



The University of Western Ontario
AMERICAN STUDIES 3310G
Being American:
Advanced American Studies

Fall/Winter 2018-19
Tuesdays 2:30 - 4:30 p.m. (location: TBA)

Instructor: Professor Aldona Sendzikas

Office Hours: TBA
Department of History, Office: Lawson Hall 1222
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Course Description:

What defines being “American”? What unites Americans, and what divides them? How is the American identity constructed, how has it evolved, and how and why is it frequently contested? In this course, we will employ an interdisciplinary approach to explore the meaning(s) and definition(s) of American identity from multiple points of view, and within the context of the history, politics, regions, values, and culture of the United States.

Prerequisite(s):

1.0 History course at the 2200 level or above or enrolment in an American Studies module.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Antirequisite(s):

American Studies 3320F/G.

Course Syllabus:

Learning Outcomes:

In this course, students will:

- Practice applying an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the United States.
- Use both primary and secondary sources to interpret and analyze issues in American history and society.
- Learn to situate contemporary issues in the context of historical events, as well as in the broader context of American Studies.

- Develop a research question and answer it in a written assignment, integrating both primary and secondary sources, and employing an interdisciplinary approach, in formulating the argument.
- Develop improved essay writing skills.
- Develop improved presentation and communication skills through class discussion and presentations.

Course Materials:

- *A New Literary History of America*, edited by Greil Marcus and Werner Sollors (Cambridge, MA and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009). **This book will be available for purchase at the Western Bookstore.**
- Additional weekly online readings, which will be available either on the internet or on the OWL course website.

Methods of Evaluation:

Grading:

- Class participation: 20%
- Three short written assignments (3-5 pages each) (see course schedule below for due dates): 30%
- In-class presentation (on a date of the student’s choosing): 15%
- Research essay (12-15 pages) (due on the last day of the course): 35%

Written assignments

Written assignments must be submitted in paper form to the instructor at the start of class on the due date, and in electronic form via the submission link on the OWL course website by the same time. (By using the submission link on the course website, your paper will automatically be submitted to Turnitin.com.)

Further instructions regarding the above assignments will be provided in class.

Late assignments: A late penalty of 5% for the first day, and 2% for each day after the first day (including Saturdays and Sundays) will be incurred for all written work submitted after the due date and time. Papers submitted on the due date but after the due time (*i.e.*, 2:30 p.m.) will be considered late and will be penalized 2%. Late papers should be submitted at the History Department (Lawson Hall 2201) drop box, as well as electronically via the course website. Keep a copy of each of your written assignments until you receive the grade for it.

Please note that AS3310G is an essay course. According to Western’s Academic Handbook, an essay course “...must be so structured that the student is required to demonstrate competence in essay writing to pass the course.” In this class, that means that a student must submit a minimum of 12 pages of written work in order to pass the course.

Expectations:

- Regular attendance.

- Completion of all assigned readings and active, informed participation in class discussion, based on those readings.
- Courtesy and respect towards other members of the class.
- Be present: turn off cell phones and other electronic devices, and engage with the class. Laptops are allowed if they are used to take notes or to refer to online course readings. Use of laptops for other purposes in class may negatively affect your participation mark, and you may be asked to turn them off if they are distracting you or other members of the class.

Participation:

Each week, beginning on January 22nd, 2-3 students will be tasked with evaluating the participation of their fellow students. Instructions and evaluation forms will be provided in class. Your participation grade for the course will be a combination of the results of these peer evaluations and the instructor’s evaluation of your contributions to class discussion.

Policy on Absences and Extensions:

If you require an extension or other type of academic accommodation, for either medical or non-medical reasons, contact Academic Counselling. Students are reminded that academic accommodation on medical grounds can in most instances only be granted if supported by a University of Western Ontario Student Medical Certificate. This form can be accessed at the Social Science Academic Counselling website: <http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/>, or can be picked up at the Academic Counselling Office in the student’s home faculty. (For Social Science students: SSC 2105.) Further detail on this policy can be found at this same website.

Pressures of work or computer/printer difficulties do not constitute acceptable reasons for an extension.

Students should familiarize themselves with the university’s Policy on Accommodation for Illness (http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf).

Course Schedule

Week 1 (January 8th): Introduction.

Review of syllabus. Introduction to course topic and themes. Discussion: what defines being an American? Where should we look to find this definition?

Week 2 (January 15th): “What, then, is the American, this new man...?”

How has American identity been defined historically? Is this a static definition, or does it change? What unites Americans? What divides them?

Week 3 (January 22nd): “A Model of Christianity.”

Religion, religious differences, and religious tolerance in America. Is religion part of “being American,” or is “separation of church and state” an essential element of the American identity?

Week 4 (January 29th): “To be free as a man is free...”

What does it mean to be a woman in America? In what ways have women been excluded from the full scope of “being American”?

Week 5 (February 5th): “The complexities of race in this country that we’ve never really worked through...”

What is it like to be black in America? The idea of “double consciousness”: reconciling black identity and American identity in a race conscious society.

*Short paper due.

Week 6 (February 12th): “You are on Indian land.”

The original Americans: how do they fit into, and how have they shaped, the definition of “being American”?

READING WEEK (February 19th): No class today!

Week 7 (February 26th): “Give me your tired, your poor....”

New Americans: the place of immigrants in America and in American identity.

*Short paper due.

Week 8 (March 5th): “The Other America.”

Being poor (and ignored) in “the land of opportunity.”

Week 9 (March 12th): “Un-American.”

When and why have certain Americans been deemed “un-American”? How does this help define—and complicate--the meaning of “being American”?

Week 10 (March 19th): “New York values.”

Regional and class differences amongst Americans: how much do they matter?

*Short paper due.

Week 11 (March 26th): “Why is it that, as a culture, we are more comfortable seeing two men holding guns than holding hands?”

Being gay in America: creating a gay identity in America in the face of exclusion and discrimination. Why have differences in sexual orientation and gender identity been so difficult for many Americans to accept?

Week 12 (April 2nd): “I will build a great wall...”

How Mexican-Americans are reframing and reshaping the meaning of “being American.” Why has this been such a cause for concern among some other Americans?

Week 13 (April 9th): “The only good thing this hurricane brought us is that now everybody knows that we are American citizens...”

Americans on the periphery. In this final week, we will discuss groups of Americans who feel neglected by, or apart from, the rest of American society. We will consider native Hawaiians and the Hawaiian independence movement; Puerto Ricans in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria; and Korean Americans during the L.A. Riots.

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. 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.

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.