

**AMST 507: CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES IN AMERICAN CULTURAL STUDIES**  
**Spring 2014 – Tuesday 1:25-4:25 p.m. – CUE 316**

Professor Lisa Guerrero

Office: Wilson-Short 121

Office Hours: **Tuesday 10 am-12 pm, and by appointment**

Office Phone: 509-335-4182

Email: [laguerre@wsu.edu](mailto:laguerre@wsu.edu)

**(E-mail is the preferred method for reaching the professor. It is also the method that will yield the quickest response.)**

---

**COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES:** Becoming a professional academic in an interdisciplinary field is challenging and requires the ability to critically engage variety of theories and methodologies.. This graduate seminar provides a common experience for entering graduate students, facilitates exchange of ideas and approaches to interdisciplinary texts in the fields of American Studies and Cultural Studies, critical issues, and theoretical problems. Specifically, the seminar will introduce students to contemporary practices and developments in American Cultural Studies, building on discussions from American Studies 506 which introduced foundations of American Cultural Studies. An interdisciplinary field of study American Cultural Studies employs varied methods, approaches, and scholarly perspectives as a means of critically examining the meanings and practices of everyday life in a U.S. context. In particular, the field is concerned with considering cultural practices and their relationship to power. In this course students will be reading recent texts that expand the field into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It focuses on broad aspects of the development of theory and criticism in the fields, on the students' critical writing, and on aspects of professional development.

The curriculum is designed primarily to help students master scholarly communication, and provide students with several related skills needed by all professional academics. The general goal is to give you opportunities to learn, practice, and evaluate oral and written methods of presenting scholarly work and ideas.

For most of the assignments throughout the term, both written and oral, along with the more formal evaluations provided by the instructor, your fellow classmates will provide various types of evaluation for organization, clarity, logical flow, style, timing, effectiveness of supplementary materials, or other relevant qualities.

**REQUIRED READINGS (in alphabetical order):**

1. Jeffrey Alexander – *The Dark Side of Modernity*
2. Christopher Bell – *Blackness and Disability: Critical Examinations and Cultural Interventions*

3. Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou – *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*
4. Manuel Castells – *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*
5. Roderick Ferguson – *The Reorder of Things: The University and its Pedagogies of Minority Difference*
6. Sharon Holland – *The Erotic Life of Racism*
7. Chandan Reddy – *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the U.S. State*
8. Mark Rifkin – *When Did Indians Become Straight?: Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*
9. Francesca T. Royster – *Sounding Like a No-No: Queer Sounds and Eccentric Acts in the Post-Soul Era*
10. Gayle Salamon – *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality*
11. Robyn Wiegman – *Object Lessons*
12. Craig Steven Wilder – *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled Histories of America's Universities*

These texts are all available at The Bookie and Crimson & Gray. Most are also readily available for order on Amazon, and several are available as e-books.

[Note: If you choose to order your books on Amazon please be VERY aware of the date each book is scheduled for discussion in class. An untimely order IS NOT a legitimate excuse for not being prepared for class.]

#### **RECOMMENDED READINGS:**

1. Paul Silvia – *How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing*
2. Kate L. Turabian – *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*

#### **LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

- (1) Improve students' fluency in both critically engaging theoretical work.
- (2) Increase students' knowledge of theoretical and methodological problems and issues faced in American Studies, Cultural Studies, and other relevant interdisciplinary studies.
- (3) Develop students' writing in a critically theoretical manner and in a variety of academic and scholarly forms.
- (4) Assist students in expanding their knowledge of the various skills and documents required to get a job in the academy.

#### **Course Requirements:**

- **General Requirement**

Students are expected to do all course readings prior to class and come prepared to discuss the readings in depth. Class is run in a seminar-style with the expectation that students will actively engage in and drive the discussions. You can also expect to be called on by me at any time during class.

- **Attendance**

Though your attendance will not be formally used to calculate your final grade, your attendance at each meeting is required. You need to arrive on time and participate in an informed and consistent manner. Anything less will not be tolerated and will result in problems in this class. Despite not being a formal component of your course evaluation, attendance does have the potential to affect your grade.

- **Participation (20% of final grade)**

You are expected to be **present intellectually as well as physically** in the classroom. This means that not only must you attend, but that you must endeavor to contribute to the flow and body of the course. You will be expected to prepare carefully for each class by completing the required readings by the day on which they are listed in the course schedule. This course asks you to read texts closely and responsively, and to participate actively in class discussion and debate. Additionally, your participation will be crucial in the reviewing and revising of each other's work. If you do not: 1) participate in an informed manner, (in other words, in a way that is not merely personal opinion or conjecture, but rather demonstrates you have both done the reading and critically considered it); 2) consider and comment on the work of your peers in a serious and constructive manner; or 3) participate at all, your grade will be significantly affected.

