**AMST 5000**

**PROSEMINAR IN AMERICAN STUDIES**

**Stockton University**

**Fall 2015**

**Wed. 6-9pm, F-226**

Dr. Deborah Gussman

Office: F-131

Office hours by arrangement

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**Course Description:**

This course provides an introduction to American Studies, including a history of the field from its origins to the present. Students will be introduced to a selection of exemplary American Studies texts, and will be asked to critique and engage with them. Although the course is heavily text based, and it focuses on what scholars have written about the field of American Studies and its various aspects, it also invites contemplation of the notion of “America” itself, its meaning and its boundaries. Several questions come to mind – for example:

* How has “America” been defined – for what purpose and for whose benefit?
* How has the idea of “America” changed among scholars and writers since the early 1900s?
* How have popular images and ideas about America been used, by whom, and for what, and in what ways have they changed?
* How have popular movements (e.g., civil rights, women’s movement, LGBT, etc.) deployed or displaced the notion of “America”?
* What impact has globalization had on American Studies – do concepts of “America” extend beyond the boundaries of the United States? Were they ever contained within them?
* How has immigration affected the way think about “America” and the peoples who inhabit the western hemisphere?

**American Studies Learning Outcomes** *[from the Program]*

Graduates of Stockton’s American Studies Masters/Certificate will be able to demonstrate achievement in the following:

1. Recognizing and understanding the range of approaches related to the field of American Studies and its development over time. This includes comprehension of the forces that have historically held together Americans, the ongoing debates over what it means to be “American,” and the counter discourses created by those who have historically been excluded from that identity. Such an approach places diverse American cultures within a global context, tracing the intersecting flows of people, ideas, and power across national borders. It also considers how multiple American cultures have shaped and continue to influence individual, local, regional, national, and transnational identities and power.
2. Understanding the research methods and/or theoretical perspectives that inform contemporary American Studies scholarship, including theories of race and ethnicity, gender studies, queer theory, feminism, cultural materialism, Marxism, post-structuralism, historicism, psychoanalysis, postcolonialism, cultural studies, archival research, textual analysis, oral history, ethnography, cultural analysis, and performance studies.
3. Applying the multi-disciplinary methods and theories scholars use in American Studies to sources as well as diverse objects of study, including primary source texts, visual imagery, material culture, and aspects of daily life.
4. Developing skills in expressing oneself orally and in writing.
5. Designing and executing an interdisciplinary research project that contributes to the field of American Studies and/or applying American Studies perspectives to the real world through internships and/or projects related to public history, museum studies, archival studies, digital media, and/or social justice and civic awareness.

This Proseminar will be focused primarily on 1, 2, and 4 above. It will touch upon 3, and will provide preparation for 5.

**Course texts (available at the bookstore and various on-line retailers)**

**Required:**

1) Lucy Maddox, *Locating American Studies: The Evolution of a Discipline* (Hopkins, 1998)

ISBN: 978-0801860560

2) Janice Radway, Kevin Gaines, Barry Shank, Penny von Eschen, *American Studies: An Anthology* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

ISBN: 978-1405113526

3) Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, 2nd edition. (NYU Press, 2014)  ISBN: 978-0814708019

Other readings will be posted on Blackboard.

**Assignments**

1. **Defining American Studies** *[This is also an American Studies assessment exercise]***:** What is American Studies? What are the key turning points, methods, approaches, and interpretations in the field? Where has it been, and where is it heading, or where do you think it should be heading?

This is a paper that you will hand in at the second class and then rewrite as a midterm and then again as a final paper. Each time you must draw on specific works read for class. You may also bring in additional relevant works. Each of the two times that you rewrite this paper you must include an explanation of how your thinking on the topic has changed over time. Identify and cite specific texts and/or discussions that have been pivotal in your on-going understanding of the topic. Note that this assignment is cumulative. Each time you write and re-write it, you should refer to readings from the beginning of the semester up until that point, including specific reference to that week’s readings (since there will be no commentary on the reading that week).

