

AMS 356/HIS 356K

Main Currents in American Culture Since 1865

Fall 2017

Tu/Th 11:00am – 12:30pm
SZB 370

Instructor: Dr. Carrie Andersen

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Overview

This course examines the cultural history of America, 1865 to the present, focusing on an array of social, political, economic, cultural, and technological forces that have driven the nation's transformations since the Civil War. We will investigate the development of, and challenges to, national identity, the centrality of technological change in American culture, the construction of American empire on a global scale, the impact of race, gender, sexuality, class, religion, ethnicity, and ability upon American identity, and the cultural forms that have expressed and shaped Americans' visions of themselves and their nation.

Driving Questions

- What does America mean? What does it mean to be American?
- Who has been included/excluded from American cultural life since the Civil War?
- How have technological developments and modernization played a role in shoring up narratives of identity, citizenship, and nation?
- What is "the good life"? How can we glean lessons from the past in imagining a better future for all Americans?

Flags/Requirements

This course will fulfill a **cultural diversity** flag requirement. Cultural diversity flag courses are designed to "increase your familiarity with the variety and richness of the American cultural experience. Courses carrying this flag ask you to explore the beliefs, practices, and histories of at least one cultural group that has experienced persistent marginalization. Many of these courses also encourage you to reflect on your own cultural experiences."

This course also fulfills the history core requirement.

Goals and Expected Outcomes

Students will leave this course with:

- The ability to critically analyze a variety of different media (including photography, visual art, television/film, music, and new media)
- The ability to draw conclusions about an historical moment based on primary source analyses
- The ability to synthesize multiple sources and ideas in analyzing the intricacies of 20th

Required Materials

All students will be required to purchase the coursepack, available at Jenn's Copies (2518 Guadalupe).

Some readings will also be available on Canvas; online readings will be indicated on the course syllabus.

Finally: you will be required to consume a series of films, online media clips, and television shows. These are either free to watch on sites like YouTube or can be rented digitally for a small price. I will also place DVDS of movies on reserve at the library.

Course Website

Familiarize yourself with our course website at canvas.utexas.edu. There, you will find an online version of the syllabus, a selection of required course readings and media texts, communication and announcements from the teaching staff, and assignment/exam information. **Check Canvas early and often.**

Grading Scale

A 93-100 | A- 90-92 | B+ 87-89 | B 83-86
B- 80-82 | C+ 77-79 | C 73-76 | C- 70-72
D+ 67-69 | D 63-66 | D- 60-62 | F 0-59

century American cultural life

- A nuanced, richer understanding of the complexities and contradictions that inhere in American identity and culture
 - A clear understanding of the diversity of American cultural history
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Assignments and Exams

- Exam 1: October 3 (25%)
- Exam 2: November 7 (30%)
- Analysis of a Technology: December 7 (15%)
- Final Exam: during the exam period (30%)

Attendance Bonus: Students who miss two or fewer classes (excluding religious observance/athletic absences with documentation) will receive two percentage points added to their final exam grade (e.g. if a student receives an 88% on the final exam and missed no classes, she would be bumped up to a 90% on the final exam). Students are responsible for signing in with Christine *before* lecture begins in order to receive credit for attendance. This policy will begin on 9/6.

Exams: Exams will require students to define and analyze a series of short answer IDs (important terms from lectures) and a longer written essay. Students will be required to draw upon both lecture material AND course readings in the essays. The final exam will be a longer version of the two in-class essays.

Technology Paper: this assignment—a 4-5 page paper—will require students to perform primary source research of historical newspapers and magazine articles to understand how Americans reacted to certain technologies as they emerged, and how those reactions reflected broader cultural currents. Further information about this assignment will be distributed later in the semester.

How to Succeed in This Class

1. Show up to every lecture.
2. Complete the required readings on schedule.
3. Take thorough notes and participate in in-class discussions (when applicable).
4. Visit office hours (either Christine's or Dr. Andersen's) when you have questions about course material or expectations.
5. Keep on your toes re: course announcements on Canvas, exam dates, and assignment and reading due dates, and plan ahead if you know you'll have the occasional insanely busy week.
6. Stay in communication with the teaching staff if anything happens that hinders your ability to succeed in this course.

