

Introduction to American Studies
“America” as an Idea
(01:050:101)

Monday/Wednesday, 5:35 to 6:55PM
Ruth Adams Building 001

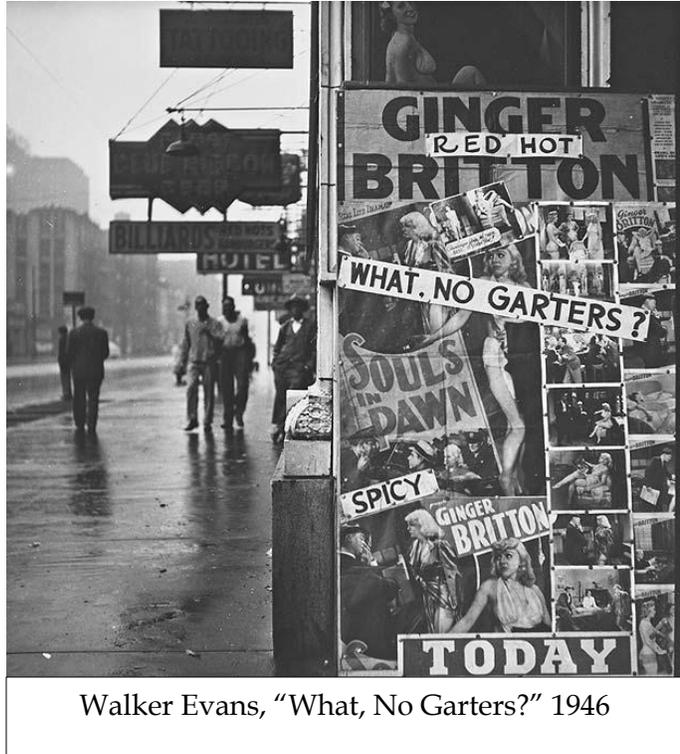
Prof. Andy Urban

aturban@rci.rutgers.edu

Office Hours: 1 – 4PM, Mondays
Ruth Adams Building 205E

Course Description

This course introduces students to the interdisciplinary field of American Studies. Employing literature, essays, law, film, history, visual culture, philosophy, and politics, the class will examine the concept and idea of “America” in its global, national, community, and bodily/psychic permutations. Students will engage with primary and secondary sources of all kinds dealing with history, literature, culture, law, race, gender and sexuality. The goal of the course is to expose students to intellectual and creative possibilities in the field of American Studies, as well as to provide incoming majors with key concepts and analytical tools that can be used in more advanced courses. Emphasis will be placed on students’ analytical skills, close reading, verbal articulations of interdisciplinary scholarship, and critical thinking.



Walker Evans, “What, No Garters?” 1946

Required Readings

- Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (ISBN# 0393319628)
- Nella Larsen, *Quicksand and Passing* (ISBN# 0813511704)
- Mine Okubo, *Citizen 13660* (ISBN# 0295959894)
- Thomas Frank, *Pity the Billionaire: The Hard-Times Swindle and the Unlikely Comeback of the Right* (ISBN# 0805093699)

In addition to the above books, all of the assigned chapters, articles, and primary sources have been (or will be shortly) posted as .pdf files on the course’s SAKAI site, under the heading “Resources.”

Readings correspond to the day they will be discussed, and need to be completed before lecture. PLEASE BRING THE ASSIGNED BOOKS AND READINGS TO CLASS. *I will reference passages from the readings during lecture, and you will need the texts to follow along.*

AND: Please make sure that you are receiving announcements via email from SAKAI, as I regularly use the site to update class information, assignments, and extra credit opportunities.

Assignment and Grading Summary

- *Essays* – 30% (two essays – 15% each)

Monument Assignment: Due at the start of class, Monday, March 25.

For this assignment, you will write a three to four page essay that analyzes the history, significance, and contemporary meanings of a monument, building, or establishment that is part of the New Jersey landscape. This assignment has been a staple of the Intro class for some years now. Some examples of sites that students in the class have selected and interpreted include:

Zinc Miner Statue, Franklin, NJ -

<http://amstmonuments.wordpress.com/2010/12/26/zinc-miner-statue-franklin-new-jersey/>

Ocean City Music Pier, Ocean City, NJ -

<http://amstmonuments.wordpress.com/2010/12/25/ocean-city-music-pier/>

Covered Bridge, Delaware Township, NJ -

<http://amstmonuments.wordpress.com/2010/12/26/green-sergeant%E2%80%99s-covered-bridge-delaware-township/>

Further details on the assignment will be provided during the first weeks of class.

