

OLD FRONTIERS/NEW BORDERS:	
	Rethinking
American Studies	

AMST 601

Fall 2005

Mon. 2-4:45

Professor Bill Mullen

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Heavilon #315

Office Hours: 12-2 Monday; 2-4 W.; 12-2 F and by appointment

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Course Description:

This course will explore the historical development of American Studies as an academic field and a method of inquiry. It will draw upon and challenge both traditional and more contemporary paradigms for constituting knowledge about the discursive field of the United States. In so doing it will examine the following set of questions in relation to each other:

- *Is there an American “exceptionalism” and if so what is it?
- *What are and were the political, cultural and social currents underwriting the development of American Studies as an academic discipline?
- *Who is allowed to “speak” and who is “silenced” in the practice of American Studies?
- *How do recently developed paradigms for work in American Studies, including not just race, sexuality, class and gender but transnationalism, “cultures of U.S. imperialism” and the border---advance or complicate knowledge produced about the nation state.

Students in the course will be expected to lead one seminar discussion, to write several short essay response papers, and to develop one extended seminar paper on an important, original topic in contemporary American Studies scholarship. They will also produce an annotated bibliography of American Studies sources and a provisional syllabus for their own American Studies course.

“Old Frontiers/New Borders: Rethinking American Studies” will emphasize American Studies as a dynamic theory and practice: that is, as a way of producing valuable academic work about the U.S. and the world and of fostering student and teacher citizenship that extends that work beyond the borders of the academy.

Required Texts:

Virgin Land: The American West as Myth and Symbol Henry Nash Smith Harvard UP
067939557

Messy Beginnings: Postcoloniality and Early American Studies Eds. Malini Schueller
and Edward Watts Rutgers UP 0813532337

Playing Indian Philip Deloria Yale UP 0300080670

Black Feminist Thought Patricia Hill Collins Routledge 0415925177

Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination Toni Morrison Vintage
0679745424

The Bluest Eye Toni Morrison Plume 0452282195

Huckleberry Finn Mark Twain Norton 0393966402

*Cultures of United States Imperialism Ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease Duke
University Press 0822314134

Black British Cultural Studies Reader Eds. Houston Baker, Mantia Diawara, Ruth
Lindeborg 0226144828

Queer Theory: An Introduction Annamarie Jagose NYU Press 0814742343

Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics Lisa Lowe Duke UP
0822318644

Culture in the Age of Three Worlds Michael Denning Verso 1859844499

The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics
George Lipsitz Temple University Press 1566396352

Feminism on the Border Sonia Saldivar-Hull University of California Press
0520207335

The House on Mango Street Sandra Cisneros Vintage 0679734775

Notes on Required Texts: Please feel free to buy used editions of any of these books to
keep down costs; most should be available through interlibrary loan as well.

*Optional purchase. This is an important text but I have decided not to assign readings
from it. You may return it if need be. Apologies for any inconvenience, fiscal, temporal
or otherwise.

Course Requirements:

Seminar Paper: This paper will exist as three stages: 1) a 1-2 page proposal due in Week VII of the semester; 2) an 8-10 page conference length paper due in Week X of the semester; 3) a 20-25 page length article/seminar paper due at the end of the semester; 4) An in-class 15 minute presentation of your paper's arguments and findings on the last day of the semester. You will be graded at each stage of the work. Your final grade for the project will be a composite of each stage.

The paper itself should address a theme, problem, issue or idea that you perceive as urgent to current American Studies scholarship. The essay must make use of at least three 'primary' sources on our course reading list, and 10 secondary sources. The logic of the assignment is to mimic the professional course of an essay from conception to publication. **40 percent of your grade**

Thematic Bibliography and essay: Identify a problem, thematic or issue central to the course and devise a minimum 10 source bibliography of primary and secondary sources around it. The Bibliography should take consideration of the *historical development* of the problem/issue. That is, include some of the "earliest" published scholarship you can find on the subject and include the most recent available, too.

