1 is a prerequisite for this course. American Studies 395 meets the requirements for General Education Category III.C.2, "Implications, Explorations and Participatory Experience in the Social Sciences," as well as Category V, "Cultural Diversity."

Required texts

This course includes one required book: Phoebe Kropp, *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* (University of California Press, 2006), ISBN 0520243641. It is available at the Little Professor Bookstore, 725 N. Placentia Avenue, near the corner of Nutwood and Placentia. While you are at the Little Professor Bookstore, you may wish to purchase Donna Wares, ed., *My California: Journeys by*

Great Writers (Angel City Press, 2004), ISBN: 1883318432, which is an optional book required only for those who choose the third essay option (see below).

All other course readings are contained in a packet, available at CopyCo, 2438 Chapman Avenue, near the intersection of Chapman Avenue and State College Boulevard. Many of the readings are also available online through the CSUF library's e-reserve service, but I strongly recommend purchasing the packet. It is vital that you complete each week's reading before Tuesday's class.

Course requirements

To get the most out of this course, you must come to class prepared to actively analyze the readings. To help you do this, attendance will be taken, participation in class discussion will be emphasized, and there may be occasional pop quizzes based on the reading. There will be no make-up quizzes.

Six weeks throughout the semester (you can choose which six, but three must be before the midterm), you must post a reading response to our class's online Blackboard discussion board. You must post by 7 pm the evening before class meets. Extensive further guidelines will be given in class.

There will be a midterm exam including short identification questions about key terms and images, as well as a brief essay. This exam will be based on both class discussions and readings.

The final exam will also have short identification questions, but the most significant part of the final exam is a take-home essay in which you apply the skills and methods learned in this class. You have three choices for this essay.

- 1) **Cultural Analysis:** Analyze a single piece of California culture not already discussed in class. Past students have chosen to analyze Scotty's Castle in Death Valley, the high school mascot of a local school, the movie "Valley Girl," and the happy-cows television advertisements by the California Dairy Association. Whatever your chosen cultural artifact, use the methods modeled in this course in order to place this piece of culture in a wider context and analyze why it matters. Consider when it was made, who is the implied audience, who profits, what messages it communicates about race/gender/labor/the environment/regionalism/or other powerful categories, whether there may be other possible messages, and how it fits into our study of California cultures.
- 2) **Lesson Plan:** Use what you have learned in this class to write a lesson plan for fourth, eighth, or eleventh-grade students studying California in a social studies class. Your lesson plan must include primary sources. Explain how you will help your students think about this source. Consider class activities (what will students do?), unit goals (how will students be different at the end of this lesson?) assessment (how will you know whether students have learned what you wanted them to learn?), and most importantly, why it all matters.
- 3) **Personal Narrative:** Select at least three of the short essays in Donna Wares, ed., *My California: Journeys by Great Writers* (Angel City Press, 2004). Reflect on how these essays connect to your own California and to issues raised in this

class. Write your own "My California" essay, using the accounts in *My California* as models for a personal narrative with historical and analytical depth.

Further guidelines will be given in class. To help you start thinking about this, an essay proposal is due during the twelfth week of class. In this proposal, explain which assignment you have chosen, what primary source you will be using, and what specific questions you will be exploring about that source.

Evaluation

Your final grade will consist of:

Class attendance and participation: 10%

Blackboard reading responses: 5% each, for a total of 30%

Midterm exam: 25%

Final essay proposal: 5%

Final exam: 30%

Grades will be calculated using a standard scale. An A+ is 98-100, A is 93-97, A- is 90-92, B+ is 87-89, B is 83-86, B- is 80-82, C+ is 77-79, C is 73-76, C- is 70-82, D+ is 67-69, D is 63-66, D- is 60-62, and F is anything 59 or below.

Policies

You are responsible for knowing what happens in class. It is impossible to receive an A in class participation if you miss more than one class and it is also extremely difficult to do well on the essay or exam if you miss class discussions. If you must be absent from class, get notes from a reliable classmate and then ask me if you have specific questions.

Plus and minus grades will be used. Late work will be penalized one full grade for each week late, unless you have made arrangements with me beforehand. This course does not include an extra-credit option. Incompletes will be granted only due to exceptional circumstances. Plagiarized work will receive an F on the assignment and be reported to the campus Judicial Affairs Officer. If you have any questions, I encourage you to talk to me in class, after class, by email, or in my office hours. I look forward to a thoughtful semester exploring the cultures of California.

