

Topics in American Studies: 050:301:01
The Concept and Meaning of Home in American Life

MW, 3:55-5:15PM
Ruth Adams Building 204

Instructor Andrew Urban
aturban@rci.rutgers.edu

Office: **Ruth Adams Building 016**
Office Hours: **Mondays, 1-3 PM and by appointment**

Course Description

This course examines the concept of “home” in the United States, and the competing cultural, political, and economic meanings that have been attached to American domesticity. Historically, the home has occupied a central place in the way that Americans think about gender, sexuality, race, and the organization of labor. The home is a frequent subject of political discourse, legal rulings, and economic planning. Projects of nation-building and national defense often use “home” and “nation” interchangeably. Depictions of domestic life, captured in phrases like the “nuclear family” and “the broken home,” provide the concept of home with further significance. Through an engagement with novels, film, advertising, and landscape and architectural design, this course will explore the importance that Americans have assigned to the concept of home, and why there is (allegedly) “no place like it.”

Department Learning Goals Met by this Course:

Students will be able to synthesize an interdisciplinary dialogue among the different disciplinary methodologies that compose American Studies investigation of American culture across time and space in the history, politics, literature, and arts of the peoples of the United States, as well as the Americas. Students will be able to write well; speak articulately; and think critically, analytically, and creatively.

Learning Goals of this Specific Course:

- a) To assess the significance of home and domesticity in American life, and to evaluate in what ways these concepts and themes have exercised a unique role in American politics, nation and empire building, economic organization, fiction and film, and in relationship to the construction of race, gender, and sexuality
- b) To offer a detailed, nuanced, and sustained analysis of how home has been defined both normatively, and through radical and alternative perspectives
- c) To understand how the concepts of home and domesticity are historical, and have changed over time

Readings - **YOU MUST BRING ALL PRINTED READINGS TO CLASS**

- Frances Harper, *Iola Leroy: Or Shadows Uplifted* (Oxford University Press, 1990), ISBN: 0195063244
- Jane Simonsen, *Making Home Work: Domesticity and Native American Assimilation in the American West, 1860-1919* (UNC Press, 2006), ISBN: 0807830321
- Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (Basic Books, 2008), ISBN: 0465010202
- Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (Anchor, 1998), ISBN: 038549081X

In addition to the following books, there are a number of required readings that have been posted as pdf files on the course's SAKAI site, under the heading "Resources." Readings that are available through SAKAI appear on the syllabus followed by a *. You are required to bring a hard copy of these readings to class on the days they have been assigned.

Grading/QUIPs:

Midterm Exam – 15% (IN-CLASS, February 28)

Midterm Essay – 15% (DUE In-Class, April 4)

- Formal details and instructions to follow

Final Project/Essay/In-Class Presentation – 25% (DUE In-Class, April 27)

- For your final project, you will create an online exhibition and write an accompanying essay that examines how specific themes and images of home and domesticity have been used to market and advertise consumer products. (Formal details and instructions to follow.)

Final Exam – 20% (Date TBA: <http://finalexams.rutgers.edu/>)

In-Class Participation – 10%

QUIPS – 15%

Participation and Inquiry QUIPs: In order to facilitate discussion each student will be required to submit a total of 5 QUIPs (Question Issue or Problem) via SAKAI in the DISCUSSION section by midnight prior to when our class meets. QUIPs should be a paragraph or two in length, and bring up a question, an issue, or connections that relate to the reading for next day's class. Three QUIPs must be completed before the Midterm Exam, and the remaining two

QUIPs after. Otherwise, it is up to you to determine when you want to post and for what readings.

Grading Scale:

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

Attendance

This is a lecture-discussion seminar. Attendance and participation are important in our work in the course. You are allowed 3 absences for any reason whatsoever; **each** subsequent absence will result in a 3-point deduction from the grade on your final. Repeated excessive lateness (>10min) will count as absences. Excuse notes are unnecessary.

- Note: there are no “minus-grades” at Rutgers.
- All special accommodation requests must be brought to my attention the first two weeks. Full disability policies and procedures are at <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html>.
- All cell phones and hand-held devices must be turned off.

All exams and assignments must be turned in on time; no material will be accepted late. Unexcused late assignments will receive a deduction.

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.

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/Readings Schedule

Note: Readings must be completed prior to class, on the day they are listed.

Week One (1/19): Introduction; Terms; the Concept of Home

Week Two: Domesticity in a Historic Context

1/24 – Linda Kerber, “The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment – An American Perspective,” *American Quarterly* 28 (1976): 187-205.*

1/26 – Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 151-174.*

Week Three: Slavery and the Home

1/31 – Harper, *Iola Leroy*, chs. I-VIII

2/2 – Harper, *Iola Leroy*, chs. IX – XIX

Week Four: Slavery and the Home (cont.); The Empire of the Home

2/7 – Harper, *Iola Leroy*, chs. XX – Conclusion

2/9 – Amy Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity,” *American Literature* 70 (1998): 581-606.*

Week Five: The Empire of the Home (cont.)

2/14 – Simonsen, *Making Home Work*, intro-2

2/16 – Simonsen, *Making Home Work*, chs. 3 & 5

Week Six: The Empire of the Home (cont.)

2/21 – Simonsen, *Making Home Work*, ch. 6 – end &

2/23 – NO READING (Exam Review)

Week 7: Exam; Designing the Home

2/28 - MIDTERM EXAM

3/2 - Ted Steinberg, "The Color of Money," from *American Green: The Obsessive Quest for the Perfect Lawn** &

Dolores Hayden, "Architecture: Roof, Fire, and Center," from *Redesigning the American Dream**

Week 8: The Sounds of Home

3/7 - NO READING (In-Class Music Activity)

3/9 - (In-Class Music Activity)

Week 9: SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS!

Week 10: The Political Economy of Housing

3/21 - David Freund, "Marketing the Free Market: State Intervention and the Politics of Prosperity in Metropolitan American," from *The New Suburban History** &

3/23 - Brian J. Miller, "The Struggle Over Redevelopment at Cabrini-Green," *Journal of Urban History* 34 (2008): 944-960.*

Week 11: Domestic Utopias/Dystopias

3/28 - Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, chs. I - V

3/30 - Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, VI - XI

(IMAGES AND QUESTIONS FOR FINAL ASSIGNMENT DUE IN-CLASS)

Week 12: Domestic Utopias/Dystopias (cont.)

4/4 - (In-Class viewing of *Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples Temple*, dir. Stanley Nelson)

4/6 – Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, XII – end

Week 13: Domestic Security

4/11 – May, *Homeward Bound*, intro– ch. 3

4/13 – May, *Homeward Bound*, chs. 4 – 5

(MIDTERM ESSAY DUE IN CLASS)

Week 14: Domestic Security; Emotional Labor and the Home

4/18 – May, *Homeward Bound*, ch. 7 – end

4/20 – Arlie Russell Hochschild, “Emotional Geography and the Flight Plan of Capitalism,” from *The Commercialization of Intimate Life**

Week 15: Lost Homes and the Future of American Domesticity

4/25 – Paul Reyes, “Bleak Houses,” *Harper's Monthly* (Oct. 2008)*

4/27 – NO READING (In-Class Student Presentations / Course Evaluations)

(FINAL ASSIGNMENTS NEED TO BE POSTED ONLINE)

Week 16: Conclusions

5/2 – NO READING (In-Class Student Presentations / Conclusions)