

Thought and Society in the American Past

050:225:01

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 6:10 – 7:30 PM
Frelinghuysen Hall, Room B1

Prof. Andy Urban

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Office Hours: 1 – 3PM Mondays, or by appointment

Ruth Adams Building 205E

Course Description

This course examines key American cultural constructions of the long nineteenth century, from the Revolutionary era to the eve of World War I. Analyzing a variety of historical, visual, literary, and performance texts from the era – as well as scholarly texts – we'll explore the central political, economic, and social events of this period, and how different actors understood their meanings.

American Studies Department Learning Goals Met by this Course

- **Cultural Competency:** The American Studies student will be knowledgeable about historical and present-day diversity (including gender, race, class, and sexuality, among many others), and the range of perspectives and subjectivities that have defined the American experience. The student will develop the ability to apply conceptual frameworks rooted in cultural and historical analysis to their lived experiences, practices, and future aspirations.
- **Research Competency:** Students will learn how to write and speak effectively and clearly, demonstrating the ability to explain the complex meanings and significance of a text. Students will learn to formulate a cogent argument supported by evidence.
- **Global Competency:** The American studies student will understand the history, culture, and politics of the United States in the context of large-scale global changes, and the place of the US in the world.

Learning Goals Specific to this Course

- Students will gain a framework of factual knowledge pertaining to the long nineteenth century—historical, literary, cultural and scholarly—on which to build interpretation and understanding of historical and cultural phenomena.
- Students will learn to analyze historical texts across the range of cultural production (written, visual, performative) from an interdisciplinary perspective, and to write lucidly and critically about them.

Required Readings:

- Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), ISBN # 9780801890079
- Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Marrow Tradition*, edited by Werners Sollors, A Norton Critical Edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012 [1901]), ISBN# 9780393934144
- Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1985 [1905]), ISBN# 9780140187298.

In addition to the above books, all of the assigned chapters, articles, and primary sources that appear in the syllabus are posted as .pdf files on the course's SAKAI site under the heading "Resources." You are required to complete these readings as well.

Assignment and Grading Overview

Additional information on the assignments will be provided in separate handouts.

Primary Source Diary – 20%

In-Class Midterm Exam (**Tuesday, March 10**) – 20%

Essay on *The Marrow of Tradition* and *The House of Mirth* – 25%

Final Exam (**May 7, 8 – 11PM**) – 25%

Participation and Attendance – 10%

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.

Class Policies

Please make sure that you are receiving and checking SAKAI announcements via email.

I regularly use the site to update class information, assignments, etc. **You are responsible for keeping up-to-date with class information and making sure that you are connected.**

Attendance in the seminar is mandatory.

Each student is allowed one unexcused absence during the semester (although you are still responsible for any materials we have covered). Each additional unexcused absence will result in deductions from your participation grade.

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.

Unexcused late assignments will receive a deduction.

Please do not text, use the internet, chat online, etc. during our seminar. If you do you will be marked as absent for that class.

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. I take plagiarism very seriously, and will do all I can to fail you if you are caught violating this policy.

Honor Pledge:

I pledge on my honor that I will adhere to all aspects of the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy. By accepting this syllabus and enrolling in this course, you assume responsibility for knowing the above policies and the possible penalties – including suspension and expulsion – should you violate the Honor Pledge.

Take an interactive tutorial on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:
<http://sccweb.scc-net.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/Intro.html>

Class Schedule and Assigned Readings

Readings correspond to the day they will be discussed and need to be completed before class. You are required to bring readings to class with you, since we will refer to the text directly. Failure to bring readings to class will result in deductions from your participation grade.

Primary source texts appear in the boxes below.

January 20

Introductions

Inventing and Constructing the Nation: The Early Republic, 1783-1824

January 22

- Paul Finkelman, "Making a Covenant with Death: Slavery and the Constitutional Convention," in *Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson* (1996).
- Linda Kerber, "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment – An American Perspective," *American Quarterly* 28 (1976): 187-205.

