

American Studies 500
American Culture Studies
Tuesdays 10:00-12:30,
Fall 2009 Syllabus
Draft 8/10/09

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Course Description:

The American Culture Studies (ACS) pro-seminar introduces students (1) to current theories and methods in the field, (2) to the history of American Studies nationally and at UNM, and (3) to the faculty in the department. It is the required introductory seminar for all American Studies graduate students and is open only to those who have been accepted into the M.A. or Ph.D. programs. This pro-seminar is based on the departmental ACS reading list, and is geared toward the Fall 2009 ACS exam. The exam will be administered and graded by the instructor of this seminar. During the course of the term, most of the other American Studies faculty members will visit the seminar to introduce themselves and their fields of specialization.

Course Requirements:

A. Participation

Each student is required to attend class on a regular basis. Except for medical and family emergencies, only one excused absence will be allowed, and that must be cleared in advance with one of the instructors. We expect consistent, prepared, and appropriate participation in class discussions.

- Each week students are required to post on the course WebCT page a reading response paper (approximately 500 words) that includes:
- A brief summary of the primary focus and argument of the reading (one paragraph)
- A discussion of two or three aspects of the reading that you find most interesting.
- Two or three synthetic questions that engage the issues and debates addressed in the reading – these questions should target key aspects of the reading that you would like to discuss further in class.
- Response papers must be posted by 11pm Sunday prior to the class session.

B. Critical Review

Each student will be required to write two critical reviews (which they will distribute to their classmates). In these reviews, you should present a concise summary of the paired book's thesis or overall argument, and then analyze the work in terms appropriate to American culture studies as they are developed in the seminar. We will discuss how to write critical review essays more extensively in class. You will also receive a separate assignment sheet for this.

C. Professionalism

Throughout the semester you will be asked to do a few small assignments related to professional development issues. If there are other issues of professional development that you would like addressed in the seminar, please contact us. Moreover, as part of this class, you are expected to attend department symposia and lectures whenever possible.

D. Final Essay

You are required to produce a paper of fifteen to twenty pages (no longer than 6500 words), based on your choice from two questions that will be handed out in mid semester. Papers are due at the start of the seminar on December. Hand in two copies; one will be graded and returned within one week, the other retained in the course files. Extensions and incompletes will only be given for documented family and medical emergencies.

Grading Criteria:

Critical reviews will be graded and returned within one week. The final essay will be graded and returned within two weeks of the date of submission. Grading at the graduate level is different than grading at the undergraduate level. An "A" signifies that you have met the assignment criteria and show mastery of the ACS material. Moreover, an "A" signifies that the work was edited and professional in tone and presentation. Grades lower than "A" indicate areas that need improvement. I will convey what areas need improvement in my written comments. You must receive a grade of "B" or higher to successfully pass the ACS proseminar. The assignments will be worth the following percentages:

- Participation 20%
- Critical Review 1 20%
- Critical Review 2 20%
- Final Paper 40%

Special Accommodations:

If you have or believe you have a disability, you may wish to self-identify. You can do so by providing documentation to the office for Services for Students with disabilities, which is located in Mesa Vista Hall, #2021. Appropriate accommodations may then be provided for you. Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent full demonstration of academic ability should contact us personally as soon as possible so that we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and to facilitate your educational opportunities.

Academic Integrity:

Ethics and honesty are critical to academic and life success. You are expected at all times to follow university policies concerning academic integrity. Each student is expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in academic and professional matters. The university reserves the right to take disciplinary action including dismissal against and student who is found responsible for academic dishonesty or who otherwise fails to meet the standards. Any student who has been judged to have engaged in academic dishonesty in course work may receive a reduced or failing grade for the work in question and for the course.

Required Texts:

Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essay on Sex and Citizenship* (Duke, 1997)

Alicia Schmidt Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the US-Mexico Borderlands* (NYU, 2008)

Roderick Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*, (Minnesota, 2004).

Eva Marie Garroutte, *Real Indians: Identity and Survival of Native America* (California, 2003).

John Hartigan, *Odd Tribes: Toward a Cultural Analysis of White People*, (Duke, 2005).

Andrew Isenberg, *The Destruction of Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920*, (Cambridge, 2001).

Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*. (Harvard, 2005).

Jake Kosek, *Understories: The Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico*, (Duke, 2006).

Melanie McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media and US Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*. (California, 2001).

Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/ Global Designs*, (Princeton, 2000).

Rafael Perez-Torres, *Mestizaje: Critical Issues of Race in Chicano Culture*, (Minnesota, 2006).

Ramon Saldívar, *The Borderland of Culture: Americo Peredes and the Transnational Imaginary*, (Duke, 2008).

Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahmoa City to Ground Zero*, (Duke, 2007).

Course Schedule:

- Aug. 25:** Course Introduction
Beginning of Semester Brunch
- Sept. 1:** **Readings:** Course packet (on reserves)
- Sept. 8:** **Reading:** Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/ Global Designs*
Paired Text: Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*.
- Sept. 15:** **Reading:** Alicia Schmidt Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the US-Mexico Borderlands*.
Paired Text: James Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands*.
- Sept. 22:** **Reading:** Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*.
Paired Text: Kenneth Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*.
- Sept. 29:** **Reading:** Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*.
Paired Text: Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*.
- Oct. 6:** **Reading:** Melanie McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*.
Paired Text: Mahmood Mamdam, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*.
- Oct. 13:** **Readings:** Rafael Perez Torres, *Mestizaje: Critical Issues of Race in Chicano Culture*.
Paired Text: John Nieto-Philips, *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish-American Identity in New Mexico, 1850-1940*.
- Oct. 20:** **Reading:** Jake Kosek, *Understories: The Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico*.
Paired Text: Julie Sze, *Noxious New York: The Racial Politics of Urban Health and Environmental Justice*.
- Oct. 27:** **Reading:** Roderick Fergusson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*

Paired Text: Laura Hyun Yi Kang, *Compositional Subjects: Enfiguring Asian American Women*.

Nov. 3: **Reading:** Eva Marie Garrouette, *Real Indians: Identity and Survival of Native America*

Paired Text: J. Kahaulani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity*.

Nov. 10: **Reading:** John Hartigan, *Odd Tribes: Toward a Cultural Analysis of White People*, (Duke, 2005).

Paired Text: Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*.

Nov. 17: **Reading:** Andrew Isenberg, *The Destruction of Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920*,

Paired Text: Tiya Miles, *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom*.

Nov. 24: **Reading:** Ramon Saldivar, *The Borderland of Culture: Americo Peredes and the Transnational Imaginary*,

Paired Text: Samuel Walker, *Prompt and Utter Destruction: President Truman and the Use of Atomic Bombs Against Japan*.

Dec. 1: **Reading:** Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*.

Paired Text: Nikihl Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy*.

Dec. 8: **Final Paper Due**