

American Studies 395: California Cultures
Fall, 2005/
Mondays & Wednesdays 1-2:15 PM
in Langsdorf Hall 307

Professor Michael Steiner
Office hours: M & W, 2:30-4 PM
& by appointment in UH-410.
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For more than a century, Americans have seen California as the cutting edge and shape of things to come for their nation. For better and for worse, this teeming patch of earth on the western edge of 35 million people with the world's fifth largest economy has been seen as a harbinger for America and often for the world as a whole. In the ever-important area of ethnic and race relations in particular, California has broadcast images of utopian hope as well as dystopian despair: it has been a place where a spectrum of cultures have flourished and fought together. In every other realm—in politics, popular culture, art, entertainment, science, and ideas in general—California has often served as both a laughing stock and litmus test for the rest of the nation. It has been seen as both the cutting edge and the cutting end of the American Dream.

From opening encounters between a mosaic of native people and European colonial powers in the eighteenth century to being the fault line of Europe, Asia, and Latin America in the twenty first century, California has been the seedbed and testing ground for multicultural hopes. "California, and especially Los Angeles, a gateway to both Asia and Latin America," Carlos Fuentes argued in 1992, "poses the universal question of the next century: how do we deal with 'the Other'?" It was here in California that Rodney King asked the searing question: "Why can't we all just get along?" For many, California represents the best possible answer to Fuentes's and King's questions; for others, our state has failed to live up to the challenge. For healthy-minded boosters, among them State Librarian and historian Kevin Starr, the Golden State "represents the most diverse and ecumenical experiment in human history," while for indignant critics like Mike Davis California exists as a bitterly fragmented "ecology of fear."

With the opening words of Fuentes, King, Starr, and Davis in mind, this course will explore how Californians have dealt with the issues of cultural diversity and "the other," how we have been able to "get along" and also failed to do so. We will trace how a variety of cultures—including Native American, European, Latino, Asian, and African—have interacted within California from the eighteenth century to the present. Cultural dynamics in geographical regions within the state—including the Bay Area, The Sierra gold fields, the Central Valley, and Southern California—will be compared and contrasted. Specific topics include: cultural diversity and conflict in frontiers and borderlands; sacred and profane versions of regional and racial myths; shifting meanings of gender among California's cultures; theories and patterns of cultural appropriation and hegemony, pluralism and cosmopolitanism within the state and its various regions over time; versions of the California Dream; patterns of immigration to the state including the Dust Bowl migration and recent movements from Latin America and the Pacific Rim.

Required Readings:

Collected Readings (25 essays; a copy placed on Closed Reserve in the Library; personal copies available at Copyco, 2438 E. Chapman in Fullerton; 714- 690-9800)

Albert Hurtado, Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender, and Culture in Old California

Carey McWilliams, Southern California: An Island on the Land

Lisa See, On Gold Mountain: The One-Hundred-Year Odyssey of My Chinese-American Family

T. Correghegan Boyle, The Tortilla Curtain

(The four required books are available at Little Professor Bookstore; the Collected Readings, as mentioned, are on Closed Reserve and at Copyco, phone number (714) 680-9878)

Course Requirements:

It is essential to complete the assigned readings as they come up for discussion. I will provide you with a fairly detailed printed list of study questions for each meeting, and I look forward to spirited and informed discussions of our common readings.

In terms of written work, each student will be required to write **two 4-5-page papers** and a **final essay exam**. I will also ask each of you to present one 10 minute **oral report**—given as a group of two, at the most three students—on an outside essay or book chapter not assigned to the class as a whole. I may also ask you to do **small group exercises or brief quizzes** during the semester if the need arises. I will lead a **Los Angeles walking tour** to various sites related to California cultures—the Plaza, China Town, Little Tokyo, and the Japanese American National Museum. A **tour of near-by Little Saigon** may be offered as an alternative. The walking tour—something I’ve been doing for more than 25 years --is a voluntary, non-required event.

The first paper, due during the sixth week of the semester and based upon our common readings, will examine an aspect of California’s cultures and regions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. **The second paper**, due during the fourteenth week of the semester and also based upon our common readings, will focus upon an aspect of California’s diversity in the twentieth century. Lists of possible paper topics will be handed out two weeks before each paper is due, and I encourage you to discuss these topics with me or Du’Weena Jordan as your papers are developing. Every student will also write a **final essay exam** covering the entire course. This in-class two-hour exam will give you the opportunity to integrate ideas and materials studied throughout the semester. I will provide sample exam questions a week beforehand. I expect your papers to be typed and properly documented, and I strongly urge you to be aware of the pitfalls of plagiarism, and I urge each of you to look at the “Student Guide for Avoiding Plagiarism” published in CSUF’s on-line Catalog. (More about this in class.)

