

American Studies 101
Intro to American Culture Studies
Fall 2009
Tu/Th 2:30-3:45

Pamela Steinle
Office: UH-418
Office Hours: Tues 11:30-1:30
Phone/voicemail: 278-3438
Email: psteinle@fullerton.edu

REQUIRED READINGS

American Studies 101 Readings Packet (available at Fullerton Copyco)
Naomi Baron, *Always On: Language in an Online and Mobile World*
(New York: Oxford Univ Press, 2009)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reading and Class Participation

Class meetings will combine discussion of the assigned readings with supplemental lectures. The emphasis in class discussions will be on your ideas and responses to the reading and lecture material so come prepared with questions and/or responses to the day's assignment. Regular attendance is assumed.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA (assignments and grading)

Written assignments are intended as opportunities for you to engage and for me to assess your ability to understand, analyze, and critique course materials and concepts; to synthesize complex ideas, and to develop and organize arguments that are grounded in secondary sources as well as primary evidence. Consequently, evaluation of your performance in the class will be based on three written assignments and your participation in class discussions as follows:

A. your choice of any two of the following three assignments (150 pts. total):

1. Oral History paper (5+ pages) Assigned Tu 9/8 -- due in class Tu 9/15 (75 pts.)
2. Ethnography paper (5+ pages) Assigned Th 9/24 -- due in class Th 10/1 (75 pts.)
3. Photographic essay (5+ pages) Assigned Th 10/15 -- due in class Tu 10/27 (75 pts.)

B. prepared class participation (50 pts. total):

1. 10 Reading Write-ups (1-2 paragraphs) due as assigned in course outline (5 pts ea.)
2. Informal final research presentation: mandatory/no + points but *-10 points if not done*
3. Regular attendance is assumed. University policy allows up to two excused absences (without penalty) but *all absences beyond the excused two will cost you -5 points each.*

C. final research project & summary paper: (100 pts. total):

Your final research project will be assigned Tu 11/17, you will present on your research in progress to the class 12/1-12/10 and your final research paper is due not later than 4:30 p.m. on Th 12/17 (end time of final exam period set for this class).

No final examination in this course

Maximum possible points for the course: 300 pts. total

Course grades will be awarded on a 30-point scale to reflect your individual performance—a grading “curve” will not be used (every 30 points=a full letter grade break—no +/- final course grades). In the course of a borderline course score (i.e. one point from letter grade cut-off), thoughtful class participation or the lack of it will make the decision to either raise or lower the grade. A grade of “Incomplete” must be

arranged with me prior to the end of the course and forfeits the possibility of an A in the course. All late assignments in above sections A & C will be penalized 10% of the earned score; late reading write-ups for above section B will not be accepted (0 points).

COURSE OUTLINE

The intent of this course is to introduce you to the interdisciplinary theories and methods of culture study, with specific attention to the study of contemporary American culture. Unit One is a consideration of how some historians have approached research and telling of American experience, discussion of the significance of historical context in culture study, and exploration of oral history as a research method. Unit Two considers anthropological attempts to define the meaning and significance of culture—in broad theory and in specific study—and includes exploration of ethnography as a research method. The focus of Unit Three is the importance of participatory, physical, and symbolic structures of social organization for culture study: encompassing and evaluating the research methods of sociologists, geographers, photographers, and documentary filmmakers, we will then explore the use of photography in community study. The final course unit (Unit Four) relies on your understanding of the preceding three units as we first consider linguistic and communications approaches to the study of social usage and impact of electronic communications media (cell phone and internet) on cultural participation. You will then engage in your own participant-observation research projects which will be the basis for your final papers in the course in which you identify and evaluate how electronic communications media both reflect and influence patterns of social relations; how language and rituals of electronic participation function to provide a sense of community and identity (local and national) in America's multicultural context.

