



The University of Western Ontario

AMERICAN STUDIES 2XXX

American Nightmare

Fall 2018

Thursdays, 2:30-4:30

Instructor: Laurel Shire, Associate Professor

Office Hours: Tues 1-2pm, Thurs 10:30am-12pm, or by appointment

Department of History, Office: Lawson Hall 2226

Email: lshire@uwo.ca

Course Description:

In the increasingly polarized culture of the U.S., one American's dream often seems to be another American's nightmare. In this second-year introductory course in American Studies, students will learn about some key ideas in American culture: the American Dream, American Exceptionalism, and American Identity. Each week, we'll examine a recent socio-political movement in the US, such as #Black Lives Matter, #Me Too, the Tea Party, White Nationalism or #NoDAPL (the indigenous protest at Standing Rock against the Dakota Access Pipeline). We will examine each historically and in social media, comparing scholarly, historical accounts against partisan, popular representations. Students will develop some important research and critical analysis skills through research and essay assignments.

Prerequisite(s): none

Antirequisite(s): none

Course Syllabus:

Learning Outcomes

Content - By the end of this course successful students will be able to:

- describe the major themes in American Studies
- describe major events and changes in the U.S. in the 19th and 20th centuries, especially those related to the movements and organizations we study

Skills - By the end of this course you will be able to

- identify, analyze, and interpret primary sources
- identify the argument as well as the relevant information in secondary scholarly articles and books
- write a properly cited essay with a strong argument and persuasive evidence

Participation (15%)

Your participation grade is worth 15% of your grade in this course because this is a relatively small course, and the conversations we have in class will provide information and learning opportunities that cannot be provided elsewhere. Your participation grade will be based on your contributions and preparedness in class – not whether you speak, but whether what you say reflects that you have done the reading and can offer reflections and analyses of it. You **MUST** bring all readings and assigned writing with you to class on the due dates – failing to bring them to class will lower your grade. Every class meeting is an opportunity for you to earn 8.3 points toward

your participation grade. To do so, you should be prepared, on task, courteous, and you should take the initiative to participate. During class, I keep track of who makes valuable contributions and engages with the material and with your classmates. Excused absences are omitted from this grade.

Other things that will affect your participation grade:

- Attendance: Religious holidays, games (for athletes) and documented illness are excusable absences. If you must miss class, please e-mail me to let me know. When you are absent, you are still expected to read, write and keep up with the course. It is up to you to provide explanations and supporting documentation in order to be excused. See the Policy on Accommodation for Illness here:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf. Accommodation for work worth more than 10% of the total course grade is granted by your faculty's Dean's office - documentation must be submitted by the student directly to the appropriate Faculty Dean's office and not to the instructor. You may consult your instructor for accommodation for work worth less than 10% of the total course grade. Unexplained absences (or excessive tardiness) will negatively affect your participation grade.

- Comportment and Courtesy: Come to class on time. Turn off your phones. Feel free to snack as long as it is not disruptive to discussion. If you MUST take notes on a smartphone, tablet, or laptop, please stay on task, do not multi-task during class, and please close your device during discussion as a courtesy to your classmates. I am not the technology police, and I will not interrupt class to correct this behavior. But I will mark your participation as zero (0) if you are off task during class.

Written Assignments

Most assignments are due in class (preferably by email just before class to lshire@uwo.ca). In some cases (see below) assignments are due at other times. Late assignments should be emailed to lshire@uwo.ca, and will be downgraded 5 points per day late (i.e., on day 2 you will get the best grade out of 95 points rather than 100). After one week I will no longer accept any assignment. If you anticipate having a hard time meeting a particular deadline, please come talk to me about an extension. Make-up exams can only be arranged with the approval of the Dean.

Primary Source Analysis (5%)

In week 2, you will identify a primary cultural source and analyze it to the best of your ability. Your analysis must be typed, double spaced, with 2.5cm margins in a 12 pt font. It must include a thesis, evidence, and references to your sources. I prefer electronic copies sent to lshire@uwo.ca by the date and time due, but if you would like to turn in a paper copy, you may also do that. I will send your graded essay with my comments back to you by email unless you request a paper copy. All written material in this course will be uploaded to turnitin.com.

Research Assignments (35%)

Think of these as "labs" for American Studies students. On the dates indicated below, you will complete a short series of research tasks using the internet and Weldon Library. Each one is designed to teach you how to engage reflectively with the research process, as you explore a topic that you find interesting. Each assignment will be posted on OWL with step-by-step instructions.

