

**American Studies 413**  
**The American Male**  
**Fall 2008**  
**Thursday 4:00-6:45 pm**  
**UH 333**  
**Code: 19089**

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**Office: UH 419**  
**Office Hours: TR 11:30-12:30,**  
**2:30-3:30, and by appointment**  
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### **Required Reading**

James B. Twitchell, *Where Men Hide* (2006)  
C.J. Pascoe, *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School* (2007)  
Neil Chethik, *Fatherloss; How Sons of All Ages Come to Terms with the Deaths of Their Dads* (2001)  
Ann Arnett Ferguson, *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity* (2000)  
Brenton J. Malin, *American Masculinity under Clinton: Popular Media and the Nineties "Crisis of Masculinity"* (2005)

### **Course Requirements**

Though I'll lecture from time to time, most of the class will be devoted to our discussions of the assigned reading and some films. It's essential that you attend regularly and keep up with the assignments. I hope that we'll together create the sort of atmosphere in which all of you will feel comfortable participating verbally in our discussions, but it is possible to do well in the class without talking, by careful listening along with good written work.

Though the books assigned in this class are all rather short, there are nonetheless five of them. To give you time to get a book read in preparation for our discussion of it, I've scheduled four one-week intervals, during which no reading will be assigned. During these intervals, we'll watch and talk about a film related to the topic of the book soon to be discussed. These films are also texts for this class. You should discuss them in the exam essays. Additionally, our classroom discussions of these films, giving you experience in examining film as a cultural document, should be valuable preparation for the film project in the class.

At the time indicated on the course outline, we will have a **midterm examination**, an essay of around 2,000 words (2,500 for graduate students) prepared outside of class, its topic to be announced before we conclude our discussion of Pascoe, with the essay due one week after the conclusion of that discussion.

Additionally you must prepare a **critical review of a film** that is in a significant way about the cultural meaning of being a male. The review should be around 1,250 (1,750 for graduate students) words long. It is due no later than **Thursday, November 6**. I will provide a list of appropriate films, but you certainly may select a film that is not on this list. Your film may be recent, but it doesn't have to be. It may be a film made and/or set

in the United States, but it does not have to be. I encourage you to discuss this project with me during my office hours and/or in email as often as you like.

The **final examination**, an essay around 2,500 words (3,000 for graduate students) prepared outside of class, is due no later than **Tuesday, December 16, at 3:00 pm**. I'll announce the topic of this essay at least two weeks before it's due.

I will extend a deadline for any assignment without penalty only for a compelling reason.

Working with the Office of Disabled Student Services, I'll make any necessary arrangements for the particular needs of students with disabilities.

### **Grading**

The midterm and the film review will each count 30% toward your overall grade for written work, the final will count 40%. In determining your course grade, after computing your grade for written work I may then make adjustments up or down, as much as a full letter grade, for class participation: attendance and attentive listening as well as your active involvement in discussions.

Grading criteria for both the exams and the film review are: understanding (50%), originality (20%), evidence (10%), clarity (10%), organization (10%).

I use the university's system of plus-minus grading.

Depending on its severity, academic dishonesty will result in a penalty ranging from a failing grade on a particular assignment to an F in the course.

### **COURSE OUTLINE**

This course rests on an assumption that you must understand but not necessarily endorse: While actually being a male is a matter of biology, what being a male means at a particular moment in a particular locale is powerfully influenced by culture. While maleness involves testicles and testosterone, masculinity involves beliefs, symbols and values associated with maleness. According to this assumption, masculinity is not a fixed essence but is a cultural construction that changes over time and space. This course, then, is a study of the history and current state of various masculinities. Throughout, the course

will evaluate the very significance of gender, especially compared to social class, sexual orientation, and race.

