

AMST 1102/02 American Identities; 11-12:15 M&W Fall 2013 SS 1022

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Office Hours by Appointment

Email is the best way to reach me. I check mine very frequently, and I expect you to check yours often, as well.



(<http://inamerica.blogs.cnn.com>)

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course explores American identity historically and culturally. Our objective is to develop the ability to “read” American culture through various lenses such as race, ethnicity, class, gender and place. It is my hope that you will also increasingly bring such critical analysis to bear outside the classroom—in everything from grocery shopping, to riding the bus, to watching or reading the news—as you come to treat your own engagement with the world as a “text” about American culture, as well. We ask in the course both *what* constitutes/marks/distinguishes American identity and *why* certain groups, practices, histories and experiences are outside “the pale,” as Frederick Douglass would say, of being American. We study American identity not to reinforce its rightness but rather to interrogate the privileges and power relations that compose it.

CLASS DECORUM and COMMUNITY: I allow laptops in class because so much of our reading is online. However, if it seems that everyone is g-chatting and facebook-ing, then I will adjust accordingly and ban open laptops during class. Please do not abuse the privilege of having the internet at your fingertips. Turn off your phones, and tune in. Stay engaged. Treat your peers and your professor with respect; greet others' ideas with openness. Critique and analyze, but do not condemn and judge. Engage in spirited debate; challenge and be challenged.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is required. You may miss TWO classes, period. However, you are responsible for material covered in classes that you miss, and there are no "make-up" assignments or quizzes. I do not differentiate between "excused" and "unexcused" absences, so you may want to save up your absences in case of extenuating personal circumstance or in the event that you get called for a second audition for American Idol. After TWO absences you lose 5 points off your total grade for each day missed. If you are late to class or leave early, you will be counted as missing one-half (50%) of a class.

LATE WORK: I don't accept late work except in rare and extremely special cases. If you think that applies, please email me so we can come to an agreement.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: The consequence for plagiarizing or other forms of cheating and academic dishonesty are severe in this class and at KSU. A first offense will result in a zero on the assignment or paper; a second offense will be brought to the attention of the university and could result in a hearing and suspension. If you are unsure about how to cite others' words and ideas or if you are helping a peer or soliciting help on your work and not sure if your actions constitute academic dishonesty, please feel free to discuss your concerns with me.

READINGS:

Texts available at the bookstore:

***The Submission* by Amy Walden**

***No-No Boy* by John Okada**

***Outcasts United* by Warren St. John**

***A Different Mirror* by Ronald Takaki (noted as "ADM" throughout the syllabus)**

All other readings will be on D2L or on the web. On D2L, under "Readings," each PDF is identified with the author's name (the author's names are bolded in each day's assignments). Pieces by the authors

marked with an asterisk* are contained in a single PDF, click through the PDF to find the appropriate piece. If an assignment on the syllabus is followed by a web address, then please use that address to locate the reading by using the hyperlink in the syllabus on D2L. Or, of course, you can simply google the title and author. *If you can't access a reading, please email me immediately. Telling me once you get to class doesn't do anyone any good.*

GRADING:

Quizzes/Reflections: 20%: You will have a quiz or “reflection” at the beginning of each class. These are short and sweet; they keep you honest and keep all of us on our toes by setting aside 5-7 minutes every meeting for you to respond thoughtfully to a discussion question or to demonstrate your close reading of the material through a short quiz. They also help rev our engines for the day's discussion. Because I'm old school, you will hand-write your quiz answers and reflections, meaning you'll need a pen and piece of paper every single day. Nostalgic, huh?

Class Participation: 15%: Your investment and participation in class discussion is essential to this course. For those who have difficulty speaking in front of the class, we will do group work that I will observe which will allow you to speak comfortably with a few of your peers. If you don't pipe up in class or during group work, I will have to assume that you are not engaged with the readings and ideas of the course and will grade your participation accordingly.

