

AMERICAN CHARACTER

AMST 301
Spring 2010
Online course via BlackBoard

Wayne Hobson
Phone: (207) 594-9787; Fax: (714) 278-1325
Email: hobson@fullerton.edu (Subject: AMST 301)

Required Texts: (available at Little Professor Bookstore; 725 N. Placentia Ave., Fullerton)
James N. Gregory, *American Exodus: The Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California*
Rodriguez, Richard, *Hunger for Memory : The Education of Richard Rodriguez*
Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: Memoir of a Childhood Among Ghosts*
*Andrew Lam, *Perfume Dreams: Reflections on the Vietnamese Diaspora*
Additional essays will be available online via the course BlackBoard site

The book by Andrew Lam is currently out of stock (but still in print) at the publisher and is therefore not available at Little Professor Bookstore. We will not be reading Lam's book until May, by which time it may be back in stock. You may be able to find new or used copies from other sources. I will let you know when it becomes available at Little Professor.

About the course:

This course explores selected aspects of American cultural diversity. We will focus on the question of personal identity formation as experienced by specific groups and individuals in specific historical contexts. Our particular focus, common to all our readings, will be the stories of migrants to California during the past 80 years. We will begin with Southwesterners (often referred to as "Okies") who migrated to California in the 1930s, then we will move to individual stories of Chinese Americans, Mexican Americans, and Vietnamese Americans—exploring in particular the relationships and identities of the immigrant generation and their children. Most of these stories are told from the second generation's point of view, but they work at understanding their parents' perspectives even as they strive to develop their own individual identities, which are inevitably based on a very different set of experiences and expectations about the future..

AMST 301 satisfies General Education categories III.C.2. (Implications, Explorations, and Participatory Experience in the Social Sciences) and V. (Cultural Diversity). The course also satisfies a core requirement for the American Studies major and minor and satisfies collateral requirements for several majors. Prospective secondary school teachers successfully completing AMST 301 will have satisfied the US Cultural Diversity requirement for the Subject Matter Preparation Program in Social Science (SMPPP).

General Education Learning Goals for this course: 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; to understand that culture is socially constructed and fundamental to social interaction; to appreciate the complex relationships that gender, ethnicity, and class bring to a discussion of society and 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.

Assignments, Grading, and Policies:

This is an online course. There will be no on-campus class meetings. All your work will be done through the course BlackBoard site. You absolutely must keep up with the reading and participate in the weekly

discussion groups. In many ways, there is more accountability in this class than in a “normal” on-campus course. Please read the course schedule carefully; you should not remain in the class if you know that you cannot meet the weekly course requirements.

You must have access to a computer with a reasonably fast, reliable Internet connection and the ability to read documents in PDF format. You should be comfortable navigating the Internet and sending emails with attachments. If you are not familiar with BlackBoard, then you will need to review CSUF’s BlackBoard support page for students: <http://BlackBoard.fullerton.edu/student/default.htm>. Although most communication will occur through the BlackBoard site, in some cases we will use email. All email communication will be with your CSUF email account. If you experience technical difficulties accessing the course BlackBoard site, please send me an email. You may also want to contact the University’s IT Help Desk via phone at (657) 278-7777.

Every week except the three midterm exam weeks (weeks 5, 9, and 13), you must **participate in an online discussion** of that week’s assigned material through BlackBoard’s discussion board. You have been assigned to a ten-person discussion group. Most of your work in this class will be within this discussion group. Twice during the semester you will serve as one of your group’s Discussion Leaders (most weeks there will be two Discussion Leaders for your group). Each week (including the weeks that you are serving as a Discussion Leader), you will participate in the discussion by responding to a thread initiated by one of your group’s Discussion Leaders or to a thread initiated by a question that I will pose. These responses should be approximately one paragraph in length. Your questions and responses to the discussion board will be graded. Details about expectations, grading, and discussion leader assignments can be found at the Blackboard site.

The weekly rhythm: The Discussion Leader must post his or her question by 7pm Wednesday and all members of the group must post a response by 9pm Sunday, with a bonus given for responses posted by 7pm Friday. These are firm deadlines. Late submissions will not be accepted. After all, members of your group should not be expected to keep checking back to see if you’ve posted yet.

In addition, everyone who is enrolled in the class has been placed in a “Queries” discussion group. You may submit factual or clarification questions, requests for background information, or other course content questions to this discussion board at any time. You may also submit relevant information that you have learned but that does not seem pertinent to your group’s discussion threads and you may respond to a fellow student’s query or comment. I will respond to all queries within two days (often more quickly). You may also respond to another student’s query if you wish. These queries and comments will not be graded and you are not required to post to this “Queries” discussion group.