The accompanying bibliographic essay, 2-4 pages, should do several things: 1) Explain why the organizing theme or issue represented by your bibliography is important to American Studies; 2) Explain the bibliographic logic you have used in preparing the list; 3) Explain what the bibliography indicates about the changing discourse around the subject of the list; 4) Explain how the bibliography might be used by a scholar in the field to launch a critical analysis of the subject. The bibliography and critical essay are due by **Week XII. A hardcopy comes to me. E-mail as a Microsoft Word attachment to your classmates. 20 percent of your final grade.**

American Studies Syllabus: Prepare a provocative, dedicated and original syllabus for your own 15 week AMST 601 course. Choose a title/thematic for the course. Devise assignments and protocols. Include a 2 page "teaching/pedagogical" statement explaining how your syllabus discloses your own assessment of key issues in American Studies. Bring a copy of your syllabus to class on the final day and e-mail an electronic version by the same day to everyone in the class. Prepare a ten-minute presentation for the final day explaining how your syllabus culminates your present thinking about the field of American Studies and your "subject position" within it as a student and student/teacher. Finally, be prepared to discuss the pedagogical value, i.e. impact, you hope your syllabus has on future students in the field. **Due week XIV. 20 percent of your final grade.**

In-class Facilitation: Identify one week during the semester in which you will facilitate class discussion. Facilitation means, to me, bringing to class both written and structural "prompts" for the class. The objective is to provoke reflection and discussion on the week's readings via nuanced, provocative analysis of the text. Please come to class with

an *argument* or thesis about the meaning of what we are reading. Avoid description and summary. Try to find points of conflict, contrast, tension that are fruitful for the class to analyze, debate, resolve. **20 percent of your final grade.**

Plagiarism: Will be cause for failure of the course. The submission of plagiarized work in whole or in part is a violation of University policy and will result in penalties up to failure in the course and referral to the dean of the college. Please use MLA citation or Chicago citation style as appropriate to the material at hand. Please also consult with me in advance if you have questions about proper citation form.

Course Schedule:

Unit I: Early Frontiers in American Studies: Settlement, Conquest and the Limits of Consensus

August 22

Week I: Problems and Possibilities for Rethinking American Studies. Read and discuss ASA Presidential Addresses by Washington, Sanchez and Radway.

August 29th

Week II: Defining Empire: Is America Postcolonial?

Ed. Malini Schueller and Edward Watts, *Messy Beginnings:*

Postcoloniality and Early American Studies

Read Introduction and essays by: Donaldson, Bross, Watts, Greeson, Burnham, Schueller, Drexler, Brooks

Week III: Monday September 5th Happy Labor Day!

No Class

EVENT: Malini Schueller, “Postcoloniality, American Studies and the Global Rush”

Friday, September 9th

2-4 p.m.

Stewart Center Rm. 314

Reception to follow at home of Bill, Liz and Max

123 Pathway Ln. W. Lafayette

You should be there!!!!

Sept. 12th

Week IV: “The Myth and Symbol School and the Limits of Consensus”

Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land*

September 19th Indigeneity and Performing Hegemony

Week V: *Playing Indian* Philip Deloria

September 26 Race and Literary Manifest Destiny

Week VI: Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, Pt. II “Romancing the Shadow”
Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*

Unit II: Feminist Interventions and Border-Crossings

October 3: Chicana Interventions

Week VII: Sonia Saldivar-Hull *Feminism on the Border*
Sandra Cisneros *The House on Mango Street*
1-2 Page Proposal Due!

Oct. 10: October Break. No Class
Week VIII

EVENT: Sonia Saldivar-Hull discusses gender, borders and American Studies
Friday, Oct. 14th.
2-4 p.m.
Stanley Coulter Rm. 239

On-campus reception to follow
You should be there!!!

Oct. 17th: New Histories/New Subjectivities

Week IX: Patricia Hill Collins *Black Feminist Thought*

Oct. 24th Literature as Theory/Theory as Literature

Week X: Toni Morrison *The Bluest Eye*
8-10 page conference paper due!

Oct. 31st Gender, Labor and Asian-American Citizenship

Week XI: Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*

November 3-6: American Studies Association Meeting in Washington D.C. You
Should Be There!!!!

Unit III: New Paradigms/New Futures in American Studies

Nov. 7 Queering American Studies

Week XII: Annamarie Jagose *Queer Theory: An Introduction*
Thematic Bibliography Due!

Nov. 14 American Studies and Whiteness Studies

Week XIII: George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*

Nov. 21: American Studies Transnationally

Week XIV: Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*

American Studies Syllabus Due!

Nov. 28 American Studies and/in Diaspora

Week XV: *Black British Cultural Studies Reader*

Read: Introduction; Ch. 1 Hall; Ch. 2 Carby; Ch. 3 Bhabha; Ch. 7 Hall;

Ch. 15 Diawara

Dec. 5 Bringing it all back home

Week XVI: **In-class presentations on seminar papers**

Final 20-25 page seminar paper due!