

American Studies, English, History, Women's Studies 216: American Cultures

Summer—2014—UCORE—[DIVR]—GER[S]—CUE 318—M, TU, W, TH, F—15-17

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E-mail is the preferred method for reaching the instructor.

Office Hours: Tuesdays 13:00-14:00, Thursdays 14:00-15:00 and/by appointment.

Required Texts

- *Imaging Japanese America: The Visual Construction of Citizenship, Nation, and the Body*, by Elena Tajima Creef. New York University Press, 2004.
- *A.D.: New Orleans after the Deluge*, by Josh Neufeld. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010.
- *A People's History of the United States*, by Howard Zinn. HarperCollins Publishers. 2010.

We will also be reading and viewing various handouts, Web sites, and films. And I hope to bring a guest speaker or two to class.

Overview

The WSU catalogue describes this course as an “introduction to the interdisciplinary studies of American cultures and the field of American studies.” This section of the Introduction to American Cultures will develop a historicized perception of the neoliberal mismanagement of differences of race, class, sex, gender, and nationality within contemporary American political and racial culture. Also, it examines the racial politics of immigration and disaster response.

Objectives/Learning “outcomes”

At the end of the term, students should achieve the following:

- Articulation of a few key concepts in the interdisciplinary field of American Studies.
- Application of those concepts to particular events and issues as well as to cultural productions.
- Basic understanding of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation.
- Skills in the close reading of culture.
- Skills in basic research.
- Skills in publicly presenting ideas and information.

Methods

The following skills should produce the desired outcomes:

- Close reading of texts: By “texts” is meant any cultural production, including written texts, visual or aural images, historical and/or “natural” phenomena, personal experience and observation, etc.
- Discussion and analysis of texts and contexts.
- Contextualization: situating a text in its historical moment, relating it to the present.

Requirements

Reading journals: You will write four short journals on our readings, films, and class discussions. Each journal should be roughly two pages (500 to 600 words). In your journals, simply write your impressions of the materials and issues we discuss and read about. But mostly, explain why, for example, you disagree with one of our authors on Hurricane Katrina. It is important to know the difference between opinions and ideas. This assignment requires your ideas—not your opinions—based on the readings, films, and discussions.

Midterm examination: This will be a take-home essay requiring a response of two or three pages to a question on the material. Because it is a formal assignment, your writing (style, mechanics, form, etc.) will factor into the grade.

Final examination: There will be no final examination in this class.

Final paper: At the end of the semester you will submit a formal paper of four to five pages on a topic in U.S. popular culture. A detailed assignment sheet will be distributed early in the semester.

Text presentation: You will lead a ten-minute discussion of one of our readings. This will involve your discussing the author's ideas and argument, offering your own ideas, and asking classmates for their ideas.

Paper presentation: Late in the semester you will present to the class, in groups of two or three, your final paper. This presentation may be informal, and it may include audiovisual aids, but you will be given a time limit, which will be announced in the assignment sheet.

Attendance and participation: You must attend every day, arrive on time, and participate. Anything less will result in a reduced grade. After two unexcused absences, each missed class will reduce your course grade by one-fourth of a letter. More than five absences will result in failure in the course. If you arrive late or leave early, you will count as absent for the day. After an absence, you are responsible for checking on announcements and assignments made while you were out.

Come to class prepared to discuss the material. This requires more than simply reading. Think about what you read: Question and challenge it. Don't assume that I assign the books because I agree with everything their authors say—I certainly do not. You can participate in different ways. But you need to make your participation evident to me, so that you may receive credit for it. Participation options include e-mailing me comments or questions prior to class and keeping up with current events. Outside of class, read newspapers, listen to broadcast news, read alternative news sources. Your responses will count toward your participation grade.