Please follow basic netiquette: be as respectful as you would be in a face-to-face encounter; do not waste your readers’ time by repeating something that others have already posted; take the readings and the course’s aims seriously; and, of course, be sure to maintain academic integrity by clearly citing your sources whenever you use the words or ideas of another.

Your Discussion Board questions and responses will be graded, with an “A” (27-30 points) assigned for postings that are specific, cite the reading, and clearly demonstrate understanding of key issues. “B” (24-26 points) postings show a partial understanding of the reading, but fail to notice or to remark on key issues. “C” (20-23 points) postings are poorly written, unclear, vague, and/or repetitive of other’s postings and show minimal comprehension of the reading. “D” (15-19 points) postings show no evidence of having done the reading. “F” postings violate netiquette or are late submissions. Five bonus points will be given for “A” or “B” responses made before 7pm Friday. If you submit more than one response in any given week, you will be given a grade for the highest-rated response. All grades will be posted to the Grade Center.

There will be **four essay examinations**. Three of the exams will ask you to write four short essays and one exam will ask you to write one longer essay. The posting date and due date for each exam are given on the Weekly Course Schedule below. The exams will be administered during week 5, week 9, week 13, and final exam week. The group discussion boards will be unavailable to you during the exam periods. I will post all exam grades to the Grade Center in BlackBoard.

The exams will be administered via the Examination feature in BlackBoard, which will forward the exam to Turnitin. As you may know, Turnitin checks for evidence of plagiarism and provides me with a score indicating what percentage of each student's essay can be found in its database of student essays and Internet sources.

The exams assess your ability to understand, critique, and analyze assigned materials, to synthesize complex ideas, and to organize brief and extended essays which are grounded in evidence and express your individual viewpoint. The short essay exams will test your knowledge of key terms, documents, ideas, events, and people. The longer essay exam will ask you to compare and synthesize ideas and insights presented by multiple authors.

If unforeseen circumstances force you to miss the exam due date, you must contact me before that deadline, explaining your situation. Do not ever simply skip an exam. Always contact me--by email. Normally, late exams will be penalized at least one letter grade and in all cases they must be completed before the rest of the class receives their exams back.

I will post a **study guide** for each major section of the course—it will appear by Sunday 5pm the first week of each section. Due diligence with the study guide and the group discussion boards should prepare you well for the essay examinations.

Plagiarism – using the words of another person without citing your source (including relevant page numbers or Internet addresses) will lead to an F on the assignment and a report to the campus Judicial Affairs Officer.

If you have a disability or special need for which you may be requesting an accommodation, please inform me as well as the Disabled Student Services Office as early as possible in the semester.

We will use the +/- grading scale, particularly for borderline cases. An Incomplete (“I” grade) will be given only after consultation with the instructor and must include an explanation of the reason for the request. Normally, a 10 per cent penalty will be assessed for assignments completed after the end of the semester. There are 1000 points possible for the semester, distributed as follows:

	Points Possible	<u>Grading Scale:</u>
Discussion Board postings	360	A- 90-91; A 92-100
Exam #1 (week 5)	150	B- 80-81; B 82-87; B+ 88-89
Exam #2 (week 9)	120	C- 65-66; C 67-77; C+ 78-79
Exam #3 (week 13)	200	D- 50-51; D 52-62; D+ 63-64
Exam #4 (final exam week)	170	
Discussion Board bonus points	Up to 60 points	

If you have questions, please contact me about them. I can be reached most easily via email. The phone number given above is my home phone. I do not expect to be on campus during the semester.. I will respond to all email or phone messages within one business day, often sooner.

My greatest wish is that this course will provide you with a stimulating and enriching intellectual experience and that after our brief time “together” you will find yourself reflecting on the insights and questions that the course has provided you.

