

American Studies 30I
The American Character
Fall 2009
M/W 2:30-3:45

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REQUIRED READING

American Slavery, American Freedom Edmund Morgan
Black Elk Speaks John Neihardt
Breadgivers Anzia Yeziarska
Backfire: American Culture and the Vietnam War Loren Baritz

COURSE INTENT AND OUTLINE

The nature of American experience has been historically complex across time, region, and an ever-growing pluralistic citizenry. This course examines both the dominant framework of ideologies and institutions that structure cultural participation, and the variations of individual and alternative cultural experiences and beliefs which give meaning to that participation. By the end of the course, you will hopefully have developed a broad understanding of what it is that unifies and hence can be said to "characterize" Americans as well as the diverse range of participation that critiques, challenges, and occasionally reshapes the outlines of national character.

This class will begin with readings and discussion of the origins of dominant American culture with particular attention to early American ideals of individualism, innocence, equality, and the concepts of ethnocentrism and enculturation.

The second segment of the course will deal with ethnicity and racial formation in America as well as non-dominant cultural experiences: internal and external definitions of heroism and equality, achievement, fundamental beliefs about the nature of reality, and modalities acculturation.

The third and final segment of the course will make comprehensive use of earlier course materials to analyze and critique the contemporary character of Americans through a study of the Vietnam war as a (still playing) cultural drama. Cultural diversity rooted in gender and class will be explored within the contexts of both the actual military-political realities of the Vietnam war and the beliefs, actions, and images that grasped the attention of Americans in imagination, participation, and current memory.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reading and Class Participation

Class meetings combine discussion of the assigned readings with supplemental lectures. The emphasis in class discussions will be on your ideas and responses to readings and lecture material; it is a good idea to come to class with questions and/or responses to reading assignments. As a 300-level G.E course, upper-division level reading comprehension and writing skills are expected.

It is crucial that you attend class regularly. Attendance will be reflected in your success with your exams as the material covered in lecture will shape the exam questions, and thoughtful participation in discussions enriches your learning experience.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA (examinations and grading)

Examinations are intended as opportunities to assess your ability to understand, analyze, and critique course materials, to synthesize complex ideas, and to organize arguments which are grounded in evidence and express your individual viewpoint.

There will be three in-class mid-term exams (short answer/essay) and a comprehensive final essay exam. Your grade will be determined as follows:

100 points	1st mid-term (in-class short answer)
100 points	2nd mid-term (in-class essay)
<u>100 points</u>	<u>final essay (in-class short answer and essay)</u>
300 points	total possible

Final grades (**straight letter grades: not +/-**) will be awarded using a standard 10% scale to reflect your individual performance: a grading curve will not be used.

In the case of a borderline grade (one point from grade cut-off) class participation will make the decision to either raise or lower the grade. Late exams will be penalized 10% of the earned score. Grades of incomplete forfeit the possibility of an "A" in the course and must be discussed with me in advance.

*"Pop quizzes" will be given if it becomes difficult to determine whether course readings are being completed in a timely and thoughtful manner. Points awarded to any pop quizzes will change the number of points possible on the next exam.

CLASS MEETING AND READING ASSIGNMENTS
Culture and Character

8/24	M	Introduction to course. No assignment.
8/26	W	Character and Culture Study.
8/31	M	Culture: Character & Ideology. Analysis of Eminem's "One Shot"/ <u>8 Mile</u>

Early American Experience:
Establishing Mainstream Cultural Ideals and Mythologies

9/2	W	<u>American Slavery, American Freedom</u> . Chpts. 1 & 2
9/7	M	Labor Day Holiday
9/9	W	<u>American Slavery, American Freedom</u> , Chpts. 3 & 4
9/14	M	<u>American Slavery, American Freedom</u> , Chpts. 5 & 6
9/16	W	<u>American Slavery, American Freedom</u> , Chpts. 7, 8, & 9
9/21	M	<u>American Slavery, American Freedom</u> , Chpts. 10, 11, & 12
9/23	W	<u>American Slavery, American Freedom</u> , Chpts. 13, 14, & 15
9/28	M	<u>American Slavery, American Freedom</u> , Chpts. 16-18 *Exam Prep*
9/30	W	**1ST MID-TERM EXAM IN CLASS**

American Character: Native American Experience

10/5	M	Theories of acculturation. <u>Black Elk Speaks</u> , Introduction and Chpts 1-4
10/7	W	<u>Black Elk Speaks</u> , Chpts. 5-11
10/12	M	<u>Black Elk Speaks</u> , Chpts. 12-19
10/14	W	<u>Black Elk Speaks</u> , Chpts. 20-25

American Character: The Acculturation of White Ethnic Immigrants

10/19	M	<u>Breadgivers</u> , Intro and Chpts. 1-4
10/21	W	<u>Breadgivers</u> , Chpts 5-11
10/26	M	<u>Breadgivers</u> , Chpts 12-16
10/28	W	Finish <u>Breadgivers</u> (Chpts 17-21) *Exam Preparation*
11/2	M	**2ND MID-TERM EXAM IN CLASS**

Vietnam: American Character in the Theatre of War

- 11/4 W Progress meetings: read & outline Backfire, Preface and Chpt 1
- 11/9 M Myth and Action: discuss Backfire, Preface and Chpt 1
- 11/11 W **Veteran's Day: reflect on this holiday as a cultural ritual.**
- 11/16 M Backfire, Chpt. 2 *identify & write out Baritz's "10 links" before class
- 11/18 W Backfire, Chpt. 3 & 4 **Film: "Why Vietnam?" (U.S. State Dept.)III**
- 11/23 & 11/25 **FALL BREAK Reflect on Thanksgiving as a cultural ritual.**
- 11/30 M Backfire, Chpt. 5 & 6
- 12/2 W Backfire, Chpt. 7 **Film: "Letters Home from Vietnam" (1st half)**
- 12/7 M **Film: "Letters Home from Vietnam" (2nd half)**
- 12/9 W On Cultural Reconciliation: Backfire: Chpt. 8 ***Final Exam Prep***
- 12/16 W **Final Exam: 2:30-4:20 **arrive on time****

Enjoy a well-deserved winter break

AMST 301 meets CSUF General Education Categories III C 2* and V

Courses in GE category III C 2 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. In addition, courses in III. C. 2. Implications, Explorations, and Participatory Experience in the Social Sciences include the following goals for student learning:

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

Meeting requirements for GE category V (Cultural Diversity):

Students must complete at least one "starred" three-unit course in category III.B.3, III.C.2, or IV that includes all of the following learning goals for cultural diversity:

- To understand that culture is socially constructed and fundamental to social interaction.
- To appreciate the complex relationships that gender, ethnicity & class bring to a discussion of society & culture.
- To understand that because we live in an inter-connected world, we need to understand the diversity and relationships within and among cultures.
- To recognize and evaluate how one's cultural history affects one's sense of self and relationship to others.

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.

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION: AMST 301 FALL 2009

CLASSES WILL NOT MEET ON WEDNESDAY, OCT. 21: 10/20-10/22 ARE CSUF FACULTY FURLOUGH DAYS AS PER CSUF PRESIDENT GORDON AFTER OUR COURSE SYLLABUS WAS PRINTED.

Your reading assignment for 10/21 remains the same & will be covered in class 10/26

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