- **250-500 Word Conference Abstract (10% of final grade)**

The theme of the 2014 American Studies Association conference is "The Fun and the Fury: New Dialectics of Pleasure and Pain in the Post-American Century." For this assignment you will write an abstract for an individual paper presentation that would be appropriate for submission. (NOTE: You won't be submitting your abstract.) Your abstract should focus on some aspect of your research/research interest and present it in such a way that it adapts to the conference theme. Consult this link to read more about the theme and the requirements for submission:

[http://www.theasa.net/submit\\_a\\_proposal](http://www.theasa.net/submit_a_proposal)

(NOTE: This assignment requires an abstract ONLY. However, I do want you to be aware of the other requirements for submitting a proposal.) The abstract will serve as the foundation for the final paper of the course.

- **Facilitation (20% of final grade)**

**Three times** during the semester you will present that week's readings. These presentations should be approximately 15-20 minutes. Your presentation should be directed towards the themes generated by the readings. (This is especially crucial if you are presenting the readings of an edited collection. DO NOT go through EVERY essay in the collection. Rather, present the themes generated by the project as a whole, using various examples and ideas from specific essays.) Please DO NOT summarize the readings, as we all will have read them. Instead, you should be prepared to discuss the theoretical and methodological insights you have gleaned from the readings. You should discuss the possibilities opened up by the readings as well as its problems. Your presentation should act as a catalyst for a larger group discussion. As such, your presentation should conclude with **TWO** questions you want to pose to the group to start discussion.

Additionally, you are responsible for writing a 2-3 page paper that accompanies each of

your presentations. These brief papers should be a critical analysis of the readings. They should be critical and reflective of the general ideas presented by the author(s). Discuss the authors' arguments, their limits, their openings, and how they relate to other broader topics in contemporary American Cultural Studies.

**On the days that you are not presenting on the day's reading you are responsible for bringing TWO discussion questions to contribute to the class discussion. Your questions should be typed and will be turned in at the end of class.**

- **Mock Conference Paper and Presentation (15% of final grade)**

In this presentation students will be responsible for writing an **8-10 page paper** that puts TWO of the course texts in conversation with one another. Your paper will be presented to the class during the penultimate weeks of class. This presentation will follow the style used at academic conferences and will therefore be limited to **15 minutes + 5 minutes for questions**. (8-10 written pages = approx. 12-15 presentation minutes. Students will be cut off at **15 minutes** during their presentations.)

- **Peer Review (10% of final grade)**

Each student will be responsible for submitting a “reader’s report” on one of their peer’s rough drafts of the final paper. A date will be set for the submission of rough drafts, and the reader’s reports will be due back to the author **ONE WEEK** from receiving the draft. Guidelines for completing the reader’s report will be discussed in detail during class. **The reader’s report MUST be turned in with your final paper at the end of the term.**

- **Final Paper (20% of final grade)**

Each student will be responsible for writing a **15-25 page** paper based on the ASA abstract they turned in during the early part of the term. The paper should be appropriately formatted, proofread, use proper citation form, and include BOTH a “Works Cited” page and a “Bibliography.” (NOTE: You may use any citation form you choose, but you must use it correctly. The most common citation forms used in academic publications are: MLA, Chicago style, and APA. The particular requirements of each style can be found online.)

The rough draft of the final paper will be due midway through the term. The rough draft **MUST** be a minimum of 10 pages.

- **Publication and Presentation Resource Project (5% of final grade)**

Each student will be responsible for compiling a list of publication outlets and appropriate conferences for your research and research interests. The list **MUST** include:

- **Five peer-reviewed journals and their submission guidelines**
- **Four graduate student, regional, and/or national conferences, their themes, and their deadlines.**

You may also include TWO online journals/outlets that would be an appropriate placement for your work. If you do choose to include online outlets make sure to consider the quality/reputation of the outlet. (i.e. Your friend's blog is not a productive online space for your work.) Online outlets are not required.

### **Policies:**

#### ***Written Work***

- Written work to be graded should be typed using a 12-point font, double-spaced (unless otherwise specified), spell checked, and proofread.
- **I DO NOT ACCEPT ANY ASSIGNMENTS VIA E-MAIL. NO EXCEPTIONS.**

#### ***Late Assignments***

No late assignments will be accepted except in the case of a **documented** emergency, a **documented** university sponsored event, or a **documented** observance of a religious holiday.

