

America in the World
AMCL 250, Spring 2013
Ely Hall 200

From the start, the United States of America has been a complicated project in multinational border crossing. That is, there is no “America” without a “non-America.” The purpose of this course is to explore the multifaceted way that America has always surged beyond its normative national boundaries to define itself and to affect the rest of the world. Crucially, we will also consider the way the rest of the world has responded to America’s varied political, cultural, religious, economic, and military expansionist techniques. Finally, in the grand tradition of American Studies, we will consider these dynamics in a multidisciplinary fashion, using a diverse set of methods and texts.

Objectives

1. To consider the ways constructions of America have produced nationalisms and popular mythology and to develop a critical perspective on these productions.
2. To develop working definitions of key terms germane to American studies such as “culture” and “subjectivity” and “identity” and the myriad complications involved in ascertaining or “reading” how these features come to be. One of the key questions we will ask is how or whether these terms are historical products.
3. To explore the peculiar challenges and rigors attendant to multidisciplinary scholarly practice and develop a sensitivity to how such intellectual projects can be pursued and accomplished. In other words, why is American Studies different from American History or American Religious Studies or American Literature?

Class Requirements

Requirements include weekly attendance (more than two absences will raise eyebrows), careful reading of weekly assignments, avid class participation, respectful and passionate exchange of ideas, 1 response paper (2-4 pages), 2 critical essays, (4 pages), and final ethnographic project. (8-15 pages). Final grades will approximately follow the following formula: class participation 15%; short papers 45%; final paper, 40%.

Required Texts

- Jill Lepore, *The Name of War* (Vintage) 978-0375702624
 - Anne Norton, *Theses on Politics, Culture & Method* (Yale) 978-0300100112
 - Bartolome De Las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (Penguin) 978-0140445626
 - Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons* (Martino Publishing) 978-1614271772
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- Zora Neale Hurston, *Tell My Horse* (Harper) 978-0061695131
 - Chang-rae Lee, *A Gesture Life*, (Riverhead) 978-1573228282
 - Richard Wright, *Black Power: Three Books from Exile* (Harper) 978-0061449451
 - Barack Obama, *Dreams of My Father* (Crown) 978-0307383419
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January 21 - January 27

Jan 24, Th - Intro

January 28 - February 3

Imagining American Studies

Jan 29, Tu

- Donald Pease, "Re-Framing the Transnational Turn in American Studies"
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Jan 31, Th

- Amy Kaplan, "Violent Belongings and the Question of Empire Today"
 - [Obama Second Inaugural](#)
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February 4 - February 10

Feb 5, Tu

- Priscilla Wald, "American Studies and the Politics of Life"
 - Anne Norton, *Theses on Politics, Culture & Method*, 1, 7, 8, 12, 15, 18, 20, 22, 24
-

Feb 7, Th

- Anne Norton, *Theses on Politics, Culture & Method*, 28, 29, 33-41, 46, 60, 81, 91
-

February 11 - February 17

Feb 12, Tu

- Bender, Intro, Ch 1.
 - De Las Casas, 3-56
-

Feb 14, Th

- De Las Casas, 65-94, 125-130
-

February 18 - February 24

Feb 19, Tu

- Jill Lepore, *The Name of War*, ix-xxiii, 3-47. 97-125, 150-170
 - <http://vimeo.com/17377471>
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Feb 21, Th

- Jill Lepore, *The Name of War*, 191-240
 - Hannah Turk responds on the 19th
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February 25 - March 3

Feb 25, Monday, First Paper Due

Feb 26, Tu

- Sean Teuton, "Internationalism and the American Indian Scholar: Native Studies and the Challenge of Pan-indigenism"
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Feb 28, Th

- Richard Slotkin, Buffalo Bill's 'Wild West' and the Mythologization of the American Empire"
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March 4 - March 10

Mar 5, Tu

- Buck-Morss, "Hegel and Haiti"
 - Hegel's Master/Slave dialectic: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/>
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Mar 7, Th

- Millery Polyne, selected essays
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EVENING TALK

Millery Polyne (NYU)

"The Idea of Haiti: Newness, Singularity
and Phantasmic Pan Americanism"

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March 11 - March 17

Spring Break

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March 18 - March 24

Spring Break

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March 25 - March 31

Mar 26, Tu

- Teddy Roosevelt, "The Strenuous Life"
 - Amy Kaplan, "Black and Blue on San Juan Hill"
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Mar 28, Th

- William James, "The Philippine Question," and "The Moral Equivalent of War"
 - Du Bois, "The Souls of White Folk"
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April 1 - April 7

April 2, Tu

- Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, selections
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April 4, Th

- Hurston, *Tell My Horse*; Afterword by Henry Louis Gates, chs 1, 2, 4, 5, 6-8.
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April 8 - April 14

APRIL 8, Monday: Email Simpson and Kahn list of 3-7 names/interviewees for final paper

April 9, Tu

- Hurston, *Tell My Horse*, chs 10, 12, 13, 15-17, "More Than a Voodoo Work," by Ishmael Reed. (This essay is placed at the end of the work in a funky section called "PS.")
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Hannah Turk Responds to Hurston

April 11 Th

- Chandra Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes"
 - Sheryl Sandberg's TED talk: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18uDutyIDa4>
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April 15 - April 21

April 15, Monday, Second Paper Due

April 16 Tu

- Wright, *The Color Curtain*, 429-528
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April 18, Th

- Wright, *The Color Curtain*, 529-609
-

April 22 - April 28

April 23 Tu

- Lee, *A Gesture Life*, 1-152
-

April 25 Th

- Lee, *A Gesture Life*, 153-216
-

April 29 - May 5

April 30 Tu

- Lee, *A Gesture Life*, 217-356
 - Obama, *Dreams of My Father*, 3-71
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May 2 Th

- Obama, *Dreams of My Father*, 72-163
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May 6 - May 12

May 7 Tu

- Obama, *Dreams of My Father*, 164-442
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