The first version of this paper should be 2-3 pages, the midterm 4-6 pages, and the final 7-9 pages.

2. **Weekly commentaries on the reading** – 500 words emailed to [deborah.gussman@stockton.edu](mailto:deborah.gussman@stockton.edu) by Monday at 6 p.m. (except those weeks when the Assessment exercise is due). Seven of nine (7/9) must be handed in. Choose wisely.

3. **American Iconography:** One in-class presentation and a final report on an icon in American Culture/Studies (reports starting week 5). For the final paper, 3000-5000 words, explain both why the icon you choose should be considered as such, and then take the contrary position and question its iconic status. You should then provide your own opinion in the conclusion. Be particularly conscious of both change over time, and the manner in which class, race, and gender (and other social variables) influence the nature and interpretation of the icon.

**Grading Outline**

Class Participation 10%

Defining American Studies

Midterm 15%

Final 20%

Weekly Commentaries on the Reading 35%

Final Paper 20%

**Academic Honesty**

Please consult Stockton’s Academic Honesty Policy, which provides the guidelines for this course.

**Schedule**

Note: Readings and assignments are subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class.

**Week 1: September 2– Introduction**

Hand outs/Mechanics/Icons

“Keywords for Cultural Studies, An Introduction,” **KACS**

<http://keywords.nyupress.org/american-cultural-studies/keywords-an-introduction/>

“Civilization,” **KACS**

<http://keywords.nyupress.org/american-cultural-studies/essay/civilization/>

Jay Melching, “An American Culture Grid, with Texts,” <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~DRBR/mchling.txt>

American Icons: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CLASS/AM484_95/icon1.html>

**Week 2: September 9 – Beginnings I**

“America,” “Colonial,” “Democracy,” “Nation,” **KACS**

Smith, “Can American Studies Develop a Method?” (and comment) **LAS**, 1‐16

Susman, “History and the American Intellectual,” **LAS**, 17‐42

Kelly, “Literature and the Historian,” **LAS**, 91‐113

Miller, “The Protestant Ethic” (**BB**)

[*Defining American Studies paper 1 due*]

**Week 3: September 16 – Beginnings II – 6:30-7:30 Bryan Stevenson – Campus Center Event Room**

**Stevenson Bio:** <https://its.law.nyu.edu/facultyprofiles/profile.cfm?section=bio&personID=20315>

**View:** Bryan Stevenson’s TED talk: <http://www.ted.com/talks/bryan_stevenson_we_need_to_talk_about_an_injustice?language=en>

**Read:**

Wise, “Paradigm Dramas,” **LAS**, 166‐214

Radway, et al., “Introduction,” **AS,** 1-6

Kessler‐Harris, “Cultural Locations,” **LAS**, 335‐352

Du Bois, “Of the Sorrow Songs” & “Of the Meaning of Progress” (**BB**)

Bourne, “The Trans-National America” (**BB**)

Lipsitz, “Listening to Learn,” **LAS**, 310‐334

**Week 4: September 23**

Kuklick, “Myth and Symbol in American Studies,” (and comment) **LAS**, 71‐90

Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth,* Book 3 (**BB**)

Marx, *The Machine in the Garden* (**BB**) & Meikle Review (**BB**)

“West,” **KACS**

<http://keywords.nyupress.org/american-cultural-studies/essay/west/>

**Week 5: September 30 – Race I**

“African,” “Black,” “Ethnicity,” “Indian,” “Race,” “Racialization,” **KACS**

Singh, “Rethinking Race and Nation,” **AS,** 9-16

Saxton, “Black Face Minstrelsy,” **LAS**, 114‐142

Baker, “Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance,” **LAS**, 261‐278

Bayoumi, “Racing Religion,” **AS**, 99-108

Miles, “Removal,” **AS**, 41-48

“The Indian Removal Act of 1830” <http://pages.uoregon.edu/mjdennis/courses/hst469_removal.htm>