What do I do if...

...I have a question about course requirements, assignments, grades, or the course schedule?

First, email Christine (ccastro@utexas.edu); if your question is on the complicated side, feel free to get in touch with Dr. Andersen. Please put "AMS 356" in the subject line of your email so we don't miss it. And please leave time for us to get back to you: you'll be better served if you email one of us a question on the course material a week before the exam versus 10:00pm the night before the exam.

...I slept in and missed class?

You are responsible for your class attendance and for all course lectures/readings. Ask a classmate to share his/her notes, visit Christine or Dr. Andersen in office hours, and complete the readings.

...I have a disability that needs to be accommodated?

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video). Faculty members are not required to provide accommodations without an official letter from SSD. Please present your documentation from SSD to Dr. Andersen by September 14.

...someone is behaving in a way that makes me feel uncomfortable?

If you are worried or feel unsafe, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

...I will be absent for a sporting event/religious holiday?

If you know you will be absent during the semester for religious observance you must notify me at least 14 days before your absence. You must also notify me of any absences due to sanctioned athletic travel in advance of your absences. Advance notice of absences is essential for the teaching staff to help fill you in on course announcements, course material, and any other miscellaneous (but important) communication, as well as the need for any make-up exams or assignments.

...it's the day of an exam and I'm really, really sick/a family member or close friend died/my apartment burned down?

To be able to make up an exam due to **major emergencies and unforeseen circumstances**, you'll need to do two things:

First, get an official doctor's note signifying that you were sick the day of the given exam, or any kind of documentation about the condition that prevented you from coming to class. Second, email Christine, and Dr. Andersen ASAP regarding your unexpected absence (remember: put "AMS 356" in the subject line). Keeping us in the loop in these situations is absolutely essential. We are always happy to work with students if major issues arise, but we need to communicate to work things out!

...I was working on my paper and I think I need an extra few days?

Late assignments will be docked a full letter grade (10%) each day that they are late. Turning in an assignment more than three days late will result in a zero for the

assignment.

...I want to use my laptop or phone in class?

Plan to take hand-written notes during lecture. Studies have shown that retention of information is *far superior* among students who take handwritten notes over those who type them up. Keep your cell phone in your pocket, your backpack, or purse—in other words, out of sight. If you have a disability that requires the use of a laptop or tablet for note-taking, that must be documented with an official letter from the SSD.

...I see a gun in the classroom?

Students and faculty are permitted by law to carry concealed handguns, but they must remain invisible at all times. As per University policy, "The open carry of handguns is not allowed on the campus. Therefore, if you ever see a gun, do not attempt to question or approach the carrier, but immediately CALL 911. Police are trained to handle this situation." Please note that if either member of the teaching staff sees a gun, we will likewise act accordingly.

...I don't understand UT's policy on cheating/plagiarism?

In an effort to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and integrity in the classroom, cheating and plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. Cheating or plagiarism will result in an automatic zero for the assignment or exam and will be reported to the Dean of Students. University policies regarding academic dishonesty are available at http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acadint_what_is.php. If you are not sure if what you are doing is considered plagiarism, please contact a member of the teaching staff before an assignment is due. A guide to avoiding plagiarism can also be found on Canvas.

