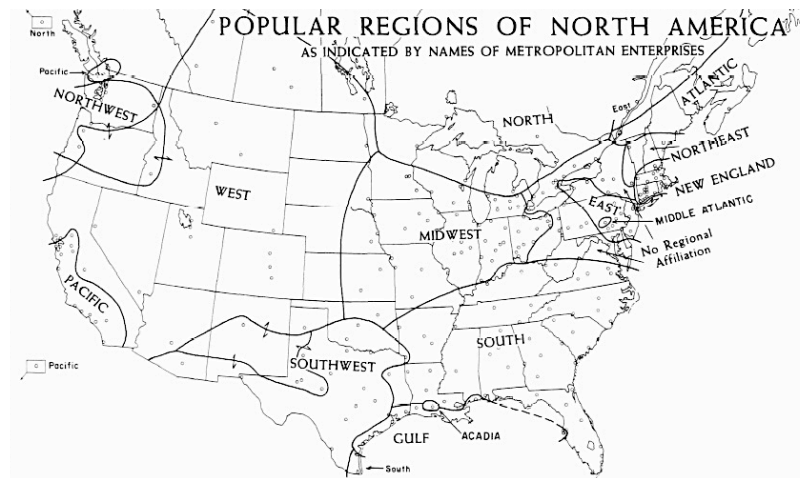


Skidmore College AM101W Cultural Geographies

Prof. Amber N. Wiley
Spring 2017
WF 8:40-10:00AM
TISCH 208
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Office: TISCH - 329
Hours: Thursday 9:30-11:00A



**“I live on Manhattan Island. For a New Yorker of color, truthfully speaking, the South begins at Newark.”
Langston Hughes, “My America,” 1944**

What is American culture? Why is it such an important concept to how we perceive and live in relation to the world around us? Is American culture connected to certain places or people, or is it mobile? How does it impact the ways people perceive themselves in relation to others? What about all of these questions is geographic, and does thinking about American culture geographically give us a different understanding of the term? AM 103W is designed to address these and other questions about something called American culture. The course introduces students to the interdisciplinary study of American culture and the ways that a geographic approach helps us make sense of American cultural practices and how it shapes the world around us. Students will examine how questions of American culture are also questions of landscape, identity, politics, economics, history, and place, and how a geographic approach to such questions helps us understand the world in more critical ways. This course is not meant to be a comprehensive history of the United States; instead, it provides snapshots of the nation's history through an investigation of cultural landscapes.

AM 101W begins by laying out what American culture constitutes for American Studies and other fields, and how interdisciplinary scholars have approached and understood culture through the formation of cultural landscapes. Lectures will draw on examples from interdisciplinary sources, including: film, television, art, contemporary politics and other media, in different time periods and places. Together, we will examine the cultural geographies of everyday spaces. We will use Social Explorer to focus on the visualization of spatial data in the humanities, particularly cartographic production and creating historic narratives of American cultural landscapes. This course is also writing intensive.

LEARNING GOALS

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand various approaches to American culture through the lens of cultural geography and cultural landscapes
- Synthesize data in meaningful ways through narrative development and visual representation
- Understand how to set a research agenda driven by a investigative problem or question
- Write and think critically about American culture, history, and identity
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity that exists in scope and methods of American Studies

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, New Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015)
- Wilbur Zelinsky, *Not Yet a Placeless Land: Tracking an Evolving American Geography* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011)

GRADING

Attendance and Participation	(10%)
Journal	(20%)
Narrative + Revision	(20%)
Regional Analysis + Revision	(25%)
Map Production + Analysis	(25%)

ATTENDANCE

Your success in this course depends entirely on your attendance, participation, reading, and completion of course assignments. This course meets twice a week and attendance is mandatory. Special circumstances such as excused absences are the exception. These include illness, religious holiday, or a personal/family crisis that is documented by an academic administrator. Please notify me in advance if you expect to be absent. You are allowed two unexcused absences; absences after that are detrimental to your class grade. Each unexcused absence will result in a 2% lowering of the final grade in this course. Timeliness is paramount, class meetings are 80m, and tardiness can cause you to miss important class announcements and information in lecture.

PARTICIPATION

Participation includes contributing to in-class discussions by speaking, being intellectually present and engaged for each meeting, paying attention to what is said by your peers, and being an active learner and listener. In order to make meaningful contributions to class discussions your participation should reflect your engagement with, and understanding of, the assigned course readings. Students should therefore have the texts read prior to the date on which it first appears on the syllabus. Not participating in lectures and classroom discussions will result in a lower class grade. Laptops will not be permitted in class unless for a documented learning accommodation, or for in-class workshop.