Guantánamo Assignment: Due at the start of class, Monday, April 29.

For this assignment, you will be required to visit and tour a museum exhibition on the history of the US Naval Base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, which explores the various functions of this site from its acquisition during the War of 1898, to its use as a Haitian and Cuban refugee camp during the 1990s, to its most recent and controversial use as a detention center for “enemy combatants” in the War on Terror.

Details about touring the exhibit and the essay assignment will be forthcoming. Information on the Guantánamo Public Memory Project, a collaborative project that created the exhibit, can be found here: <http://gitmomemory.org/stories/>

- *Exams – 45%*

There will be three short answer and multiple choice exams, each worth 15% of your total grade. Please see the syllabus schedule below for the dates of the in-class exams. The final exam of the semester will take place during exam week - date and time TBA – see <https://finalexams.rutgers.edu/>.

- *QUIPS/Participation – 25%*

In order to ensure that you are doing the readings and engaging them critically, students will take turns – according to their assigned group (A-D) – responding to QUIPs (Questions, Issues, or Problems) posted by me or 101’s course assistants. In order to receive credit, you must respond to the QUIP assigned to your group by no later than 11PM on the day before lecture (Sunday for Monday classes; Tuesday for Wednesday classes). Your response should be in the range of three to four sentences. **PLEASE NOTE the group you are in below, and mark on your calendar the class dates for which you must submit a QUIP.**

GROUP A: Last names that begin with A to F

GROUP B: G to L

GROUP C: M to R

GROUP D: S to Z

Attendance at lectures is mandatory. Each student is allowed one unexcused absence during the semester. Each additional unexcused absence will result in deduction from your participation grade. If I or one of my assistants see you texting, surfing the internet, chatting, etc. during lecture, you will be marked as absent for that class. I also reserve the right to call on you during lecture.

Grading Scale:

92-100=**A**; 87-91=**B+**; 81-86=**B**; 77-80=**C+**; 70-76=**C**; 60-69=**D**; 0-59=**F**

Note: there are no minus grades at Rutgers.

American Studies Department Learning Goals Met by this Course:

Students will learn to synthesize interdisciplinary sources and methods of analysis in order to conduct an investigation of American culture and history. Students will learn to use scholarship in history, politics, literature, and art in order to interpret the varied experiences, perspectives, and events that define American life. Students will be able to write well; speak articulately; and think critically, analytically, and creatively.

Learning Goals Specific to this Course:

- Analyze arts and/or literatures in themselves and in relation to multiple American histories, values, languages, cultures, and technologies.
- Examine critically philosophical and other theoretical issues concerning the nature of varied American realities, human experience, knowledge, values, and cultural production.

Class Policies

If you have to miss class due to sickness, an emergency, or another excused reason, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.

Again, all cell phones and hand-held devices must be turned off prior to the start of class. **NO TEXTING** - if I catch you texting, you will be counted as absent that class, no exceptions.

Computer use should be limited to looking at the .pdf readings for class (if you choose not to print them out), and taking notes.

Unexcused late assignments will receive a deduction.

Rutgers Academic Policies

Please review the following policies. Should a situation arise where a violation occurs, it will be assumed that you were aware of this information and its ramifications.

Special Accommodation Requests

All special accommodation requests must be brought to my attention during the first two weeks of class. Full disability policies and procedures are available for review at: <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>.

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html>

Academic Integrity Policy

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>

Violations include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity.

Honor Pledge

I pledge on my honor that I will adhere to all aspects of the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy

Take an interactive tutorial on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:

<http://sccweb.scc-net.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/Intro.html>

Consult Don't Plagiarize: Document Your Research! For tips about how to take notes so you don't plagiarize by accident.

http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/lib_instruct/instruct_document.shtml

Class Schedule and Assigned Readings

Wednesday, January 23 – Course Introduction

Week Two: Founding Principles?