#### ***Incompletes***

I reserve "Incompletes" **ONLY** for students who are on their deathbeds or are experiencing a comparable catastrophic event. Everyone else will receive a grade in my class. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

#### ***Communicating in the classroom***

While it is obvious that we should avoid abusive and hateful speech, given that we must deal with plenty of that everywhere else, I also want to encourage you to exercise your academic freedoms in thoughtful, intellectually honest discourse. So, speak your mind. Just remember as you do so, people can disagree without being disrespectful.

#### ***Plagiarism***

Really? I would hope that in a graduate seminar I would not have to remind people that academic dishonesty of any sort, particularly plagiarism, will NOT be tolerated. The penalty for academic dishonesty is at the professor's discretion. In the case of my graduate seminars, if any academic dishonesty is discovered it will result in an automatic "F" in the course. No discussion. Period. Accordingly, make sure you are familiar with the university's policies on plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty so you are well informed as to what constitutes a violation. Finally, be aware that plagiarism includes not providing proper citation for ANY work including information found on any website, book, pamphlet, etc., as well as copying in full or part someone else's work, (including fellow students AND yourself from a previous essay or project without proper citation.).

### ***Grade Problems***

During the semester use my office hours to talk to me about any problems you are having with your progress and/or evaluations for the course so we can try to fix any bad situation **early**, before it's too late. You must communicate any problems you may be having that are affecting your coursework early on so that I am aware of the situation as I continue to evaluate your work. Any explanations for poor performance, relevant or not, will not be accepted at the end of the semester and will have no effect on your final grade. Please do not come to ask me to change your grade after you have failed the course. Also, do not come to ask me to give you an "I" because you are failing or have failed the course.

### ***Disability Accommodation***

Students with Disabilities: Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please either visit or call the Access Center (Washington Building 217; 509-335-3417) to schedule an appointment with an Access Advisor. All accommodations MUST be approved through the Access Center. Please notify me during the first week of class of any approved accommodations needed for the course.

### ***Campus Safety***

Washington State University is committed to maintaining a safe environment for its faculty, staff, and students. Safety is the responsibility of every member of the campus community and individuals should know the appropriate actions to take when an emergency arises. In support of our commitment to the safety of the campus community the University has developed a Campus Safety Plan, <http://safetyplan.wsu.edu>. It is highly recommended that you visit this web site as well as the University emergency management web site at <http://oem.wsu.edu/> to become familiar with the information provided.

[Your continued enrollment in this course after the first week means that you have read and understand the information contained within this syllabus, and that you agree to follow the procedures and rules explained within it.]

- **Grade Breakdown:**

By Grade Point:

**A = 4.0**

**A-= 3.8**

**B+=3.5**

**B = 3.0**

**B-= 2.8**

**C+=2.5**

**C = 2.0**

**C-= 1.8**

**D = 1.0**

By 100 Point Grading Scale:

**94-100 = A**

**90-93 = A-**

**87-89 = B+**

**83-86 = B**

**80-82 = B-**

**77-79 = C+**

**73-76 = C**

**70-72 = C-**

**60-69 = D**

**0-59 = F**

**Course Schedule:**

**JAN 14:** Introduction to class

**JAN 21:** *The Dark Side of Modernity* – Alexander

**JAN 28:** *The Erotic Life of Racism* – Holland

**FEB 4:** *The Reorder of Things* – Ferguson

DUE In-class: ASA Abstract

**FEB 11:** *Ebony and Ivy* – Wilder

**FEB 18:** *Object Lessons* – Wiegman

**FEB 25:** *Freedom with Violence* – Reddy

**MAR 4:** *Dispossession* – Butler and Athanasiou

DUE In-class: Rough draft of final paper

**MAR 11:** *Blackness and Disability* – Bell, ed.

DUE In-class: Reader's report

**MAR 18:** NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

**MAR 25:** *Assuming a Body* – Salomon

**APR 1:** *When Did Indians Become Straight* – Rifkin

**APR 8:** *Sounding Like a No-No* – Royster

**APR 15:** *Networks of Outrage and Hope* – Castells

DUE In-Class: Journal and Conference resource project

**APR 22:** IN CLASS – Mock Conference Presentations

**APR 29: NO CLASS – Writing Day**

**FINAL PAPER due in professor's mailbox on THURSDAY, MAY 8, 2013 BY  
4PM**