**Readings & assignments are to be completed (finished before class) on the date listed. Prompts for reading write-ups will be assigned in the preceding class meeting.*

UNIT ONE. The History of Americans

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|------|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8/25 | Tu | Introduction to the course. No assignment |
| 8/27 | Th | 2009: Looking for America
Reading: excerpt from Barabasi's <i>Linked</i> |
| 9/1 | Tu | What is "history?"
Reading: Zinn, <i>Voices of a People's History of the United States</i> , 23-28
Homework: <u>Reading Write-up #1 due in class</u> |
| 9/3 | Th | Oral history as a research methodology
Reading: Hoopes, "History and Oral History," excerpted pp. 3-29
Homework: <u>Reading Write-up #2 due in class</u> |
| 9/8 | Tu | Oral history: sense of time and place
Reading: excerpts from Baskin's <i>New Burlington</i> , pp. 149-159
*Oral History Paper assignment will be given out in class |

- 9/10 Th Oral history research *Steinle Furlough Day: Class will not meet*
- 9/15 Tu Oral history papers due in class for discussion

UNIT TWO. Understanding American Experiences: Anthropological Perspectives

- 9/17 Th What is "culture:" the anthropological perspective
Reading: Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (excerpt pages 1-30)
- 9/22 Tu Ethnography as residential community research methodology
Reading: Meyerhoff, Excerpt from *Number Our Days*, pp. 1-39
Homework: Reading Write-up #3 due in class
- 9/24 Th Ethnography as social community research methodology
Reading: Ehrenreich, Barbara. "Serving in Florida."
Homework: Reading Write-up #4 due in class
*Ethnography Paper assignment will be given out in class
- 9/29 Tu Ethnographic research: process/in-progress discussion
- 10/1 Th Ethnography papers due in class for discussion of findings

UNIT THREE. Landscapes of Belonging: Sociology, Geography, Visual Studies

- 10/6 Tu Questing for Community: Individualism & the Sociological Imagination
Reading: Putnam, Excerpts from *Bowling Alone*, pp. 15-27 & 183-187
Homework: Reading Write-up #5 due in class
- 10/8 Th Sense of Place and Built Environments: Cultural Geography
Reading: Excerpts from *L.A. Freeway*, pp. 1-5, 23-26, & 37-46
Homework: Reading Write-up #6 due in class
- 10/13 Tu Spaces of Social Alienation/Suicidal Consequences
Reading: Gaines, *Teenage Wasteland*, pp.7-20 (excerpted)
Homework: Reading Write-up #7 due in class
- 10/15 Th Envisioning Sense of Place: Visual Studies
Reading: Agee & Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, 7-13 & 77-82
Homework: Reading Write-up #8 due in class
*Photographic Essay assignment will be given out in class.

10/20 & 10/22 (Tu & Th) CSUF FACULTY FURLOUGH DAYS: AS PER CSUF PRESIDENT GORDON, CLASSES WILL NOT MEET ON THESE DATES
Assignment for 10/20-10/22: research and compose your photographic essays

10/27 Tu Photographic Essay assignments due in class for discussion.

UNIT FOUR. Virtual Communities: Electronic Media and Communications Studies

- 10/29 Th Imaginary Social Worlds
Reading: Caughey, "Artificial Social Relations in Modern America."
Homework: Reading Write-up #9 due in class
- 11/3 Tu *Always On: Language in an Online & Mobile World*
Reading: Baron, *Always On*: Intro, Chapter One & Chapter Two
- 11/5 Th Intensive reading and online participant-observation engagement in IM
Reading: Baron, *Always On*: Chapters Three & Four
*Class will not meet on Th 11/5 as I will be attending the American Studies Assoc Annual National Conference in Washington, D.C.
- 11/10 Tu Online social worlds: IM, Facebook/MySpace, and the "blogosphere"
Reading: Baron, *Always On*: Chapters Five & Six
Recommended: online participation-observation in a social network site
Homework: Reading Write-up #10 due in class
*We will discuss Chapters Three through Six within this class meeting
- 11/12 Th Cellular (mis)communications: talking, texting, and language impact
Reading: Baron, *Always On*: Chapters Seven and Eight
Recommended: talking vs. texting cellular participation-observation
- 11/17 Tu *Always On*: benefits/costs to the individual and to the social community
Reading: Baron, *Always On*: Chapters Nine and Ten
Recommended: continued participation-observation cellular & online
Final research paper assignment on electronic communications media and social relations in contemporary America will be given out in class
- 11/19 Th **Final research paper topic summaries due** in class for discussion
Research presentation scheduling will be completed in class
- 11/24-11/26 FALL BREAK
Assignment: conduct primary research for your final paper