- Abigail Adams, letter to John Adams, March 31, 1776
- Thomas Jefferson, excerpts from *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1781)

January 27

- Joanne Freeman, "Dueling as Politics," in *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (2002).
- Andrew Cockburn, "Washington is Burning," *Harper's Magazine*, Sept. 2014

- Thomas Jefferson, Annual Message to Congress, 1803
- Excerpts from Lewis and Clark, Expedition Journals, 1803
- Monroe Doctrine, 1823

January 29

- Rockman, *Scraping By*, Introduction, chs. 1 & 2

February 3

- Rockman, *Scraping By*, chs. 3, 4, & 5

February 5

- Rockman, *Scraping By*, ch. 6

Expansions: The Market Revolution, Manifest Destiny, and Immigration, 1824-1882

February 10

- Rockman, *Scraping By*, chs. 7, 8, & conclusion

February 12

- John Lauritz Larson, "The Market Revolution in Early America: An Introduction," *OAH Magazine of History* (2005)

- Henry David Thoreau, "Economy," excerpts from *Walden* (1854)
- Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" (1855)

February 17

- Theda Perdue, "The Legacy of Indian Removal," *Journal of Southern History* 78, no. 1 (2012): 1-35

- Andrew Jackson, "On Indian Removal" (1830)
- Lucy Ames Butler, "Swept into Eternity" (1839)

February 19

In Class Film: John Ford, *The Searchers* (1956)

February 24

In Class Film: John Ford, *The Searchers* (1956)

February 26

- Amy S. Greenberg, "A Gray-Eyed Man: Character, Appearance, and Filibustering," *Journal of the Early Republic* 20 (Winter 2001): 673-99.

- John L. O'Sullivan on *Manifest Destiny*, 1839

March 3

- Eric Lott, “Blackface and Blackness: The Minstrel Show in American Culture,” from *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (1993)
- Krystyn Moon, “Toward Exclusion: American Popular Songs on Chinese Immigration, 1850-1882,” in *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance, 1850s-1920s* (2005)

Slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction, 1850-1877

March 5

- Walter Johnson, “Turning People into Products,” in *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (2001)

- Dred Scott Decision: To the Free Voters of Ohio (c. 1858)

March 10

In-Class Midterm Exam

March 12

In Class Film: Steve McQueen, *12 Years a Slave* (2013)

- Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” (1852)

***** SPRING BREAK *****

March 24

In Class Film: Steve McQueen, *12 Years a Slave* (2013)

***** NO CLASS, MARCH 26 *****

March 31

- George Fitzhugh, excerpts from *Cannibals All! Or, Slaves Without Masters* (1857)

April 4

- Drew Gilpin Faust, "Dying," in *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (2009)
- Mark E. Neely, "Was the Civil War a Total War?" *Civil War History* 50, 4 (2004): 434-458.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Anderson, Letter from a Freedman to His Old Master (1865)▪ Mississippi Black Code, 1865▪ Department of Immigration and Labor, <i>Debow's Review</i>, 1867 |
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"Jim Crow," the Gilded Age, Imperialism, and the Dawn of the Twentieth Century, 1877-1914

April 7

- Chesnut, *The Marrow of Tradition*, 5-50
- Chesnut, excerpt from *The Courts and the Negro*, 224-226

April 9

- Chesnut, *The Marrow of Tradition*, 51-103

April 14

- Chesnut, *The Marrow of Tradition*, 104-151
- Julia Lee, "Estrangement on a Train: Race and Narratives of American Identity," *ELH* 75, no. 2 (2008): 345-365

***** NO CLASS, APRIL 16 *****

April 21

- Chesnut, *The Marrow of Tradition*, 152 - end
- Primary Sources Relating to the Wilmington Race Riot, 272-311

April 23

- Wharton, *House of Mirth*, 3-98

April 28

- Wharton, *House of Mirth*, 99-209

April 30

- Wharton, *House of Mirth*, 210 - end