

AMST-A100
Summer 2014, 4W2
MTWR 10:20a-12:30p
Swain Hall East 010

WHAT IS AMERICA?

Instructor:
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Office hours:
MW 12:45-2:15pm
Ballantine Hall 908



In attempting to answer the question “What is America?” we will begin at the geographic level. What spaces and peoples are included in the Americas and why? How have these definitions and boundaries changed over time? With the aid of both historic and contemporary maps, we will examine the literature, images, objects, and foods that illuminate peoples’ experience as they have navigated among different national categories. By understanding the cultural paradigms upon which national boundaries have been cast, we can better appreciate the complexity of the concept of “America” that many of us take for granted.

Learning outcomes

In this course, you will

- Develop a transnational framework for understanding cultural difference, contact, and change.
- Gain an understanding of how routes of travel, trade, and political influence can affect interactions between nations.
- Formulate critical questions about the nature of international relations and their manifestation in the humanistic arts.
- Critically interpret and compare multiple artistic works, including images, literature, film, music, and dramatic performance.
- Use your understanding of the historical and cultural background of humanistic arts to offer contextually informed interpretations.

Required texts

- Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, ISBN: 0374527075)
- Milton Murayama, *All I Asking For Is My Body* (U of Hawaii Press, ISBN: 0824811720)
- Additional readings available on Oncourse [please bring a hard copy to class]

Grade distribution

Short Responses [3 x 100 points]	300 points
Peer Review [2 x 50]	100 points
Critical Question Proposal	100 points
Analytical Essay	350 points
Attendance and Participation	150 points

Total: 1,000 points

	899-870 points (B+)	799-770 points (C+)	699-600 (D)
1000-930 points (A)	869-830 points (B)	769-730 points (C)	599 and below (F)
929-900 points (A-)	829-800 points (B-)	729-700 points (C-)	

Assignments

Short Responses

In responses of no more than 2 pages (double-spaced) you will practice your interpretive skills in the following contexts:

- Cartographic Analysis
- Literary Analysis
- Film Scene Analysis

Peer Review

Active participation in two peer review sessions is required in order to submit the Analytical Essay and Critical Issue Proposal. Please let me know in advance if you will be unable to attend class on the days for which these activities are scheduled. You will be graded on the quality and completeness of your responses.

Critical Question Proposal

One of the most important skills in American studies is learning to identify critical problems and formulate research questions. This 3-page assignment will prompt you to explain the stakes of your problem, the types of scholarly and public disagreement on the topic, and your proposed plan of research for the Analytical Essay.

Analytical Essay

Your work in this course will culminate in a final essay (~6 pages) that offers an analytical thesis in answer to the critical question you have proposed. You will use cartographic, visual, and textual forms of evidence to support your claim. In particular, I encourage you to assemble your own maps to help support your argument.

Participation and preparation

You are expected to seriously prepare for and participate in class discussions. Your participation grade will reflect both the quantity and quality of your comments in class.

Class conduct

While you are in class I hold you to professional forms of conduct. Text messaging, falling asleep, doing homework for another class, or being otherwise disengaged or disruptive is unprofessional and will lower your participation grade.

Attendance

You may have one unexcused absence without penalty. After that, 5% [50 points] will be deducted from your final grade for each unexcused absence. Tardiness of more than 15 minutes will be counted as an absence. Absences can be excused in the case of:

- Illness, provided I am notified within 24 hours of the class missed and receive a note from the IU Health Center or other healthcare provider.
- Major family matters, such as weddings or funerals. For weddings I require at least one week notice in advance.
- Religious observances, provided I am notified at least 1 week in advance.

Late work

Even if you cannot make it to class, make every effort to get your work in on time. You or someone you trust can drop off hard copies of your assignments in my mailbox [Ballantine Hall, 9th floor lobby]. If you are unable to complete your work on time due to illness or other circumstances, you must contact me in a timely manner if you wish to arrange make-up work or an extension. I reserve the right to refuse late work or an extension if I determine that your reason for missing the deadline is not adequate.

Plagiarism and academic integrity

Plagiarism occurs when you represent someone else's work as your own in the following ways:

- having someone write your paper for you or turning in someone else's work
- copying and pasting published information into your paper
- deliberately using ideas or arguments from other sources without attributing them

In cases of plagiarism, the student will receive a zero for the assignment and his or her participation grade will be reduced by 50 points. In class we will discuss ways of integrating the ideas of other writers and documenting the sources of those ideas, but please ask if you ever have any questions about how to properly cite your sources.

Course schedule

*All assignments and readings are due by the class period on which they are assigned. This schedule is subject to change.

Day	Topic	Readings/Viewings	Assignment Due
Unit 1: Critical Issues in American Studies			
M 6/9		Introduction to the course	
T 6/10	What is America?	Michael Walzer, "What Does It Mean to Be an American?" (Oncourse)	
W 6/11	Imperialism at home and abroad	Amy Kaplan, Introduction to <i>The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture</i> (Oncourse)	
Unit 2: The Caribbean			
R 6/12	Representations of the Caribbean	In-class viewing: <i>Island in the Sun</i>	Short Response: Cartographic Analysis

M 6/16	Tourism, imperialism, and resistance	Jamaica Kincaid, <i>A Small Place</i> , pp. 3-37 In-class viewing: <i>Island in the Sun</i> , cont'd.	
T 6/17	Tourism, imperialism, and resistance, cont'd.	Jamaica Kincaid, <i>A Small Place</i> , pp. 41-81	Short Response: Film Scene Analysis
W 6/18	Comparative approaches to the Caribbean and Hawai'i	Christine Skwiot, excerpts from <i>The Purposes of Paradise: U.S. Tourism and Empire in Cuba and Hawai'i</i> (Oncourse)	
Unit 3: Hawai'i			
R 6/19	Political change and Native rights	In-class viewing: Indigenous Hawaiian filmmakers	Short Response: Literary Analysis
M 6/23	Sugar plantations and racial politics	Milton Murayama, <i>All I Asking For Is My Body</i> , pp. 27-67	
T 6/24	Competing nationalisms during WWII	Murayama, <i>All I Asking For Is My Body</i> , pp. 68-103	
W 6/25	Research and writing strategies in American studies	Peer review workshop	Critical Question Proposal Peer Review Coversheet
Unit 4: Canada and the Arctic			
R 6/26	Indigenous cartographies	Hugh Brody, excerpts from <i>Maps and Dreams</i> (Oncourse)	
M 6/30	Contesting national borders	Rachel Adams, "Before the Border: Indigenous Geographies of North America" from <i>Continental Divides</i> (Oncourse)	
T 7/1	Environmental protection and Indigenous rights	USGS Fact Sheets #1; #2 (Oncourse) Peer review workshop	Analytical Essay draft Peer Review Coversheet
W 7/2	Individual conferences	<i>Class does not meet</i>	
R 7/3	Closing presentations and discussion	2-minute presentation of Analytical Essay thesis Course evaluations	Analytical Essay