Fall Semester 2003
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:00 – 3:15 p.m.
Room HHSI-205

Office: Room FO2-109
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Wednesdays 4:00-6:00 p.m.; Thursdays 12:00–1:30 p.m. and by appointment
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Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to the interdisciplinary study of American history, life, and culture. While it serves as a required introduction for those students interested in a major in American Studies, it also stands alone to encourage students to make connections between various aspects of society and culture at different moments in American history and to situate the interactions between peoples in a culturally diverse society within national and global contexts.

American Studies has been around for more than half a century, and is a vital, malleable, and growing academic enterprise. Scholars working within the American Studies tradition have posed new questions about American history and life, brought new perspectives to the study of the cultures of the United States, and have introduced new information into scholarly and public conversations about national identity and experience. In the process, American Studies has developed into an intensely self-reflective mode of inquiry, one constantly concerned with its methods, fields of study, intellectual coherence, and relation to both other disciplines and the world.

This course is part of the recently revived and reconceptualized Program in American Studies at CSULB. For the past several years, faculty from a number of different departments and programs on campus have been working to reimagine what "American Studies" should mean in the 21st century. Many of those conversations have found their way into both the American Studies major and this syllabus, which will revolve around three key issues—identity, place, and culture—to be explored in depth. As an overview, we will investigate American Studies as an enterprise, partly by reading essays on the history and present state of "American Studies" as a mode of inquiry and activism. We will then draw upon a variety of evidence in examining the imaginative and cultural work of fiction in antebellum America, the construction and contestation of racial and gender identities during the first American imperial era, and the imagination and representation of Los Angeles. Throughout the semester, we will work to ask pertinent, insightful questions about both course topics and the larger world with which we interact.

Course Design:

While parts of this course will use a lecture format, most of our class sessions will revolve around in-class discussions and analyses of American culture, usually approached through our course readings. Several of our regular sessions will be replaced with guest lectures, and field trips. This will enable you to meet and work with some of the faculty affiliated with American Studies at CSULB as they introduce us to their approaches to the many voices and many lives shaping American experiences.

Because of the flexibility of American Studies, students will actively assist in the growth and design of the Program and this introductory course. While I have expertise about some aspects of American history and culture, I operate under the assumption that each of you are likewise experts on topics and issues about which I
know little. Accordingly, despite the fact that I ultimately possess the power of the grade book, I hope to run this class in an open, democratic, and interactive manner.

**Required Course Texts:**


These books are available at the University Bookstore. Additional readings are included in a course packet (number 2054) available at Copy Pro (corner of Palo Verde and Atherton streets, 562-431-9974).

This course assumes and requires a basic understanding of American history. Those of you who feel you lack sufficient background should consult one of the many U.S. history textbooks that are available. I particularly like Peter N. Carroll & David W. Noble, *The Free & the Unfree: A Progressive History of the United States* (Penguin, 2001). You may also wish to consult the outlines of American history provided by the U.S. Information Agency from 1954 to 1994 that are available on-line at [http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/H/index.htm](http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/H/index.htm). All students should also possess both a quality dictionary and a style manual.

**Course Assignments & Grading:**

1. Three reaction papers, due dates below, 30% of final grade
2. Final paper, due December 19th, 50% of final grade (including preliminaries)
   - Final Paper Topic: Read something, or view something, or listen to something, and tell me about it, using the materials of the course that help you make the most sense of what you've read, seen, heard. Take about ten pages to do it. No more than fifteen.
3. Attendance, participation, and in-class assignments, 20% of final grade

Additional information about these assignments will be distributed and discussed in class.

**Course Policies:**

*Attendance:* Because we cover a great deal of material in this interactive course, prompt and regular attendance is a necessity. Students who miss classes run the risk of receiving a failing grade or receiving a lower grade than the student might have secured with regular attendance. Excused absences must be documented by a doctor's note, a note from the Dean, or advance notice from the Athletic Director. Absences for religious observances are excused; please let me know of dates in advance. I allow two unexcused absences during the semester; thereafter each subsequent unexcused absence will result in the subtraction of points from your participation grade.

*Classroom Environment:* You are strongly urged to ask questions and express opinions in this course, approaching readings and ideas actively and critically. As you do so, however, please strive to be courteous to your fellow students. To create a respectful and productive environment please avoid unnecessary distractions (such as ringing cell phones, beeping pagers, and conspicuous food consumption) during class meetings.

*Course Readings:* You are expected to have completed the day's readings prior to coming to class and to be prepared to participate in discussions. Always bring the texts we will be discussing to class.

*Disability Accommodation:* Any student who feels that he or she may need an accommodation for any sort of disability should make an appointment to see me during my office hours so we can make arrangements for you to complete the requirements of the class.
Papers: All work written outside the classroom must be typed or word-processed in a standard 10 or 12 point font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins. Your papers should, at a minimum, both present and critically analyze the main theoretical and historical arguments in your reading. All quotations must be cited by using parenthetical references, footnotes, or endnotes. If you are unsure about how or what to cite, please ask me. All papers should have your name, the course title and number, the due date, and an appropriate title or label for the assignment at the top. I strongly recommend that you keep copies of all your work, either on paper or on disk, for your protection.

