

**USA 200H1F**  
**Introduction to American Studies**  
**T 2-4; VC 215**

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**Office Hours: Office Hours: T 11:30-1:30; Th 2:30-4:30; 1 Devonshire Place, Room 326N**

**Course Description:** This introduction to the field of American Studies will engage with some of the great debates that have animated both the discipline and the republic itself, including does the ideal America consist of a skyscraper metropolis or rolling 'fields of amber grain'? Is America better understood as a nation or an empire? If the United States is indeed a nation of immigrants, then what does it mean to be a citizen? Working with keywords such as 'race,' 'frontier,' and 'community,' we will read influential examples of American Studies scholarship as we interrogate American culture as an object of study.

**Texts:** Except for Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, which is available at the U of T Bookstore, all texts available online through Blackboard class website.

**Evaluation:**

**Informed Participation (15%):** In this class, each student bears an equal responsibility for the discussion. You will be evaluated based on both the quality and quantity of your oral participation.

**Comparative Analysis (25%):** Choose from one of three assigned objects - images or a short text - and write a 5 page analysis, using two theoretical texts we've read so far this term. Due October 10.

**Essay (30%):** Write an 8 page essay analysing an assigned text. Due November 28.

**Final Exam (30%):** Scheduled during the official exam period; do not make travel arrangements until the exam schedule is announced.

**Late Policy:** The penalty for late essays is two percentage points a day to a maximum of fourteen points (e.g., from 80% to 66%). Essays will not be accepted more than one week after the due date unless accompanied by medical documentation.

**Plagiarism:** According to the Code of Behaviour established by the Governing Council of the University of Toronto, to plagiarize is "to represent as one's own any idea or expression of an idea or work of another." This includes borrowing ideas as well as words without attribution, from print and from online sources. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please contact me.

**Schedule:**

**September 12: Setting the Terms**

'The Star Spangled Banner'

## **Viewing the American Landscape:**

### **September 19: Imagining the Frontier**

Walt Whitman, 'Pioneers! O Pioneers!'

Bates and Ward, 'American the Beautiful'

Colonel Prentiss Ingraham, *Adventures of Buffalo Bill from Boyhood to Manhood* (Selections)

Frederick Jackson Turner, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History'

### **September 26: Inhabiting the Wilderness**

Wallace Stegner, 'Wilderness Letter'

William Cronon, 'The Trouble with Wilderness, Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature'

Christopher Columbus, Letter to the Sovereigns of 4 March 1493

Keeping America Beautiful 'Crying Indian' PSA

### **October 3: Defending the City**

Ralph Steiner, 'The City' (Film)

Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (Selections)

Walt Whitman, 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry'

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Selections)

## **Forging a Republic:**

### **October 10: A New Nation**

Declaration of Independence

Irving Washington, 'Rip Van Winkle'

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Selections)

John Gast, 'American Progress'

**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS DUE**

### **October 17: Exceptional Empire**

Teddy Roosevelt, 'The Strenuous Life'

Amy Kaplan, 'Left Alone with America: The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture'

## **Re-considering Citizenship:**

### **October 24: Making Race**

Langston Hughes, 'The Negro Speaks of Rivers,' 'Theme for English B,' 'Harlem'

W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Selections)

Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Selections)

### **October 31: Racing the Future**

Ta-Nehisi Cotes, 'The Case for Reparations'

Jesse Ferguson, BET Awards Speech (Online)

Wesley Morris, 'What We Talk About When We Talk about Hoodies' (Online)

'Weekend Passes': 1988 Bush presidential campaign 'Willie Horton' ad

## **NOVEMBER 7: READING WEEK**

### **November 14: Writing Women**

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Declaration of Rights and Sentiments*

Jane Tompkins, 'Sentimental Power: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Politics of Literary History'

Jessa Crispin, *Why I Am Not a Feminist* (Selections)

### **November 21: Immigration and the Culture Wars**

Israel Zangwill, *The Melting Pot* (Selections)

Emma Lazarus, 'The New Colossus'

Donald Trump, Immigration Speech

Alice Kessler-Harris, 'Cultural Locations: Positioning American Studies in the Great Debate'

### **November 28: America on Trial**

Arthur Miller, *The Crucible* (U of T Bookstore)

Salem Witch Trial transcripts

Judith Resnik, *Representing Justice: Invention, Controversy, and Rights in City-States and Democratic Courtrooms* (Selections)

**PAPER DUE**

**December 5: American Studies**

John Carlos Rowe, 'The Cultural Politics of the New American Studies' (excerpts)

Exam Review