

Scripps College – Fall 2011**American Studies 180: American Studies Seminar
Mondays 2:45 – 5:30
Humanities 202****Instructor: Professor Matt Delmont****E-mail: mdelmont@scrippscollege.edu****Office Hours: Tuesday 1-3 and by appointment****Office: Balch 214****Course Description:**

This advanced seminar will facilitate your transition from being American Studies students to American Studies scholars who are prepared to conduct original thesis research. We will read and discuss recent American Studies research with particular attention to the different methodological and theoretical approaches used in the field. The course is organized based on the most common types of evidence American Studies scholars use in their research. Each week we will examine articles that use different types of evidence, including: archival documents; law and legislation, newspapers and magazines; architecture and maps; photography, photography; film & TV; music; oral history and ethnography; and museum exhibitions, public history & memorials. We will also read a number of the American Studies Association Presidential addresses to better understand the ongoing debates over how “American Studies” should be defined. Through these readings and class discussions, as well as the writing assignments outlined below, students will be given the tools they need to develop and refine their senior thesis topics.

Course Aims:

- 1) Introduce students to leading contemporary American Studies research, and expose students to the wide range of evidence and interdisciplinary methods American Studies scholars use in examining historical and contemporary subjects.
 - Students will be able to read, write, and speak critically about research published in *American Quarterly*, the journal of the American Studies Association.
 - Students will be able to differentiate among the types of evidence and interdisciplinary methods used by American Studies scholars.
 - Students will be able to identify contemporary trends in American Studies scholarship.
 - Students will be able to define “American Studies” in their own terms.
- ✓ This course aim will be accomplished through reading assignments and class discussions.
- 2) Encourage students to participate in the intellectual conversation among American Studies scholars.
 - Students will be able to write clear and concise review essays.

- Students will be able to locate primary and secondary sources that are related to each week's reading and to communicate their evaluations of these sources in class discussions, oral presentations, and written work.
 - ✓ This course aim will be accomplished through review essays, weekly class discussions, and weekly materials/evidence blog.
- 3) Guide junior students in the development of the first drafts of their senior thesis topics.
- Students will be able to prepare their thesis proposals by identifying their topics, relevant primary and secondary sources, and a work timeline.
 - Students will be able to develop and refine their senior thesis ideas and to present their thesis proposals through oral presentations and in written form.
- ✓ This course aim will be accomplished through peer workshops, written draft thesis proposals, and proposal presentations.

Assigned Reading:

- ☞ All of the assigned articles (with one exception) are from *American Quarterly* and are available as PDF documents on the course's Sakai website. Students must bring the articles for each week with them to class in some format, either printed out or on their laptops.

Assignments/Grading:

In-Class Writing Responses to Assigned Reading – (25%)

The weekly readings are an extremely important part of this course and are weighted accordingly. You are expected to complete the reading assignments outlined below and to attend every class prepared to be a thoughtful contributor and active listener in class discussions. Each day for which there is a reading assignment, we will start class with a short writing assignment. You will be asked to write for ten minutes on a question related to that day's reading. The questions will ask you to explore one of the main themes, terms, and/or examples in that day's reading. These will not be trick questions and should be accessible if you have done the reading. Your responses will be graded as 1, 0.5, or 0 and will be handed back at the start of the next class. If you are sick or miss a class, you will need to e-mail me a 500-word summary of that day's reading before the next class. If you received a 0.5 or 0 for a particular day and would like to improve your score, you may also write a 500-word summary of the reading. These 500-word summaries will be graded using the same scale as the in-class responses. There are 10 days with reading assignments, so the maximum number of points available will be 10. The final grading scale for the reading questions will look like this: 10=A, 9=A-, 8=B, 7=C, etc.

Review Essay – (50% for seniors; 25% for juniors)

To help you expand your secondary source reading, you will write a review essay of three books. You can choose one book that you have read in another course, but at least two of the books should be new for you. Your review essay should be 7-9 pages (12pt font, double-spaced). Your review should do three things: 1) Identify the thesis of each book; 2) Identify the evidence each author uses to support her/his thesis; 3) Make at least one specific connection and/or contrast among the books. Seniors should also identify how their thesis can build on these texts. Samples of review essays by will be provided on Sakai. Students should e-mail me by week 6 to confirm book selection. Review essays should be uploaded to your Sakai drop box before class on December 5.

Juniors Only:**Early Draft Thesis Proposal – (25%)**

Over of the course of the semester you will start to think about your senior thesis ideas through peer workshops in class. For week 3, you should spend an hour brainstorming potential thesis topics. At this stage, focus on getting your ideas down on paper rather than going into a great amount of detail for each idea. For week 5, you should narrow this list down to your top three ideas. Write one to two paragraphs describing each idea and create a preliminary list of the primary and secondary sources you might use for each idea. For week 11, write a draft thesis proposal addressing 1) your thesis question or problem; 2) your research method; and 3) your working bibliography of sources you have consulted and plan to consult. I will provide written feedback on your draft proposal, and students are encouraged to visit office hours with any questions. The final written version of your draft thesis proposal should be uploaded to your Sakai drop box before class on November 28. For the final class (Nov 28th), you will give a 5-minute oral presentation on your proposed research.

Finding Research Materials/Evidence – (25%)

To encourage you to get in the habit of looking for research materials and evidence, you will be asked to find one primary source related to the type of evidence being discussed each week (note: we will start in week 3). For example, you could choose a newspaper article for week 4: “Newspapers & Magazines” or a photograph for week 7: “Photography.” Ideally, the source you choose will also be related to your potential thesis topic. Suggestions regarding where to look for primary sources will be given in class. You should post the source you select to the course blog (as a hyperlink or PDF) by Sunday 9 PM of each week.