Assessment and Relationship to General Education Goals:

These papers and the exam will assess your ability to understand, critique, and analyze primary and secondary documents; to synthesize complex ideas from a variety of sources; and to organize brief and extended essays which are grounded in evidence and also express your individual viewpoint. These assignments (as well as the oral report) are designed to enhance your communications skills by providing the opportunity to integrate and analyze class materials and create informed and thoughtful arguments both in discussion and in writing. Your written work must demonstrate an understanding of and familiarity with all relevant course materials, including assigned readings, lectures, multi-media materials, and discussions.

AMST 395 satisfies General Education requirements for **Section III.C.2** (Implications, Explorations, and Participatory Experience in the Social Sciences) as well as **Section V** (Cultural Diversity). By carefully developing an interdisciplinary social scientific understanding of the interaction of California’s cultures in the past and present, students in AMST 395 cover the learning goals for each category. The specific learning goals for this course are designed to reflect these larger General Education ideals.

Student Learning Goals for AMST 395:

- Develop a rigorous concept of culture and cultural processes as experienced by a diverse group of Californians;
- Understand how various cultures, including Native American, European, Latino, Asian, and African-American, have interacted in California's past and present;
- Gain a broader interdisciplinary awareness, becoming aware of connections among the social sciences and the humanities;
- Acquire a thorough understanding of cultural diversity by examining the creative tension between unity and multiplicity in California experiences, theories of cultural pluralism, and the relationships between subcultures and dominant cultures;
- Understand the ways in which culture creates meaning and guides behavior by learning to critically analyze and interpret a spectrum of California artifacts, ranging from popular to folk to elite expressions, from mass media to material culture and architecture;
- Learn research, writing, and expressive skills that will allow them to see connections among complex materials and will enable them to clearly communicate their understanding of the underlying meanings and causes of cultural/historical events within our state.

Grading:

Your final grade will be based upon your written work, your oral report, the quality and consistency of your discussion, and the consistency of your attendance. Your two papers and final exam will constitute 80% of your final grade; your oral report plus participation and attendance will make up the remaining 20 %.

First 4-5 page paper:	30% of the semester grade
Second 5-6 page paper:	30% of the semester grade
Final exam (in-class essay)	20% of the semester grade
Oral reports:	10% of the semester grade
Discussion/Attendance:	10% of the semester grade

I greatly encourage open, informed, and respectful discussion, and the oral reports—which will begin by the second week of the semester—are a vital element of the course. It is crucial that you attend every class meeting; frequent absence will hurt your grade. I will accept late papers, but they will be lowered a grade if they are not turned in by the due date

Course Outline:

I. Opening Themes: (Three Weeks)

M, August 22: **Introduction to the Course: People and Places Within the Golden State**

W, August 24: **The Promise, Problems, and Sources of California Cultures**

Over view: Three Visions: Carey McWilliams, "Mixed Multitudes" (1949); Dale Maharidge, "The Brink" (1996); and Mike Davis, "The View From Futures Past" (1990) (Collected Readings)

M, August 29: **Sources and Narratives: California as Frontier, Region, and Homeland: Global Gathering Point and Launching Pad:**

B. Albert Hurtado on Sex and Gender in Early California:

M, September 26: Introduction and chapters 1 and 2 of Hurtado's Intimate Frontiers;
& conclude documentaries and relevant reports

W, September 28:

****Suggested Readings/ Possible Reports:** Michael J. Gonzalez, "The Child of the Wilderness Weeps for the Father of the Country," Blake Almendinger, "All About Eden," chapters from William Deverell's Whitewashed Adobe, and many other possibilities on the frontier and rancho periods (handed out in class)

***III. "The Whole World Rushed In": Crossings and Collisions in the Gold Rush:
(Two Weeks)***

M, October 3: Getting there: the Donner Party, Indian captivity, & other border crossings.
Read: Hurtado on "Sex, Gender, and the Journey to California," chapter three of Intimate Frontiers. See portions of Ric Burns's documentary on the Donner Party.

****Possible reports** on the various meanings of the Donner tragedy.

W, October 5: Cross cultural and sexual encounters in the mines:

Read: Hurtado, Chapters Four and Five "His Own Will and Pleasure" and "Amelia's Body" in Intimate Frontiers.

****Possible reports** on the myth of Joaquin Murrietta and various Latino stereotypes

M, October 10: Sex, gender, and the creation and function of the gold rush myth:

Amelia's Body, the Lynching of Juanita, and "The Luck of Roaring Camp."