COURSE SCHEDULE

All readings are in the course packet, except for the items marked below with an asterisk: online websites and Phoebe Kropp's book, *Caifornia Vieja*

Week 1 (Aug 21): California Stories

Patricia Nelson Limerick, "Will the Real Californian Please Stand Up?" from *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West* (2000), pages 256-273.

In class, view Diego Rivera's "Allegory of California" (1931) and Paul Julian's "Fullerton Post-Office Mural" (1938).

Week 2 (Aug 28): Missions and Racialization

Selections from Sucheng Chan and Spencer Olin, ed.s, *Major Problems in California History* (1996), as well as 4 pages of other primary sources, all in the course packet. Steve Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans* (2003), pages 1-29.

In class, view Louis Choris, "Habitants de la Californie" watercolor series (1822)

Week 3 (Sept 4): Corporations and Laborers

Henry George, "What the Railroad Will Bring Us," *Overland Monthly* 1:4 (Oct., 1868)
Selections from Sucheng Chan and Spencer Olin, ed.s, *Major Problems in California History* (1996), pages 162-4 and 166-175.

Week 4 (Sept 11): Missions and Memory

* Phoebe Kropp, *California Vieja*, preface (p. xiii – xiv), introduction (p. 1-15) and chapter 2 (page 47-102)

Week 5 (Sept 18): Marketing the Past

William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of its Mexican Past* (2004), pages 1-10 and 250-252.

* Phoebe Kropp, *California Vieja*, chapter 5 and conclusion (pages 207-269)

Week 6 (Sept 25): California is in the Heart?

Carlos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart: A Personal History* (1946), pages 3-9, 58-71, 97-112, 120-153, 180-189, 193-199, 320-327.

Week 7 (Oct 2): Depression and War

Woodie Guthrie, "Los Deportees" (1940s song lyrics)

Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor, *An American Exodus* (1939 photographs)

Peter Ota in Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II*, pages 28-33.

Week 8 (Oct 9): Midterm exam**Week 9 (Oct 16): Zoot Suits**

Zoot-suit articles from the *Los Angeles Times*, 1943, in course packet

George Sanchez, "The Rise of the Second Generation," from *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles* (1993), pages 253-269

* Also, view "History of El Pachuco" online at www.elpachuco.com,

or visit El Pachuco Zoot Suits at 801 S. Harbor Blvd, Fullerton

Week 10 (Oct 23): Military-Industrial Complexes

Chester Himes, *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945), pages 1-62.

Selections from Dwight D. Eisenhower's "Farewell Address to the Nation," also known as the "Military-Industrial Complex Speech" (1961)

Week 11 (Oct 30): Suburbanization

D.J. Waldie, *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir*, pages 1-38.

D. J. Waldie, "Our Town" in *Where We Are Now* (2004), pages 146-153.

In class, view William Garnett, photos of Lakewood for *Fortune Magazine*, 1950,

* available online at <http://www.getty.edu/art/collections/objects/o256209.html>

Week 12 (Nov 6): Counterculture Movements

Allen Ginsberg, "A Supermarket in California" and "America," from *Howl* (1956).
Cy Epstein, *How to Kill a College: The Factual Story of the Elements Behind the Student Revolution at California State College, Fullerton* (1971), pages 13-29 and 40-49
Photos by Cal State Fullerton students in *The People vs Ronald Reagan* (1970).
In-class, view selections from "Berkeley in the Sixties: A Documentary"

Week 13 (Nov 13): Chicano Movements

Luis Valdez, "Los Vendidos" (1967) from *El Teatro Campesino*
Cesar Chavez, "Address to the Commonwealth Club of California" (Nov. 9, 1984), from Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove, ed., *Voices of a People's History of the United States* (2004), pages 515-520.
Steve Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley* (2003), pages 173-201.

Thanksgiving Break**Week 14 (Nov 27): Watts, Compton and other California Stories**

Josh Sides, "Straight Into Compton: American Dreams, Urban Nightmares, and the Metamorphosis of a Black Suburb" *American Quarterly* 56:3 (Sept. 2004), 583-605.
Mike Davis, "In L.A., Burning All Illusions," from Zinn and Arnove, *Voices*, 561-564.
In-class, view Anna Deavere Smith, "Twilight: Los Angeles 1992"

Week 15 (Dec 4): Concluding California Stories

D. J. Waldie, "Preface," from *Where We Are Now* (2004), 13-24.
* Also, view Judy Baca et al, "The Great Wall of Los Angeles" (begun 1974), online at www.sparcmurals.org and at <http://bomoco.com/greatwall/pg1.htm>
In class, view photos of the Watts towers

Week 16 (Dec 11): Final exam, 5-6:50 pm