Grades (based on a 400-point scale)

Reading journals	20 percent (5 percent each)	80 points
Midterm examination	20 percent	80 points
Final paper	40 percent	160 points
Presentations	10 percent (5 percent each)	40 points
Attendance and participation	10 percent	40 points

Grading Scale

100-94	A	Suggests that a student's work is outstanding to excellent; the student's work reflects an engaged comprehension of the course content and shows thoughtful insight into the complexities of the course. Student shows an attentive engagement with the course. Student's work is consistently well-considered and well-written.
93-90	A-	
89-87	B+	Suggests that a student's work is very good to good; the student's work reflects a very strong, engaged, and solid understanding of course material. Occasionally, the student's work doesn't go the extra step in critical analysis. Student's work is mostly well-considered and well-written.
86-83	B	
82-80	B-	
79-77	C+	Suggests that a student's work is adequate; the student's work reflects a fair, but essentially disengaged, grasp of the course material and doesn't go very far in comprehension, or reflects a lack of understanding of the issues represented in the material. Student's work is un- or under-considered and unclearly written. Class attendance may be a problem.
76-73	C	
72-70	C-	
69-67	D+	Suggests that a student's work shows some, but very little effort; the student's work does not reflect a comprehension of the course material, is disengaged, or reveals a lack of reading, attention, and/or attendance.
66-60	D	
59-0	F	

Grades on the midterm exam, the journals, and the final paper will be based on both your writing and your reasoning. Your papers should be free of errors in mechanics (grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.) and clear. Learn the difference between simplicity and clarity. Good writing is always clear but is not always simple. Simple writing is almost always bad. As for reasoning, you will be graded not on *what* you argue but on *how* you argue—that is, logical flow of ideas, engagement with audience, etc. Your presentations will be based strictly on the information you provide. This is not a course in public speaking, and so do not worry if you feel uncomfortable about speaking to the class.

Course policies

- For reading assignments, read authors' explanatory footnotes and scan their sources.
- No written assignments will be accepted late unless cleared, for good and documented reason, in advance.
- No assignments will be accepted by e-mail unless cleared, for good reason, in advance.
- All written assignments must be typed, in standard font and margins, and stapled. Number your pages.
- Extra credit opportunities exist. You are responsible for keeping up with events on campus or in the area and letting the class know about them in advance, so that you may write a one-page analysis of them.
- If, in any of your written assignments, you use information or ideas from other sources, whether you are quoting or merely paraphrasing, you must cite those sources. This is true even when your sources are interviewees for oral histories. Failure to cite will be counted as plagiarism and will result in a failing grade.
- You may choose your citation style—whether MLA, Chicago, Turabian, APA, AMA, CBE, Harvard, or any other—but you must remain consistent. Do not mix styles.

Community standards

- Argue—defend your position, demonstrating your knowledge of history and showing respect.
- Name-calling is not educational. Neither is hate speech—which will not be tolerated.
- The best way to show your respect is by listening. Cultivate good listening skills, if you have not done so already.
- Bring your book to class. If you don't bring the current text, you should stay home. This is part of your participation grade.
- Please ask questions.
- Arriving late and leaving early are unacceptable and will be counted as absences. If you have job, class, registration, or childcare conflicts, you will probably need to drop the class. Non-emergency healthcare visits are not valid reasons for absences or for missing parts of class.
- Turn off your computers, cell phones, and other media devices during class. If seen using your cell phone during class time—or reading a newspaper, magazine, or other material unrelated to our work—you will lose a full letter off your participation grade.

Academic integrity

Academic integrity will be strongly enforced in this course. Any student caught cheating on any assignment will be given an F grade for the course and will be reported to the Office Student Standards and Accountability. Cheating is defined in the Standards for Student Conduct WAC 504-26-010 (3). It is strongly suggested that you read and understand these definitions. Plagiarism or cheating of any kind will result in your failing the course.(See the WSU Student Handbook on Academic Dishonesty).Academic honesty is much easier to achieve than academic dishonesty, if only you observe Course Policy 6 above: whenever you use someone else's information or ideas, cite the source. If you write a five-sentence paragraph and use a source for all five sentences, then you must cite that source in every sentence. If you cite your source only at the end of the paragraph, then you have plagiarized the first four sentences (unless you use a style that permits this), and your grade will be affected. This is not negotiable, and you are expected to know the rules.

Students with Disabilities

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. For more information contact a Disability Specialist on your home campus:

PullmanorWSUOnline:509-335-3417<http://accesscenter.wsu.edu>, Access.Center@wsu.edu

Safety and Emergency Notification

Washington State University is committed to enhancing the safety of the students, faculty, staff, and visitors. It is highly recommended that you review the Campus Safety Plan (<http://safetyplan.wsu.edu/>) and visit the Office of Emergency Management web site (<http://oem.wsu.edu/>) for a comprehensive listing of university policies, procedures, statistics, and information related to campus safety, emergency management, and the health and welfare of the campus community.