&

Read: Hurtado's Chapter Six, "Intimate frontiers" and Bret Harte , "The Luck of Roaring Camp" and Ambrose Bierce's "The Haunted Valley" W, (Collected Readings). Possible viewing of excerpts of the schmaltzy musical, "Paint Your Wagons" or the gaudy production, "The Girl of the Golden West."

W, October 12:

****Possible reports:** McWilliams "The Mustang Colt" on the Gold Rush; Patricia Limerick on John Sutter and the Gold Rush; Michael Kowalski, "The Literature of the Gold Rush," and other sources.

First paper is due

IV. From the Northern Gold Rush to the Southern Land Rush and Early Challenges to White Hegemony: (Two Weeks)

M, October 17: Sunshine, real estate, and an Anglo-American Floodtide: Carey
& McWilliams, Southern California, chapters, 7-13 and continued oral on water issues,: Orange County citrus culture, and other issues.

W, October 19:

M, October 24: Racism, Exclusion, Progressivism, and Early Challenges to White Hegemony: Continue discussing McWilliams;

&

W, October 26: Revisit Matthews, Deverell, and Haslam on patterns of race relations in the Bay Area, Southern California, and the Central Valley; explore the relationship between progressive politics and racial tensions; discuss three dark episodes: the anti-Chinese riot of 1871, the Wheatland Riot of 1913, and the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943.

Read: Carey McWilliams, “Cathay in the South,” chapter 5 of Southern California, “The Wheatland Riot” in Factories in the Fields, and “The Pattern Of Violence” and “Blood on the Pavements” in North From Mexico (Collected Readings)

****Suggested Reading/Possible Reports:** David Wyatt’s on “Exclusion,” from his Five Fires; McWilliams’s “Perilous Remedies for Present Evils,” from California: The Great Exception, and many other possibilities.

V. *East From Asia: How Cultures can “melt in all directions”*
(Two Weeks)

M, October 31: Fong See, Ticie Pruitt, and their descendants: Begin Lisa See’s On Gold Mountain and continue oral reports. Excerpt from documentary “The Forbidden City.”

W, November 2:

M, November 7: Finish See’s On Gold Mountain, as far as p. 132 and continue oral reports

W, November 9:

****Suggested Readings/ Possible reports:**relevant chapters from Wyatt’s Five Fires on Chinese exclusion and Japanese-American relocation; excerpt from Judy Yung’s Unbound Feet; Anthony W. Lee’s “Crooning Kings and Dancing Queens: San Francisco’s Chinatown and the Forbidden City Theater”; and many other possibilities including further materials on the Japanese wartime incarceration at Manzanar and other places.

VI. *North From Mexico: Patterns of Conflict and Creativity*
(Two weeks)

M, November 14: Some background and variety of possibilities:

Review Huntington’s “Hispanic Challenge” and Rodriguez’s “Mongrel America,” and read: Octavio Paz, “The Pachuco & Other Extremes” and George Lipsitz, “Cruising Around the Historic Bloc: Postmodernism and Popular Music in East Los Angeles” (Collected Readings)

****Suggested Readings/Possible Reports:** George Lipsitz, “Music, Migration, and Myth: The California Connection,” a chapter from Hector Tobar’s Translation Nation, Victor Hanson’s Mexifornia, Kirse Granat May, “Wish They All Could Be California,” and other sources.

W, November 16: Candido and America Rincon and the California Dream: Begin T. Corregheasan Boyle's The Tortilla Curtain

Thanksgiving Break

M, November 28: Finish Boyle's The Tortilla Curtain and see a brief documentary: "Chavez Ravine" and snippets of "A Day Without Mexicans."

W, November 30: Conclude our discussion of The Tortilla Curtain and see a powerful documentary, "Rancho California (Por Favor)"

Second paper is due:

Saturday, December 3: **Los Angeles (or Little Saigon) Walking Tour—an optional event**

VII. Utopian and Dystopian Visions of California Cultures

M, December 5: Getting and Not Getting Along: The Rodney King Rebellion and Beyond:
Read: Jack Miles's "Blacks Versus Browns" and excerpt from Richard Rodriguez's Brown (Collected Readings).

W, December 7: Three creative visions: portions of Anna Deavere Smith's play, "Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992" and excerpts from Ridley Scott's "Blade Runner" and the from Gurinder Chada's joyously optimistic film, "What's Cooking?"

Final Exam: Two-hour in-class essay exam as scheduled during finals week.

Key dates:

Monday, August 29:	Begin oral reports
Wednesday, October 12:	First paper is due
Saturday December 3:	Los Angeles (or Little Saigon) Walking Tour
Wednesday, November 30:	Second paper is due
Finals week:	Final comprehensive open-book, open-note essay exam