Research Presentation (15%) and Research Essay (30%)

Rather than a final exam, you will write conduct your own research into some aspect of US culture as a final assessment in this course. Using the research skills and American Studies knowledge you have learned this semester, you will choose a topic (with supervision from the instructor), conduct research, present your findings, and write an essay. Presentations will be given to the whole class during the time allotted for the final exam. Research essays will be due 3 days later. Guidelines for each will be discussed in class and posted on OWL.

Extra Credit: World-renowned American Studies scholar Elaine Tyler May is coming to Western this fall! If you attend at least one of the Goodman Lectures she is giving (Oct. 2-4, 2:30-4pm Great Hall) I will apply 2 extra points to your overall participation mark. Please see me at the lecture and be sure I note your attendance.

Course Materials:

See schedule of readings below. No books required for purchase.

Methods of Evaluation:

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Primary source analysis: | 5% |
| Research Assignments 1-4: | 35% |
| Participation: | 15% |
| Research Presentation: | 15% |
| Research Essay: | 30% |

Course Schedule and Readings:

Week 1. Key Concepts in American Studies

- Selections: Encyclopedia of American Studies - <http://eas-ref.press.jhu.edu/index.html>
 - The Constitution & Bill of Rights - <http://constitutionus.com>
- Skills and concepts: how “multi-tasking” makes you less smart
- Multi-tasking can diminish concentration. *Mind, Mood & Memory*. 2009; 5(11): 2.

Week 2. Is Everyone Lying? Fake News, “Personal Brands,” and Partisan Hacks: How to be a Smarter Consumer of News and “Infotainment”

- Tandoc EC, Lim ZW, Ling R. Defining “Fake News’: A typology of scholarly definitions.” *Digital Journalism*. 2018; 6(2): 137.
 - Hearn A. “Meat, Mask, Burden: Probing the contours of the branded self.” *Journal of Consumer Culture*. 2008;8(2):197-217.
 - Groeling T. “Who’s the Fairest of them All? An Empirical Test for Partisan Bias on ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox News.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. 2008;38(4):631-57.
- Primary source critical analysis assignment: social media as cultural evidence
- Choose a viral tweet or meme and answer the 7 critical thinking questions about it. How will cultural historians in the future interpret it?

Week 3. #NoDAPL: Native Americans, Land Policy and Settler Colonialism

- Pineda B. “Indigenous Pan-Americanism: Contesting Settler Colonialism and the Doctrine of Discovery at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.” *American Quarterly*. 2017; 69(4): 823-32.
- Peltier L. “On Solidarity with Standing Rock, Executive Clemency and the International Indigenous Struggle.” *Turning the Tide*. 2016; 28(9): 2.

- Hoxie F.E. "Retrieving the Red Continent: settler colonialism and the history of American Indians in the US." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 2008;31(6):1153-67.

Week 4. #MeToo and #TimesUp: Rape Culture, Sexism and Harassment in America, from Anita Hill to Ashley Judd

- Reling TT, Barton MS, Becker S, Valasik MA. "Rape Myths and Hookup Culture: An Exploratory Study of U.S. College Students' Perceptions." *Sex Roles*. 2018; 78(7): 501-14.
- Freedman EB. "The manipulation of history at the Clarence Thomas hearings" (Gender, Race, and the Politics of Supreme Court Appointments: The Import of the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas Hearings). *Southern California Law Review*. 1992;65(3):1361.
- Black AE, Allen JL. "Tracing the legacy of Anita Hill: The Thomas/Hill hearings and media coverage of sexual harassment." *Gender Issues*. 2001;19(1):33-52.
- Birnbaum D. JUSTICE LEAGUE. *Variety*. 2017;338(11):68-9.
- Research assignment #1: online databases

Week 5. #BLM: the War on Drugs, the Militarization of US Police Forces, and the Growth of Prisons for Profit

- Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (2010)
- "13th", Netflix

Week 6. "Don't Tread on Me": Tea Party Republicans and the American Revolution

- Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*
- Nash GB. *Defiance of the Patriots: The Boston Tea Party and the Making of America*.
- Research assignment #2: books and articles

Week 7. "Occupy Wall Street" and the History of Class in America

- Loewen, J. *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, Chapter 7.
- Calhoun C. "Occupy Wall Street in perspective." *The British Journal of Sociology*. 2013;64(1):26-38.
- Dahl, R. *On Democracy*.