Course Outline

Please note that all assignments are negotiable and subject to change. You are responsible for having the texts and for keeping up with all changes. The first two books are identified below by the last names of their authors: i.e., **ZINN** or **CREEF** while the last one is identified by its title: **AD**.

July 7: Monday.

- Introduction.
- Understanding syllabus.
- Discussion of some basic concepts and terms (see page 10).

July 8: Tuesday.

- Discussion of Basic Concepts continues.

July 9: Wednesday.

- **ZINN**. Chapter ONE: Columbus, the Indians, and Human Progress. Page 1- 22.
- Presentation Begins.

July 10: Thursday.

- **ZINN**. Chapter TWO: Drawing the Color Line. Page 23-38.

July 11: Friday.

- **ZINN**. Chapter FIVE: A Kind of Revolution. Page 77-102.
- Journal Zinn (A) DUE.

July 14: Monday.

- **FILM**. *Race: Power of an Illusion: The Story We Tell*.

July 15: Tuesday.

- **ZINN**. Chapter SIXTEEN: A People's War? Page 407-442.

July 16: Wednesday.

- Review of **ZINN**.
- Journal Zinn (B) DUE.
- **FILM**. *Historical Animated Short: Yamashita (WWII Japanese-American Internment Camps)*.
- **CREEF**. Chapter ONE: The Representation of the Japanese American Body in the Documentary Photography of Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange, and Toyo Miyatake. Page 13-56.

July 17: Thursday.

- **CREEF**. Chapter ONE: The Representation of the Japanese American Body in the Documentary Photography of Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange, and Toyo Miyatake. Page 57-71.
- **MIDTERM** Assigned.

July 18: Friday.

- **CREEF**. Chapter TWO: Beyond the Camera and between the Words—Inserting Oneself into the Picture and into Japanese American (Art) History—Mine Okubo’s Citizen 13660 and the Power of Visual Autobiography. Page 71-92.

July 21: Monday.

- **CREEF**. Chapter FIVE: Another Lesson in “How to tell your Friends Apart from the Japs”—The 1992 Winter Olympics Showdown between Kristi Yamaguchi of the United States and Midori Ito of Japan. Page 145-171.
- **MIDTERM DUE!**

July 22: Tuesday.

- **ZINN** and **CREEF** reviewed.
- **JOURNAL** Japs (C) DUE!

July 23: Wednesday.

- **AD**: New Orleans after the Deluge. Read Afterword (Page 191-193). Also, read page 1-80.

July 24: Thursday.

- AD. Page 82-153.

July 25: Friday.

- AD. Page 157-187.

July 28: Monday.

- Gender stereotypes.
- Sexuality and Sexual Orientation. LGBTQ.
- Wage Gap by Gender and Race.
- Gender-flips.

July 29: Tuesday.

- Racial Stereotypes.
- Colorblind Racism.
- Every day and Institutional Racism.
- Front Stage and Back Stage Racism.
- Colorblind VS Color brave.
- Reverse Racism.
- **FILM:** *How racist are you?*

July 30: Wednesday.

- Paper Presentation.

July 31: Thursday.

- Paper Presentation.

August 1: Friday.

- Paper Presentation.
- **FINAL PAPER DUE!**
- Course Conclusions.

Terms we will probably encounter

- Agency
- American Exceptionalism
- Capital
- Citizenship
- Class
- Colonialism/Imperialism
- Colorblindness
- Divide and conquer
- Double consciousness
- Dragon Ladies
- Ethnicity
- Everyday Racism
- Gender
- Hegemony
- Identity
- Ideology
- Inequality
- Institutional Racism
- Migration
- Model Minority
- Nationalism
- Naturalization
- Neoliberal Capitalism
- Noble Savages
- Orientalism
- Patriarchy
- Power
- Power differentials
- Prison-Industrial Complex
- Racialization
- Relativism
- Representation
- Sexism
- Social construction
- White privilege
- White supremacy