Midterm Essay: 25% (Due Monday, Oct. 7th) This is a 5- page analytical essay assignment. You are required to use at least three different texts from the class. We will spend a few minutes during class the preceding week discussing how to develop an argument, outline, free-write and, of course, correctly cite sources. I am always happy to answer questions about the writing process, but you should also take advantage of all the expertise and support available at the Writing Center: English Building 242; <http://kennesaw.edu/writingcenter/>.

Final Project: 40% (Due on Tuesday, Dec. 10th) Your final project is your opportunity to creatively explore the themes of the course through the methods and readings we discussed and, if you wish, bring in outside methods and material, too. You may choose to write a 6-8-page analytical essay, or you may go a different route. Although every project will have a written analytical component in which you describe your process and methods, I welcome oral history, photography, short films and other formats as a way for you to engage with the question of American identity. You will submit a one-page proposal describing your final project via D2L by **midnight on Monday, Dec. 4th**, which will count as part of your grade. We will talk in more detail about your options, and I will post some suggested frameworks on D2L for you to consider as you decide what you'll examine and through what lens you'll examine it.

****This schedule is subject to change due to weather or other unforeseen events.****

8.19 M: Introduction to the Course: Where, What and Who is America/n?

8.21 W: For class, have read: pp. 1-48 in ADM;

Peggy **McIntosh**, “Unpacking the Knapsack of White Privilege” (D2L)

8. 26 M: For class, have read: pp. 49-71 in ADM; “Introduction,” pp. xi-xxxvii, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings,” pp. 9-16, “The Sorrow Songs,” pp. 154-164 in W.E.B. **DuBois**, *The Souls of Black Folk* (D2L)
In Class: History Detectives: Slave Songbook, PBS

8.28 W: For class have read: pp. 75-130 in ADM; In Class: Images of Sambo/Mammy/Jezebel:

<http://www.authentichistory.com/diversity/african/1-mammy/> and

<http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/mammies/>

9.2 M: Labor Day, NO CLASS.

9.4 W: Have read pp. 131-176 ADM and Preface and Ch.1, p. xi-31 in Richard **Rodriguez**, *Brown* (D2L)

9.9 M: Have read Walden, *The Submission*, pp. 1-98 (read up until Chapter 10)

9.11 W: Have read: Walden, *The Submission*, pp. 98-170

In class: September 11th, 2001; <http://www.911memorial.org/>

9.16 M: Have finished *The Submission*, pp. 171-299

Tuesday, 9.17: * **Mandatory: Screening of “The Incident at Oglala: The Leonard Peltier Story,” at 6:30pm in SO1019.*** (If you absolutely can’t attend, please contact me so that we can arrange an alternative.)

9.18 W: Have read: pp. 209-231 ADM and Vine **DeLoria**, “Indians Today, The Real and the Unreal,” pp. 1-28 (D2L)

9.23 M: Have read: Joy Harjo, "A Map to the Next World,"

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/179781>

Have read: Sherman Alexie, "This is What it Means to Say Phoenix Arizona,"

<http://courses.csusm.edu/ltr325bc/phoenix.html>;

9.25 W: Have read: pp. 232-261 ADM

In Class: "Finding Your Roots" clips

9.30 M: Daniel Segal, "Can You Tell a Jew When You See One?" (D2L)

10.2 W: Have read: pp. 292-310 ADM

10.7 M: WRITING DAY; **Midterm papers due by midnight, submit via D2L.**

Tuesday, 10.8: *Mandatory Screening of "Bird" at 6:30pm in SO1019.* (If you absolutely can't attend, please contact me so that we can arrange an alternative time.)

10.9 W: Have read p. 221-232 in Ralph **Ellison**, "On Bird, Bird-Watching, and Jazz," (D2L)

Friday October 11th: Last Day to Withdraw.