Mutual respect. Each person in this course has unique prior experiences and a unique viewpoint to share. This offers a great opportunity for us to learn from each other. Though disagreement and even conflict may occur, I expect your cooperation in maintaining an atmosphere of mutual respect. When participating in discussions, it is perfectly acceptable to have strong opinions – in fact I encourage you to do so. In the process, however, I expect you to respect the basic intelligence and humanity of each of the other participants in the discussion. Disagreement is not necessarily a bad thing, as long as there is a commitment to mutual respect. Hateful and demeaning speech will not be tolerated.

BLACKBOARD

Some of our course material will be available through our course Blackboard site: <https://learn.skidmore.edu/>. From Blackboard, you will be able to download articles; review the syllabus and assignments; submit assignments; and check your grades. Articles available on Blackboard are labeled with (Bb).

SOCIAL EXPLORER

The course depends on Social Explorer as a source about the United States, its regions, and its cities. Demographic information about the United States is available for online research, dating from 1790 to present day estimates. Skidmore has an institutional subscription so if you log on while on campus you can create an account and access it for 3 months before having to log on while on campus again. You should save your projects in an account created with your Skidmore email. Visit www.socialexplorer.com.

ASSIGNMENTS

The essay assignment material will be covered both in class lectures and assigned readings. It will be necessary to attend all lectures and read all assigned material in order to be prepared for these assignments. Please follow the Chicago Style for citations. Skidmore's guide to writing can be found here: https://www.skidmore.edu/writing_guide/. Full credit will not be given to papers that do not meet minimum length requirements. There will be no extension granted on the essay due date, except for a legitimately documented excused absence. You will receive a 1/3 reduction in your grade for each day that exceeds the stated submission deadline, meaning, an A will become an A- after one day, a B+ after two days, a B after three days, etc. **Journal entries are due each Friday by 5 pm via Blackboard.**

WRITING INTENSIVE

This class focuses on writing as a process and a skill to develop. In addition to exploring the content of the course, we will explicitly focus on the craft of writing, dedicating class time to short assignments and workshop sessions that will improve your skills and deepen your thinking on the subject matter. These include generating ideas and principles of organization; gathering and documenting information; determining an appropriate audience and voice; structuring the paper as a whole; revising; peer critiquing; attending to questions of grammar, syntax, and word usage. Completed papers will total at minimum twenty-five pages of formal writing.

GRADE SCALE

A (Excellent): Exceptional performance, exceeding the requirements of the course, showing strong academic initiative and independent resourcefulness.

B (Good): Performance above the norm; accurate and complete; beyond the minimum requirements of the course; work demonstrates marked progress and initiative.

C (Average): Satisfactory work that adequately meets minimum requirements and demonstrates satisfactory comprehension, communication skills, and effort; demonstrates little initiative to investigate the problem without substantial prodding of the instructor; work shows little improvement.

D (Inferior): Unsatisfactorily meets minimum requirements; demonstrates minimum comprehension, communication skills, and effort at an inferior level; initiative lacking; improvement not noticeable.

F (Failing): Does not meet minimum requirements; fails to adequately demonstrate comprehension, communication skills, and effort.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The integrity of Skidmore Honor System is based on the absolute honesty of the entire community in all academic endeavors. As part of the community, students have responsibilities regarding the originality of all independent work that forms the basis for the evaluation of their academic achievement. For more information see the Honor Code: <https://www.skidmore.edu/advising/integrity/>. Students should be familiar with the College's Honor Code and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. Please pay particular attention to Skidmore's policies on documentation and plagiarism; you may also find it helpful to refer to the Definitions and Guidelines document published on-line through the Office of Academic Advising (OAA). Violating Skidmore's policies on academic honor can lead to course failure, suspension, and even expulsion. Examples of a violation of academic honor include, but are not limited to: submission of the same written work in more than one course; plagiarism – the use of someone else's words, ideas, information, or original material without acknowledging the source. If you are unclear about how to cite sources in your papers, you should ask. I have a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism – plagiarizing sources will result in a failing grade for an assignment.

DISABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Office of Student Academic Services at 518.580.8150 to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <https://www.skidmore.edu/accessibility/>.

COUNSELING SERVICES

The Counseling Center assists students in addressing academic, career, and personal problems. Support services include: adjustment to college, depression, family problems, anxiety, sexual assault and eating disorders, or other situations that may arise. Call 518.580.5555 or visit: <https://www.skidmore.edu/counseling/>.

MISCELLENEA

I reserve the right to make changes to the readings and assignments as the semester moves along, but will stay within the boundaries of the workload signaled in this syllabus. I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours, except on weekends and holidays, and I do not check email after 5pm.