Your papers will be evaluated for earnest effort and thoughtful, coherent content. Remember to clearly state your thesis and support your arguments with examples. Usage and grammar are not major concerns of grading, but a minimum mechanical competence to insure the "readability" of these papers is expected. I expect that you will proofread your papers and exams before handing them in. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day assigned unless otherwise noted. Electronic submission of papers is not allowed. If you know you are going to miss class on dates assignments are due you must be proactive and request an extension in advance. Late assignments will lose 5 points for each calendar day late and will not be accepted more than one week past their due date without a previously agreed to extension.

Plagiarism & Academic Integrity: Students in this class will be held to a high standard of academic integrity, which is defined as "the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception." Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. If I suspect all or part of an assignment may not be your own intellectual work I will ask to see your notes or drafts. I also may require electronic submission of the paper to facilitate running the paper through plagiarism-detecting databases. If you have any questions about academic integrity, please talk with me. I can and will fail a student for major infractions.

Student Services: If you need help with written assignments or require guidance on note-taking and critical reading, please take advantage of the Writer's Resource Lab (LAB-312; 985-4329) or the Learning Assistance Center (Library East 12; 985-5350).

Technology: The CSULB Technology Help Desk is now available for students. Help is available on a wide range of computer issues including: BeachBoard, Windows and Mac OS, CSULB Internet Accounts, Remote Connectivity, Microsoft Desktop Applications, Anti-Virus, Internet and Web related topics. Visit them on the web at http://helpdesk.csulb.edu or contact the THD by phone at 562-985-4959 or send Email to helpdesk@csulb.edu. All students should e-mail me (dmizelle@csulb.edu) during the first week of class in order to sign up for the class distribution list.

Course Schedule:

Despite its daunting appearance, there is substantial flexibility in this syllabus, which should be considered as a work in progress that will be changed during the semester as necessary and appropriate. Any changes, such as a reorganization of readings to accommodate additional guest lectures and/or field trips, will be discussed in class and distributed via e-mail. Supplemental in-class texts, such as film and musical selections, are not listed below.

Unit 1: What is American Studies? So What?

Tu Sep 02 Introduction
Th Sep 04 Reading: Lipsitz, introduction, chapters 1-2
Tu Sep 09 Reading: Lipsitz, chapters 3-4
Th Sep 11 Reading: Lipsitz, chapters 10 & 12
Tu Sep 16 Reading: Horwitz, "Introduction," to The American Studies Anthology; "Introduction" to Post-Nationalist American Studies, in CP
Th Sep 18  No Class; read ahead in Lipsitz and/or Melville
Tu Sep 23  Reading: Lipsitz, topics and chapters to be selected by students
Th Sep 25  Reading: Lipsitz, topics and chapters to be selected by students
Tu Sep 30  Guest Lecture: Sarah Schrank
           Reading: Schrank, "Picturing the Watts Towers: The Art and Politics of an Urban Landmark"
           in CP
Th Oct 02  Field Trip: Watts Towers
           Reaction Paper 1 due

Unit 2:  Melville, Moby-Dick, and America
Tu Oct 07  Ishmael, Queequeg, and the Spouter Inn—In-Class Reading Aloud of Chapter 3
           Reading: Melville, through chapter 20, "All Astir"
Th Oct 09  Library Orientation with Greg Armento, Spidell Room, Library
Tu Oct 14  Reading: Melville, through chapter 71, "The Jeroboam's Story"
Th Oct 16  Reading: Melville, through chapter 101, "The Decanter"
Tu Oct 21  Reading: Melville, to end
Th Oct 23  Authorship, Publication and the Creation of Moby-Dick
           Reading: Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses" and "Letters" (pp. 517-548 in Norton edition)
Tu Oct 28  "Surely all this is not without meaning"…
           Reading: C.L.R. James, chapters 1-3 from Mariners, Renegades & Castaways in CP
Th Oct 30  Melville Wrap-Up?
           Reaction Paper 2 due

Unit 3:  Gender, Race, the Body, and American Empire
Tu Nov 04  Reading: Bederman, chapter 1
Th Nov 06  Reading: Bederman, chapter 2
Tu Nov 11  Reading: Lutes, "Into the Madhouse with Nelly Bly: Girl Stunt Reporting in Late Nineteenth-
           Century America" in CP
Th Nov 13  Reading: Bederman, chapter 4
Tu Nov 16  Reading: Griffith, "Apostles of Abstinence: Fasting and Masculinity during the Progressive
           Era" in CP
Th Nov 18  Reading: Bederman, chapter 5 & Conclusion
Tu Nov 25  Guest Lecture or Event TBA
           Reaction Paper 3 due
Th Nov 27  No Class (Thanksgiving)

Unit 4:  Imagining & Representing Los Angeles
Tu Dec 02  Reading: Davis, Prologue & chapter 1
Th Dec 04  Reading: Davis, chapters 2-3
Tu Dec 09  Reading: Davis, chapters 4-5
Th Dec 11  Reading: Davis, chapters 6-7
Th Dec 18  Final Papers Due in F02-109 by 2:30pm, the end of our scheduled exam time. An end-of-
           semester social event will follow. I hope to also arrange a whale watching trip during Spring
           Semester when their winter migration is underway.