10.14 M: Have read: pp. 1-16 in Richard **Wright**, "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow," (D2L); Have read pp. 103-141 in James **Baldwin**, "Sonny's Blues," (D2L) and

10. 16 W: Have read: pp. 311-335 ADM; Choose either the short poem, "America" by Claude McKay or the four paintings in the series "Aspects of Negro Life," by painter Aaron Douglas (word documents containing the images of the paintings and the poem are on D2L under "Readings"). Please compose a 250-word response to either the poem or the paintings, due at the beginning of class, which will replace the day's quiz.

10. 21 M: Have read: selections from Lawson **Inada**, *Legends from Camp* (D2L)

10.23 W: Have read pp.383-404 ADM; **King**, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (D2L)

10:28 M: Have read: pp. 515-522 Audre **Lorde**, “I am Your Sister” (D2L);
pp. 50-57 Assata **Shakur**, “Women in Prison: How We Are” (D2L)

10.30: W: Have read: pp. 388-393, Betty **Friedan***, “The Problem that has No Name,” (D2L)
“The Redstockings Manifesto,”
http://www.redstockings.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=76&Itemid=59
pp. 178-193, Carl **Oglesby***, “Trapped in a System” (D2L)

11.4 M: Have read: pp. 17-24, Jewelle **Gomez**, “The Event of Becoming” (D2L)
pp. 494-502 Frank **Kameny*** et al., “Does Research into Homosexuality Matter?” (D2L)

Tuesday 11.5: *Mandatory Screening of “Harlan County, USA” at 6:30pm in SO1019.* (If you absolutely can’t attend, please contact me so that we can arrange an alternative.)

11. 6 W: Have read and listened to: “Poor People’s Campaign: A Dream Unfulfilled,”

(<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=91626373>)

In Class: Clips from “Eyes on the Prize” and the photography of Walker Evans at LOC:

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/search/?va=exact&co!=coll&st=slideshow&q=LOT+991&fi=number&sg=true&op=PHRASE>

11.11 M: Have read: Gloria Anzaldua, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue,”
<http://dsapresents.org/staff/michael-thornton/files/2011/08/Anzaldua-Wild-Tongue.pdf>;
pp. 142-145 Luis **Valdez*** “The Tale of the Raza” (D2L)

11.13 W: Have read: pp. 1-37 (Introduction and Ch. 1) in Jonathan **Kozol**, *The Shame of the Nation* (D2L)

11.18 M: Have read: pp.161-187 Jonathan **Kozol**, *The Shame of the Nation* (D2L), and very short news article by David **Sirota** (word doc on D2L)

11.20 W: Have watched video lecture: “Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow*—George E Kent Lecture,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gln1JwDUI64>.

11.25 M: Have read: Wende Marshall, "White Supremacy and Mass Incarceration,"
<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/01/201311782939161836.html>

11.27 W: Class does not meet: FALL RECESS.

12.2 M: Have read the selected chapters (TBA) of Warren St. John's *Outcasts United*; be ready to discuss them.

12.4 W: **1-page Final Project Proposal Due at midnight tonight.** For class, have read: Marie Laskas, "Hecho in America," *GQ*, <http://www.gq.com/news-politics/big-issues/201110/illegal-immigration-issue-blueberry-fruit-farmers-gq-october-2011>; Have looked at: Sheila Pree Bright's photographic series, "Young Americans," and have read accompanying essay at <http://www.oxfordamerican.org/articles/2012/jul/03/only-stair-doesnt-creak-sheila-pree-bright/>.

For class: Take your own "Young American" portrait. Your portrait can feature a flag, but it doesn't have to. Just take a self portrait or get a friend to photograph you with objects/at a place/in a style of dress, etc. that expresses your relationship to or critique of "American identity"; please upload to D2L. Time allowing, a few who are willing will share their portraits with the class. (This replaces the quiz/reflection.)

Final Projects due via D2L by midnight on Tuesday, Dec. 10th.

Exam Date: 10:30-12:30pm Wednesday December 11th; Final Project Presentations