Weekly Course Schedule:

I. MIGRATION AND SOCIAL CLASS: A REGIONAL SUBCULTURE & THE CALIFORNIA DREAM

Week 1: Instructor will post discussion questions by Wed., Jan. 27, 7pm; post responses to at least one question to your group discussion board by Sun., Jan. 31, 9pm

Clarence Mondale, “Place-on-the-Move: Space and Place for the Migrant” (avail. on BlackBoard)

Week 2: Discussion leaders post questions by Wed., Feb. 3, 7pm; post responses by Sun., Feb. 7, 9pm
Interregional Migration; Okie Stereotype-Its History and Functions

Gregory, *American Exodus*, xiii-xviii, 3-77

Week 3: Discussion leaders post questions by Wed., Feb. 10, 7pm; post responses by Sun., Feb. 14, 9pm
Plain-Folk Americanism as Class and Regional Identity

Gregory, *American Exodus*, 78-171

Week 4: Discussion leaders post questions by Wed., Feb. 17, 7pm; post responses by Sun., Feb. 21, 9pm
Religion, Migration, and Ironic Reversals: Evangelical Protestantism as an “Ethnic Church”

Gregory, *American Exodus*, 172-221

Country and Western Music: “The Language of a Subculture”

Gregory, *American Exodus*, 222-248

Week 5:

Short-answer exam covering weeks 1-4: Go to “Examinations” section of the course BlackBoard site

Note: Discussion Board will be unavailable during the exam period

Exam posted by noon Fri., Feb. 26. Answers due on BlackBoard by 9pm, Mon., Mar. 1

II. MIGRATION, IDENTITY, AND THE STORY OF THE GENERATIONS: MEXICAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

Week 6: Discussion leaders post questions by Wed., Mar. 3, 7pm; post responses by Sun., Mar. 7, 9pm
Perspectives on Migration and Identity

“My Family, Mi Familia” [rent this movie or view at CSUF Library—You check them out at the Circulation Desk and view them in the first floor media center or in a viewing room in the fourth floor Audio-Visual area.]

Rubén Martínez, “The Shock of the New” (avail. on BlackBoard)

Family Language, School Language

Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory*, 1-41

Week 7: Discussion leaders post questions by Wed., Mar. 10, 7pm; post responses by Sun., Mar. 14, 9pm
The Scholarship Boy; Inner and Outer Meanings--Religion

Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory*, 45-118

Week 8: Discussion leaders post questions by Wed., Mar. 17, 7pm; post responses by Sun., Mar. 21, 9pm
Race, Success, Validation, and Secrets
Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory*, 121-212

Week 9:

Short-answer exam covering weeks 6-8: Go to “Examinations” section of the course BlackBoard site
Note: Discussion Board will be unavailable during the exam period
Exam posted by noon Thur., Mar. 25. Answers due on BlackBoard by 9pm, Mon., Mar. 29

SPRING BREAK

III. MIGRATION, IDENTITY, AND THE STORY OF THE GENERATIONS: CHINESE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

Week 10: Discussion leaders post questions by Wed., Apr. 7, 7pm; post responses by Sun., Apr. 11, 9pm
Asians in California: History and Stereotypes; the Hong Family's Story
Yung, “Unbound Feet: Epilogue” (avail. on BlackBoard)
Women & Traditional Chinese Peasant Culture
Kingston, *Woman Warrior*, 3-53

Week 11: Discussion leaders post questions by Wed., Apr. 14, 7pm; post responses by Sun., Apr. 18, 9pm
The Dream of the Female Avenger; Mothers and Daughters in a Chinese American Family
Kingston, *Woman Warrior*, 57-109

Week 12: Discussion leaders post questions by Wed., Apr. 21, 7pm; post responses by Sun., Apr. 25, 9pm
The Woman Warrior on Gold Mountain; The Second-Generation Daughter Constructs Her Identity
Kingston, *Woman Warrior*, 113-209

Week 13:

Long-essay exam covering weeks 1-12: Go to “Examinations” section of the course BlackBoard site
Note: Discussion Board will be unavailable during the exam period
Exam posted by noon Fri., Apr. 30. Answers due on BlackBoard by 9pm, Mon., May 3

IV. REFUGEE, IMMIGRANT, AND AMERICAN: THE STORY OF THE GENERATIONS IN THE VIETNAMESE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Week 14: Discussion leaders post questions by Wed., May 5, 7pm; post responses by Sun., May 9, 9pm
The Refugee and His Immigrant Son
Lam, *Perfume Dreams*, 1-69

Week 15: Discussion leaders post questions by Wed., May 12, 7pm; post responses by Sun., May 16, 9pm
Long After the War: Meanings of Being American and Vietnamese
Lam, *Perfume Dreams*, 71-140

Final Exam Week:

Short-answer exam covering weeks 10-15. Go to “Examinations” section of the course BlackBoard site
Note: Discussion Board will be unavailable during the exam period
Exam posted by noon Wed., May 19. Answers due on BlackBoard by 9pm, Sat., May 22