12/1-12/3 Presentations: evidence and methods of research in progress

12/8-12/10 Presentations: research summaries and preliminary findings

Your final research paper is due not later than 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 17 (the end of the final exam period scheduled for this class)

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION

American Studies 101 as a CSUF General Education Category III. C. 1 Course

Courses in III. C. 1 (Intro to the Social Sciences) include the following goals for student learning:

- a. To reflect on what it means to be a social being.
- b. To understand the role that cultural diversity plays in defining what it means to be a social being: the past and present processes of cultural differentiation in our own society or elsewhere.
- c. To understand the origins, workings, and ramifications of social and cultural change in our own society or elsewhere.
- d. To understand what makes a social science different from other disciplines.
- e. To understand and compare the distinctive methods and perspectives of two or more social science disciplines.
- f. To understand major concepts, methods, theories, and theorists in one or more of the social sciences.
- g. To apply these methods, perspectives, and concepts to everyday, "real life" situations.
- h. To appreciate the relevance of the social sciences to social, political, and/or economic institutions and behavior.
- i. To analyze and evaluate critically social science concepts and theories as applied to particular problems or themes.

Each of these goals have been integrated into the course outline for American Studies 101. Student learning relative to these goals will be assessed through both written work and participation in class discussions, with particular attention to each student's grasp of course concepts and materials as well as their ability to think critically and independently about them. Students will be encouraged to develop their critical thinking skills and to improve their ability to express their ideas effectively through verbal feedback in class discussions and through written comments in evaluation of their written work.

Students' right to receive accommodations for documented special needs via the campus' Disabled Student Service Office (DSS):

The University requires students with disabilities to register with the Office of Disabled Student Services (DSS), located in UH-101 and at (714) 278 – 3112, in order to receive prescribed

accommodations appropriate to their disability. Students requesting accommodations should inform the instructor during the first week of classes about any disability or special needs that may require specific arrangements/accommodations related to attending class sessions, completing course assignments, writing papers or quizzes/tests/examinations.

COPY CO is located at: 2436 E Chapman Ave. Fullerton, CA 92831 (intersection of Chapman & State College Blvd: between Bank of America/Chapman and Del Taco/State College)

*From 8/23 thru 9/3, store hours are: 8am-9pm Mon-Thurs, 8am-7pm Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sunday 1-6pm. You can also order online at: <http://textmartfullerton.com/>

Emergency Procedures Notice to Students

The safety of all students attending California State University Fullerton is of paramount importance. During an emergency it is necessary for students to have a basic understanding of their personnel responsibilities and the University's emergency response procedures. In the event of an emergency please adhere to the following guidelines

Before an emergency occurs-

Know the safe evacuation routes for your specific building and floor.
Know the evacuation assembly areas for your building.

When an emergency occurs-

Keep calm and do not run or panic. Your best chance of emerging from an emergency is with a clear head.
Evacuation is not always the safest course of action. If directed to evacuate, take all of your belongings and proceed safely to the nearest evacuation route.
Do not leave the area, remember that faculty and other staff members need to be able to account for your whereabouts.
Do not re-enter building until informed it is safe by a building marshal or other campus authority.
If directed to evacuate the campus please follow the evacuation routes established by either parking or police officers.

After an emergency occurs-

If an emergency disrupts normal campus operations or causes the University to close for a prolonged period of time (more than three days), students are expected to complete the course assignments listed on the syllabus as soon as it is reasonably possible to do so.
Students can determine the University's operational status by checking the University's web site at <http://www.fullerton.edu>, calling the University's hotline number at 657-278-0911, or tuning into area radio and television

stations. Students should assume that classes will be held unless they hear or read an official closure announcement.

EMERGENCY CALLS

DIAL 9-1-1 All campus phones and cell phones on campus reach the University Police Department

Non-emergency line: (657) 278-2515 24 -hour
recorded emergency information line: (657) 278-
0911(657) 278 -4444