

The purpose of this course is to highlight the interdisciplinary nature of American Studies work. It focuses on synchronic and diachronic approaches to the past by considering: 1) the interconnections among sources from the same time period to highlight the particularities of specific cultural moments, and 2) the juxtapositions of sources across time periods to reveal broad temporal trends and causal connections through time. We will treat the period from the Age of Exploration through the Civil War with special emphasis on the themes of race, ethnicity, gender, class, culture contact, revolution, reform and war, as well as the men and women whose lives and work reveal the cultural temper of their times.

AM 201L counts toward the Cultural and Difference requirements for graduation. It examines the interaction of Europeans and Native Americans, settlers of European descent and African Americans, and, briefly, Euro-Americans and Mexican Americans as well as Chinese and Irish immigrants. It considers cultural interactions from the perspectives of both Western and non-Western people, and we'll spend a good deal of time thinking about why these different groups perceived each other in the way that they did, and about what other options for interaction were not used, or considered and discarded.

The course will follow a workshop format. Each Friday students will receive a packet of materials from a specified time period divided into three distinct sections. Students are responsible for reading and studying *all* the materials in the weekly packets, but they will be asked to become experts on one of the three sections, researching and contextualizing materials in ways sufficient to deliver a group presentation the following Wednesday. Groups will be randomly selected each week for these assignments and members should plan to meet at least one hour outside of class to prepare the presentations (This accounts for the fourth credit hour of the course—the so-called laboratory experience.) The group presentations will be framed by a series of questions posed each week and will be interactive rather than merely informative.

Based on these presentations, students will then write a 3 page weekly essay (due each Friday) establishing synchronic connections among the sources included in the three sections. Students will be responsible for completing 10 of these 12 essay assignments throughout the term. While there is no extra credit for doing all twelve, students will be graded on the best ten essays submitted, so students who do all the essays may drop the lowest two.

In addition to the weekly oral presentations and written assignments, students will take a midterm and a final exam which will be diachronic exercises designed

to test their ability to make connections across time periods and document packets.

Grades will be apportioned as follows.

Weekly presentations	25%
Weekly written assignments	25%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%

There are no assigned books for the course. All the reading materials will be provided in the weekly packets. I have placed a survey textbook of the United States (Nash, et.al, *The American People*) for those who may need more background in specific areas of American history, but there are no required readings from this source.

Week 1: Synchronic and Diachronic Approaches to the Past

Wednesday

September 9 – Columbus and the Age of Discovery

Friday

September 11 – Essay #1 Due

Week 2: Racial Politics and the Problem of Identity

Wednesday,

September 16 -- Pocahontas and the Jamestown Experiment

Friday,

September 18 – Essay #2 Due

Week 3: Ritual Celebration and the Question of Authority

Wednesday

September 23 – Thomas Morton and the Maypole of Merrymount

Friday
September 25 – Essay #3 Due

Week 4: The Geopolitics of Colonial Life

Wednesday
September 30 – King Philip's War and the Salem Witchcraft Trials

Friday
October 2 -- Essay #4 Due

Week 5: Philosophical Ideology and National Character

Wednesday
October 7 – The French and Indian War and the Struggle for a Continent

Friday
October 9 – Essay #5 Due

Week 6: Social Upheaval and the American Revolution

Wednesday
October 14 -- Saratoga and the Betrayal of the Cause

Friday
October 16 – Essay #6 Due

Week 7: Evaluations

Wednesday
October 21 – Diachronic Midterm Exam

Friday
October 23 – Study Day

Week 8: Myth, Symbol and Culture in the Young Republic

Wednesday
October 28 -- George Washington and the Pantheon of Heroes

Friday,
October 30 -- Essay #7 Due

Week 9: Conspiratorial Culture and the Crisis of Identity

Wednesday
November 4 -- The New England Confederacy and The War of 1812

Friday
November 6 -- Essay #8 Due

Week 10: Mid-Life Crises and Aging of America

Wednesday
November 11 -- America at 50: The Jubilee and the Post-Heroic Generation

Friday
November 13 -- Essay #9 Due

Week 11: Environmental Determinism and Manifest Destiny

Wednesday
November 18 -- The West and the American Psyche

Friday
November 20 -- Essay #10 Due

Week 12: Leisure in American Culture

Wednesday
November 25 -- Thanksgiving Break

Friday
November 27 -- Thanksgiving Break

Week 13: Slavery and the "Other" in American Culture

Wednesday
December 2 -- The Coming of the Civil War

Friday
December 4 -- Essay #11

Week 14: The American Civil War and the Shattering of Identity

Wednesday
December 9 -- The Bloody Struggle and Its Meaning

Friday
December 11 -- Essay #12 Due

*** * * Diachronic Final Exam (Tuesday, December 15, 2009, 9:00-12:00)**