**8/28** Introductions: What We're Doing Here and Why We're Doing It

**9/4** The Problems and Potential American Manhood  
 Film & discussion in class: "Boys Will Be Men: A Documentary about Growing Up Male in America" (2001)

## **I. THE GEOGRAPHY OF MASCULINITY: THE MEANING OF MALE SPACES**

**reading:** Twitchell, *Where Men Hide*

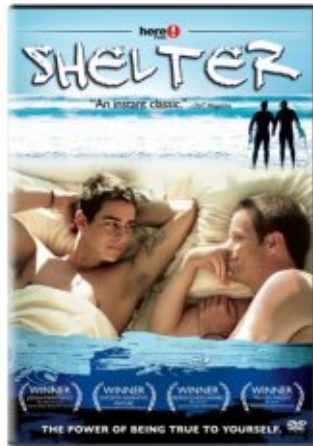
**9/11** Introduction through Chapter 7, pp. 3-117: The Deer Camp: The Hunt; The Boxing Ring: Shame and Honor; The Fraternal Lodge: Initiation of Brotherhood; The Snuggery: Fathers, Sons, and Trains; A Room of His Own: Two of Man's Best Friends; The Garage: Car and Calendar; The American Barbershop: "Next Gentleman."

**9/18** Chapters 8-Conclusion, pp. 119-242: The Baseball Dugout: Chew, Spit, and Fight; Getting Outta Here: My Wheels, My Self; The Recliner Chair: Hiding in Plain Sight; Strip Clubs: Hiding behind the Ogle; "Aah lurve this place": The Male Way of Eating; The Workshop Warren: Hammer Time; On the Job: Hiding Out in the Office; Male Bonding for God: Megachurch and Promise Keepers .

## **II. FORMING A MALE IDENTITY: HIGH SCHOOL AS A PROVING GROUND**

**reading:** C. J. Pascoe, *Dude, You're a Fag! Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*

**9/25** Film & discussion in class: "Shelter" (2008)



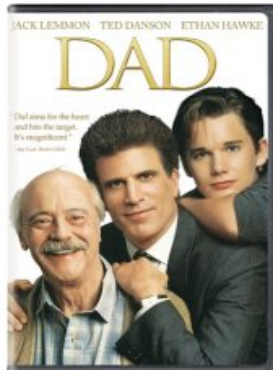
- 10/2** Chapters 1-3, pp. 1-83. Making Masculinity: Adolescence, Identity, and High School; Becoming Mr. Cougar: Institutionalizing Heterosexuality and Masculinity at River High; Dude, You're a Fag: Adolescent Male Homophobia
- 10/9** Chapters 4-6, pp. 84-174. Compulsive Heterosexuality: Masculinity and Dominance; Look at My Masculinity! Girls Who Act Like Boys; Conclusion: Thinking about Schooling, Gender, and Sexuality

**Midterm Examination Covers Material to Here: Due Thursday, October 16**

### **III. PERFECT STORM? FATHERS AND SONS**

**reading:** Chethik, *Fatherloss*

- 10/16** Film & discussion in class: "Dad." (1989): **Midterm Essay Due**



**10/23** Introduction-Chapter 4, pp. 1-106. Torn Asunder--Birth to Age 17; Too Soon—Ages 18 to 32; The Body Blow—Ages 33 to 55; Closing the Circle—Ages 56 and Up.

**10/30** Chapters 5-12, pp. 109-267. Preparing for FatherLoss; The First Days After; Men's Style of Mourning; How Spouses Help; Life Changes; Does Therapy Help? Lingerings; Affectionate Fathering.

#### **IV. GENDER AND RACE: A DIFFERENT SORT OF MAN? BLACK MASCULINITY IN AMERICAN SOCIETY**

**reading:** Ferguson, *Bad Boys*

**11/6** Film & discussion in class: "Nothing but a Man" (1964)



**11/13** Chapters One-Four, pp. 1-99. Don't Believe the Hype; The Punishing Room; School Rules; Naughty by Nature.

**11/20** Chapters Five-Eight, pp. 101-235. The Real World; Getting in Trouble; Unreasonable Circumstances; Dreams.

#### **Fall Recess**

#### **V. MANHOOD NOWADAYS: MASCULINITY IN CRISIS OR IN TRANSITION?**

**reading:** Malin, *American Masculinity under Clinton*

- 12/4** Introduction-Chapter 3, pp. 1-96. Bill Clinton and the Crisis of Masculinity; Little Big Men and Softhearted Hard Bodies: Homophobia as Hyper and Hypomascularity; Classified and Declassified: Cultural Capital and Class Anxiety in New Male Sons and Fathers.
- 12/11** Chapter 4-Conclusion, pp. 97-194. The Exotic White Other: Otherworldly Whiteness from Clinton to Fox Mulder; 9/11 and After: Masculinity, Citizenship, and National Crisis.

**Tu 12/16 FINAL EXAMINATION DUE 3:00 PM**