Monday, January 28 (GROUP A)

- Jonathan Edwards, “Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God” (1741)
- Thomas Jefferson, “Declaration of Independence” (1776)
- Eric Posner, “Why Originalism is So Popular,” (2011)

Wednesday, January 30 (GROUP B)

- Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, Introduction through chapter 3
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Week Three: Imagining the Nation

Monday, February 4 (GROUP C)

- Benedict Anderson, “Imagined Communities” (1983)
- Alan Trachtenberg, “Brooklyn Bridge as a Cultural Text” (1984)

Wednesday, February 6 (GROUP D)

- Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, chapters 5 & 6
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Week Four: Iconography and Public Memory

Monday, February 11

- Lou Masur, selection from *The Soiling of Old Glory: The Story of a Photograph That Shocked America* (2008)

GUEST LECTURER: Professor Lou Masur

Wednesday, February 13 (GROUP A)

- Dolores Hayden, “Claiming Urban Landscapes as Public Space” (1995)
 - Micki McElya, “Commemorating the Color Line: The National Mammy Monument Controversy of the 1920s” (2003)
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Week Five: Land, Resources, and Destiny

Monday, February 18 (GROUP B)

- Frederick Jackson Turner, "Significance of the Frontier" (1893)
- Leo Marx, "Technology: The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept" (1997)
- Bill McKibben, "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math" (2012)

Wednesday, February 20 (GROUP C)

- Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, chapters 7 & 9

Week Six: Exam/This is What It Sounds Like to Study America

Monday, February 25

EXAM #1

Wednesday, February 27

- Michael Kazin, "Introduction" and "Inheritance," *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (1995)

ALSO to prepare for class students are asked to listen to

- Bruce Springsteen - "We Take Care of Our Own" (2012)
- Kid Rock - "Born Free" (2010)

These two songs can be found on YouTube, Spotify, and are available for purchase on iTunes.

GUEST LECTURER: Chris Rzigalinski

Week Seven: Race and American Identities

Monday, March 4 (GROUP D)

- Larsen, *Passing*, Section 1

Wednesday March 6 (GROUP A)

- Larsen, *Passing*, Sections 2 & 3

Week Eight: The Other Side of the Tracks

Monday, March 11

In-class movie: *Pretty in Pink* (1986)

Wednesday, March 13

In-class movie: *Pretty in Pink* (1986)

SPRING BREAK!

Week Nine: American Citizenship and Belonging

Monday, March 25 (GROUP B)

- *Citizen 13660* (in its entirety, including preface)

Wednesday, March 27 (GROUP C)

- Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, chapters 10 & 11
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Week Ten: Guantánamo

Monday, April 1 (GROUP D)

- Amy Kaplan, "Where is Guantánamo?" (2005)
- Naomi Paik, "Carceral Quarantine at Guantánamo: Legacies of US Imprisonment of Haitian Refugees, 1991 - 1994," (2013)
- Paul Kramer, "The Water Cure," (2008)

Wednesday, April 3 (GROUP A)

- Karen Greenberg, "World Gone Wrong," (2009)

GUEST LECTURER: Professor Michael Strauss, Centre d'Etudes Diplomatiques et Stratégiques, Paris

Week Eleven: The Post 9-11 Security State/Exam

Monday, April 8 (GROUP B)

- Mahmood Mamdani, selection from *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*

GUEST LECTURER: Sylvia Chan-Malik

Wednesday, April 10

EXAM #2

Week Twelve: Constructing Gender and Sexuality

Monday, April 15

In-Class Film: *Paris is Burning*

Wednesday, April 17 (GROUP C)

- Judith Butler, "Gender is Burning,"

GUEST LECTURER: Prof. Ben Sifuentes-Jauregui

Week Thirteen: American Countercultures and Protest

Monday, April 22 (GROUP D)

- Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, chapter 12
- Bryan Garman, "Seeger, Dylan, and the New Left,"
Quinn Norton, "Beyond Blowin' in the Wind': The Music of Occupy Wall Street,"
VISIT THIS LINK FOR ARTICLE - INCLUDES VIDEOS:
<http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2011/12/occupy-wall-street-music/>

GUEST LECTURER: Chris Rzigalinski

Wednesday, April 24 (GROUP A)

- Thomas Frank, *Pity the Billionaire*, Introduction through chapter 3

GUEST LECTURER: Prof. Jefferson Decker

Week Fourteen: Inequalities and the Future of Democracy

Monday, April 29 (GROUP B)

- Frank, *Pity the Billionaire*, chapters 4 & 5

Wednesday, May 1 (GROUP C)

- Frank, *Pity the Billionaire*, chapters 6, 7, & 8
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Week Fifteen: Conclusions

Monday, May 6 (GROUP D)

- Frank, *Pity the Billionaire*, chapter 9 to conclusion
- John Connelly, "The Betrayal of the American Dream," (2010)