RELATED SKIDMORE PROGRAMS

January 31	Walking Pattern: A Brief History of Labyrinths	@ The Tang	7 pm
February 1	Walk the Pattern	@ Wilson Chapel	6-9 pm
February 9	Screening: Jordan: Home Away from Home	@ Case Center SPA	6 pm
February 13	Screening: Después De Trujillo	@ Davis Auditorium	6 pm
March 21	Screening: The Settlers	@ Emerson Auditorium	6pm

Week 1 Introduction

01.25.17

- Please spend some time tonight familiarizing yourself with the online course space on Blackboard. Review the syllabus, make sure you can access and print the articles for next class.
- Read for Friday, January 27.

01.27.17

- George Lipsitz, "What is American Studies?" American Studies Association White Papers (2015) (Bb)
 - Yi-Fu Tuan, "Introduction," *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977): 3-7 (Bb)
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Week 2 Writing About Place

02.01.17

- William Zinsser, "Writing About Places: The Travel Article," *On Writing Well* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006): 116-131 (Bb)
- Helen Horowitz, "The Writer's Path: J. B. Jackson and Cultural Geography as a Literary Genre," *Site Lines: A Journal of Place* 11 no. 1 (Fall 2015): 3-7 (Bb)

02.03.17

- Michel de Certeau, "Spatial Stories," *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): 115-130 (Bb)
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Week 3 The Zelinsky Argument

02.08.17

- Williams, "Empirical"
- Zelinsky, 1-16

02.10.17

- Zelinsky, 17-36
- Catherine Boland Erkkila, "American Railways and the Cultural Landscape of Immigration," *Buildings & Landscapes* 22 no. 1 (Spring 2015): 36-62 (Bb)

Due: Narrative First Draft

Week 4 Community in the Modern World

02.15.17

- Williams, "Community"
- Zelinsky, 34-49

02.17.17

- Williams, "Communication"
 - Zelinsky, 49-62
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Week 5 Cultural Hegemony

02.22.17

Trip to the GIS Center for Interdisciplinary Research

- Williams, "Hegemony"
- Zelinsky, 62-81

02.24.17

- Barney Warf and Mort Winsberg, "The Geography of Religious Diversity in the United States," *The Professional Geographer* 60 no. 3 (2008): 413-424 (Bb)

Due: Narrative Revised

Week 6 The Built Landscape

03.01.17

- Williams, "Structural"
- Zelinsky, 82-99

03.03.17

- Henry Glassie, "Architects, Vernacular Traditions, and Society," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 1 no. 2 (1990): 9-21 (Bb)
-

Week 7 The City and Country

03.08.17

- Williams, "City"
- Zelinsky, 99-105

03.10.17

- Williams, "Country"
- Zelinsky, 105-116

Due: Regional Analysis First Draft

Spring Break

03.15.17 NO CLASS

03.17.17 NO CLASS

Week 8 The Leisurely Life

03.22.17

- Williams, "Experience"
- Zelinsky, 117-134

03.24.17

- Zelinsky, 134-142
 - Barbara Berglund, "Chinatown's Tourist Terrain: Representation and Racialization in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco," *American Studies* 46 no. 2 (Summer 2005): 5-36 (Bb)
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Week 9 Institutions

03.29.17

- Williams, "Institution"
- Zelinsky, 142-155

03.31.17

- Zelinsky, 155-163
- Katherine McKittrick, "On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place," *Social & Cultural Geography* 12 no. 8 (December 2011): 947-963 (Bb)

Due: Regional Analysis Revised

Week 10 The Work of Culture

04.05.17

- Williams, "Culture"
- Zelinsky, 164-187

04.07.17

- Zelinsky, 187-205
 - Amber N. Wiley, "Geography, Planning, and Performing Mobility in New Orleans," *Walking in Cities: Quotidian Mobility as Urban Theory, Method, and Practice* (Temple University Press, 2015) (Bb)
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Week 11 The Regional Factor

04.12.17

- Williams, "Regional"
- Zelinsky, 206-231

04.14.17

- Albany Institute of History & Art, "New York's Capital Region in 50 Objects:"
<http://www.albanyinstitute.org/953.html> (Bb)

Due: Maps

Week 12 The New York Capital Region

04.19.17

- Zelinsky, 231-261

04.21.17

- Albany Institute of History & Art, "The Making of the Hudson River School:"
<http://www.albanyinstitute.org/introduction.html>, <http://www.albanyinstitute.org/the-topographical-tradition.html>,
<http://www.albanyinstitute.org/between-man-and-nature.html> (Bb)
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Week 13 Conclusion

04.26.17

- Williams, "Nationalism"
- Zelinsky, 262-270

04.28.17

- Reflections

05.10.17 Maps Final Due