Week 1:

Monday: August 29 (No Class)

Week 2: What is American Studies?

Monday: September 5

- ☰ Rowe, John Carlos. "Introduction to A Concise Companion to American Studies" (2010)
- ☰ Kaplan, Amy. "Violent Belongings and the Question of Empire Today" Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, 2003 (AQ, Volume 56, Number 1, March 2004)
- ☰ Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. "What is to Be Done?" Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, 2010 (AQ, Volume 63, Number 2, June 2011)

Week 3: Archived Letters, etc.

Monday: September 12

- ☰ Rifkin, Mark. "Debt and the Transnationalization of Hawai'i" (AQ, Volume 60, Number 1, March 2008)
- ☰ Miles, Tiya. "'Circular Reasoning': Recentering Cherokee Women in the Antiremoval Campaigns" (AQ, Volume 61, Number 2, June 2009)

JUNIORS' THESIS ASSIGNMENT:

- Spend an hour brainstorming potential thesis topics. Bring the list to class.

Week 4: Newspapers & Magazines

Monday: September 19

- ☰ Espiritu, Yen Le, "The 'We-Win-Even-When-We-Lose' Syndrome: U.S. Press Coverage of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the 'Fall of Saigon'" (AQ, Volume 58, Number 2, June 2006)
- ☰ Herring, Scott. "Out of the Closets, Into the Woods: RFD, Country Women, and the Post-Stonewall Emergence of Queer Anti-urbanism" (AQ, Volume 59, Number 2, June 2007)

Week 5: Law and Legislation

Monday: September 26

- ☰ Shah, Nayan, "Between 'Oriental Depravity' and 'Natural Degenerates': Spatial Borderlands and the Making of Ordinary Americans" (AQ, Volume 57, Number 3, September 2005)
- ☰ Strub, Whitney, "The Clearly Obscene and the Queerly Obscene: Heteronormativity and Obscenity in Cold War Los Angeles" (AQ, Volume 60, Number 2, June 2008)

JUNIORS' THESIS ASSIGNMENT:

- Narrow down your brainstorming list to your top three ideas. Write one to two paragraphs describing each idea and create a preliminary list of the primary and secondary sources you might use for each idea. Bring this to class.

Week 6: Architecture, Maps, & Place

Monday: October 3

- ☰ Kinnahan, Thomas, "Charting Progress: Francis Amasa Walker's *Statistical Atlas of the United States* and Narratives of Western Expansion" (AQ, Volume 60, Number 2, June 2008)
- ☰ Cuff, Dana, "The Figure of the Neighbor: Los Angeles Past and Future" (AQ, Volume 56, Number 3, September 2004)

REVIEW ESSAY ASSIGNMENT:

- E-mail me titles of review essay books by Friday, October 7.

Week 7: Photography

Monday: October 10

- ☰ Raiford, Leigh, "'Come Let Us Build a New World Together': SNCC and Photography of the Civil Rights Movement" (AQ, Volume 59, Number 4, December 2007)
- ☰ Rice, Mark, "His Name Was Don Francisco Muro: Reconstructing an Image of American Imperialism," (AQ, Volume 62, Number 1, March 2010)

Week 8:

Monday: October 17

Fall Break, No Class

Week 9: Film & TV

Monday: October 24

- ☰ Klein, Christina, "Why American Studies Needs to Think about Korean Cinema, or, Transnational Genres in the Films of Bong Joon-ho" (AQ, Volume 60, Number 4, December 2008)
- ☰ Spigel, Lynn, "Entertainment Wars: Television Culture after 9/11" (AQ, Volume 56, Number 2, June 2004)

Week 10: Music

Monday: October 31

- ☰ Cowie, Jefferson R.; Boehm, Lauren, "Dead Man's Town: 'Born in the U.S.A.,' Social History, and Working-Class Identity" (AQ, Volume 58, Number 2, June 2006)
- ☰ Kun, Josh, "What is an MC If He Can't Rap to Banda? Making Music in Nuevo L.A.," (AQ, Volume 56, Number 3, September 2004)

Week 11: Oral History and Ethnography (i.e., people as sources)

Monday: November 7

- ☞ Maira, Sunaina “Flexible Citizenship/Flexible Empire: South Asian Muslim Youth in Post-9/11 America” (AQ, Volume 60, Number 3, September 2008)
- ☞ Nguyen Tu, Thuy Linh. “All in the Family? Asian American Designers and the Boundaries of Creative Labor (AQ, Volume 62, Number 2, June 2010, June 2010)

Week 12: Museum Exhibitions, Public History & Memorials

Monday: November 14

- ☞ Faherty, Duncan. “‘It Happened Here’: Slavery on the Hudson (AQ, Volume 58, Number 2, June 2006)
- ☞ Boehm, Scott. “Privatizing Public Memory: The Price of Patriotic Philanthropy and the Post-9/11 Politics of Display” (AQ, Volume 58, Number 4, December 2006)

JUNIORS’ THESIS ASSIGNMENT:

- Write a draft thesis proposal addressing: 1) your thesis question or problem; 2) your research method; and 3) your working bibliography of sources you have consulted and plan to consult. I will provide written feedback on your draft proposal before next week’s class, and students are encouraged to visit office hours with any questions.

Week 13: American Studies Theses

Monday: November 21

- ☞ Students will read examples of senior theses by recent American Studies graduates. Details TBA.

Week 14: Thesis Proposal Workshop and Discussion

Monday: November 28

JUNIORS’ THESIS ASSIGNMENT:

- Juniors will give a 5-minute oral presentation on their proposed research.
- Upload draft thesis proposal to Sakai drop box before class

Week 15:

Monday: December 5

REVIEW ESSAY ASSIGNMENT:

- Upload review essay to Sakai drop box before class
- Come to class prepared to talk about the books you read for your review.