**Week 6: October 7– Race II**

“Performance,” “Subject,” **KACS**

Higginbotham, “Rethinking Vernacular Culture,” **AS**, 225-23

Kelley, “The Riddle of the Zoot,” **AS**, 280‐289

Maira, “To Be Young, Brown, and Hip: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Indian American Youth Culture,” **AS** 299-306

Deloria, “I Want to Ride in Geromino’s Cadillac” AS, 412-423

Trouillot, “Silencing the Past,” **AS**, 558-566

Rankine, from *Citizen*, sections I and II, 5-36 (**BB**)

Rankine, “The Meaning of Serena Williams”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/30/magazine/the-meaning-of-serena-williams.html>

**Week 7: October 14 – Gender I**

“Gender,” “Domestic,” “Marriage,” **KACS**

Video: Gender and American Studies <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0UOohiBJVSc>

Welter, “Cult of True Womanhood,” **LAS**, 43‐70

Smith‐Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual”

Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity,” **AS**, 17-25

Peiss, “Putting on Style” (**BB**)

May, “Explosive Issues” (**BB**)

*[Defining American Studies midterm due]*

**Week 8: October 21 – Gender II**

“Identity,” “Digital,” **KACS**

<http://keywords.nyupress.org/american-cultural-studies/essay/identity/> <http://keywords.nyupress.org/american-cultural-studies/essay/digital/>

Baym, “Melodramas of Beset Manhood,” **LAS**, 215‐234

Radway, “The Utopian Impulse,” **LAS**, 235‐260

Blum, “The Patient’s Body” **AS,** 365-371

Nguyen, “Queer Cyborgs and New Mutants,” **AS,** 372-383

Jeffords, “The Remasculinization of America” (**BB**)

**Week 9: October 28 – Class**

“Class,” “Capitalism,” “Labor,” **KACS**

Lyons, “The Sixties” (**BB**)

Potter, “History – Spectacle – Resistance” (**BB**)

Denning, “The Age of the CIO,” **AS**, 166-175

Morgan, “Women’s Sweat,” **AS**, 145-154

Enstad, “Fashioning Political Subjectivities,” **AS**, 155-165

Johnson, “Domestic Life in the Diggings,” **AS**, 135-144

**Week 10: November 4 – Migration and Immigration**

**For weekly reflection next time—What is your family’s migration/immigration narrative? Use Keywords and readings to tell your family’s story –it doesn’t have to be accurate, more interested in how it came to be known to you.**

“Migration,” “Immigration,” “Diaspora,” “Community,” **KACS**

Ngai, “The Johnson‐Reed Act of 1924,” **AS, 69-77**

Edwards, “The Practice of Diaspora,” AS, 33-40

Lowe, “Work, Immigration, Gender,” AS, 177-184 cut

Gutierrez, “Community, Patriarchy, and Individualism,” **LAS**, 353‐384

Wong, “The Transformation of Culture,” **LAS**, 408‐439

Samaras, “Rebetiko Psalm”

<http://www.worldliteraturetoday.org/2011/september/two-poems-audio-nicholas-samaras>

**Week 11: November 11 – American Exceptionalism & Empire**

“Exceptionalism,” “Empire,” “Economy” **KACS**

Gregg, “Apropos Exceptionalism” (**BB**)

Kaplan, “Left Alone with America” (**BB**)

Spanos, “Redeemer Nation and Apocalypse: Thinking the Exceptionalism of American Exceptionalism” (**BB)**

**Week 12: November 18 – Internationalizing American Studies**

Saldivar, “Neustra America’s Borders,” **AS**, 26‐32

OAH, “Internationalizing American History” (**BB**)

Liam Kennedy, “Spectres of Comparison,” **AS**, 569‐577

Wiegman, “Romancing the Future,” **AS**, 578‐587

Izzo, “Outside Where?” **AS**, 588‐604

**Week 13: December 2 – Conclusions/Icon & Defining American Studies Papers Due**