Week 8. #ParklandStrong: Gun Control, the NRA, and the 2nd Amendment

- Blad E. "After Shooting, Tension Mounts Between Security Quick-Fixes and Long-Term Solutions," *Education Week*. 2018;37(23):1.
- Adam D M Briggs, Fisher ES. "It's time for a change of message, it's time for #GunSafetyNow." *The Lancet*. 2018;391(10128):1353.
- Fleming AK. "Gun policy in the United States and Canada: the impact of mass murders and assassinations on gun control." New York: Continuum; 2012.

Week 9. Reproductive Rights, Personal Freedom, and Feminism: Pro-Choice and Pro-Life Politics

- Felkey AJ, Lybecker KM. "Do Restrictions Beget Responsibility? The Case of U.S. Abortion Legislation." *American Economist*. 2017;2018;63(1):59-70.
- Price K. "What is Reproductive Justice?: How Women of Color Activists Are Redefining the Pro-Choice Paradigm." *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*. 2010;10(2):42-65.
- Research assignment #3: online sources

Week 10. DACA Dreamers and the Border Wall: Anti-Immigrant Movements from the Know-Nothing Party to Donald Trump

- Heiskanen B. "A Day Without Immigrants." *European journal of American studies*. 2009 (Vol 4, No 3).
- Neem, Johann. "The new know-nothings," *The Hedgehog Review*, Vol, 18, No. 1 (2016): 13.
- Fathali H. "The American DREAM: DACA, DREAMers, and comprehensive immigration reform." *Seattle University Law Review*. 2013;37(1):221.
- Research Assignment #4: Research Topic Proposal (3 pages, including bibliography)

Week 11. Whiteness and Nationalism: from the KKK to Neo-Nazis at Charlottesville

- Schmitz RM. "Intersections of hate: Exploring the transecting dimensions of race, religion, gender, and family in Ku Klux Klan Web sites." *Sociological Focus*. 2016;49(3):200-14.
- Bouie J. "Charlottesville: A Visual Narrative." *The Virginia Quarterly Review*. 2017;93(4): 28.
- Lipsitz G. *The possessive investment in whiteness: how white people profit from identity politics*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press; 1998, introduction.
- "Birth of a Nation" (1915), excerpts

Week 12. Toxic Masculinity, Homophobia, and Gender Equality in America: from Teddy Roosevelt to Elliott Rodger

- Bederman G. *Manliness & civilization: a cultural history of gender and race in the United States, 1880-1917*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 1995, chapter 1.
- Posadas J. "Teaching the Cause of Rape Culture: Toxic Masculinity." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*. 2017;33(1):177.
- Kimmel MS, Mahler M. "Adolescent Masculinity, Homophobia, and Violence: Random School Shootings, 1982-2001." *American Behavioral Scientist*. 2003;46(10):1439-58.

Week 13. State's Rights and Libertarian Freedoms: how Americans frame Same-Sex Marriage and "Legal Weed"

- Nicol N, Smith M. "Legal Struggles and Political Resistance: Same-Sex Marriage in Canada and the USA." *Sexualities*. 2008;11(6):667-87.
- Adam Liptak, "Supreme Court Ruling Makes Same-Sex Marriage a Right Nationwide," *New York Time*, June 26, 2015
- Preiss J. "Libertarian personal responsibility: On the ethics, practice, and American politics of personal responsibility." *Philosophy & Social Criticism*. 2017;2016;43(6):621-45.
- Vigorito J. "Creating constitutional cannabis: an individual state's Tenth Amendment right to legalize marijuana." *The University of Toledo Law Review*. 2014;46(1):221.

DATE TBA: Final Essays due, and Research Presentations – in place of a final exam

Additional Statements

Academic Offences:

Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitute a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Accessibility Options:

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:

www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html

Medical Issues

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Please go to:

https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical_accommodations_link_for_OOR.pdf

to read about the University's policy on medical accommodation. This site provides links the necessary forms. In the event of illness, you should contact Academic Counselling as soon as possible. The Academic Counsellors will determine, in consultation with the student, whether or not accommodation should be requested. They will subsequently contact the instructors in the relevant courses about the accommodation. Once the instructor has made a decision about whether to grant an accommodation, the student should contact his/her instructors to determine a new due date for tests, assignments, and exams.

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation: http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be

included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of Publication and page number. Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writer's ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source; these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction, your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases, in their suspension from the University.

Scholastic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:

www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western, http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Use of Electronic Devices

Only students with accommodations through a University support service will be able to use electronic devices during exams.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact, Heidi Van Galen, Administrative Officer, Department of History, 519-661-2111 x84963 or e-mail vangalen@uwo.ca.