Course Schedule

Date	Lecture Topic	Reading (due day of class)
8/31	Introduction	NO READING
9/5	Reconstructing America	Whitelaw Reid, "Atlanta," in <i>After the War: A Southern Tour</i> (New York: Moore, Wiltach and Baldwin, 1866) Keyword: "South"
9/7	Bridging City and Country: the Railroad	William Cronon, "Rails and Water," in <i>Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West</i> (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992)
9/12	Electrifying America at the Columbian Exposition and Beyond	"Grover to Press the Button," <i>Daily Globe</i> , May 1, 1893, http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90059522/1893-05-01/ed-1/seq-1.pdf Carolyn Marvin, "Dazzling the Multitude," <i>When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
9/14	Wild West Shows: "Progress" and the Frontier	Richard Slotkin, "The White City and the Wild West," in <i>Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America</i> (New York: Harper Collins, 1992) Keyword: "Civilization"
9/19	Photographing the Other Half in Gilded Age America	Jacob Riis, "The Bend," and "The Problem of the Children," in <i>How the Other Half Lives</i> (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890)
9/21	Scientific Management, Fordism, and Labor	Jill Lepore, "Not So Fast," <i>The New Yorker</i> , October 12, 2009
9/26	Imperial Culture and Practice	Mark Twain, "To the Person Sitting in Darkness," <i>The North American Review</i> , 1901 Keyword: "Empire"
9/28	Nostalgia for the Plantation	John Crowe Ransom, "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," in <i>I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition</i> (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977) Keyword: "White"
10/3	EXAM 1	NO READING
10/5	Environmental Catastrophe in the Dust Bowl	Caroline Henderson, "Letters from the Dust Bowl," <i>The Atlantic</i> , May 1936
10/10	WWII Propaganda and the Boundaries of Citizenship	Helen Black and William H. Thompson, "A War Within a War: A World War II Buffalo Soldier's Story," <i>The Journal of Men's Studies</i> 20, no. 1 (32-46)
10/12	GUEST LECTURE	TBD
10/17	The Rise of the 'Burbs: Mass Producing America	Cynthia Henthorn, "What Did Happen to the Dreamworld?" <i>From Submarines to Suburbs: Selling a Better America, 1939-1959</i> (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006) Keyword: "Domestic"
10/19	Cold War Fear on the Home Front	"Fallout Shelters," <i>Life Magazine</i> , September 15, 1961, p. 95-108, https://books.google.com/books?id=nVQEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=september+15,+1961&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjP-5tsjVAhVQ5WMKHQc-BVEQ6AEIKDAA#v=onepage&q=september%2015%2C%201961&f=false
10/24	Space Mania and National Power	Tom Wolfe, "In Single Combat," in <i>The Right Stuff</i> (New York: Picador, 1979)
10/26	MEET IN LBJ LIBRARY	Lyndon Johnson, "And We Shall Overcome," speech, March 15, 1965
10/31	Broadcasting the Civil Rights Movement	Sasha Torres, "Civil Rights and Televisual Information," in <i>Black, White, and in Color: Television and Black Civil Rights</i> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003)

11/2	Gender, Sexuality, and Popular Culture	Susan Douglas, "Throwing Out Our Bras," in <i>Where the Girls Are: Growing up Female with the Mass Media</i> (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1994)
11/7	EXAM 2	NO READING
11/9	NO CLASS	NO READING – take a break!
11/14	El Movimiento	B. James Barrera, "The 1968 Edcouch-Elsa High School Walkout: Chicano Student Activism in a South Texas Community," <i>Aztlán</i> 29, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 93-122
11/16	LSD and the Counterculture	Tom Wolfe, "What Do You Think Of My Buddha?" "The Rusky Dusky Neon Dust," in <i>Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test</i> (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1968)
11/21	Pushing Back: The New Right	Jerry Falwell, "Listen, America," in <i>Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right: A Brief History With Documents</i> (New York: Bedford, 2012)
		WATCH: "Of God and Caesar," <i>God in America</i> (Available on PBS: http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/view/)
11/28	Bowling Alone? Community and Social Trust	LISTEN: "Trust Me," Freakonomics Radio, November 10, 2016, http://freakonomics.com/podcast/trust-me/
		Keyword: "Community"
11/30	9/11 Culture	WATCH: 24, Season 2, Episode 8, "3:00pm – 4:00pm" (available on Amazon Prime Video)
		Keyword: "Orientalism"
12/5	Unmanned War and American Empire	Ian G.R. Shaw, "Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare," <i>Geopolitics</i> 18 (2013): 536-559
12/7	Wrap-up	Danielle Tcholakian, "I Want to Persuade You to Care About Other People," <i>Longreads</i> , August 2017, https://longreads.com/2017/08/24/i-want-to-persuade-you-to-care-about-other-people/

Please note: I reserve the right amend the syllabus as necessary due to unforeseen circumstances.