**Introduction to American Studies**

**CSER 4000**

**Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race**

**Prof. Matt Sandler**

**Office Hours: Monday, 2-4, and by appt.**

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**Description:**

This course explores the set of possibilities presented by American Studies as a comparative field of study. We begin with a brief overview of the history of the field, and then we’ll focus primarily on the range of modes in which its interdisciplinary work has been undertaken (literary, historical, legal, digital, etc.).

The idea here is not to arrive a comprehensive picture of American Studies, but to think about the many ways people have produced knowledge under its aegis. We will also focus on work by Columbia faculty, and sessions of the course are built around visits by faculty in the field to Columbia’s University Seminar in American Studies.

Our guiding questions include: How does one do research in a multimedia, “cultural” environment? How does one situate oneself as an “intellectual” or “critic” in relation to one’s object of study? How does one write about different media/genres? How does one incorporate different methodologies into one research project?

**Grading:**

--Participation: 20%

(You will be expected to contribute verbally to every class session. You are permitted to miss 2 sessions without penalty.)

--6 x 2 page Response/Proposals: 30%

(see forthcoming prompt)

--8 page Literature review paper (30%)

--3 x Event reports: 20%

(These are very short responses to events in the department relevant to American Studies. Max of 5 sentences sent to me over email)

**Reading materials:**

The assigned readings listed below are all collected on the courseworks page for the course.

**Schedule:**

**Week 1 (Sept. 9): Some Accounts of the Field or Fields**

--Henry Nash Smith, “Can American Studies Develop a Method?”

--Gene Wise, “Paradigm Dramas in American Studies: A Cultural and Intellectual History of the Movement”

--Mary Helen Washington, “Disturbing the Peace: What Happens to American Studies If You Put African American Studies at the Center?”

**Week 2 (Sept. 16): Fugitivity/Refugees/Exiles**

--David Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic”

--Yén Lê Espiritu, “Toward a Critical Refugee Study: The Vietnamese Refugee Subject in US Scholarship”

--Timothy K. August, “Re-placing the Accent: From the Exile to Refugee Position”

**\*\*University Seminar in American Studies with Timothy K. August\*\***

**Tuesday Sept. 17th 7pm, Faculty House, 116th & Morningside**

**Week 3 (Sept. 23): Libraries and Archives**

Class visit by John Tofanelli, Librarian for American History and Literature, Butler Library

--Selections from Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire* (“Scenarios of Discovery” and “False Identifications”)

**Week 4 (Sept. 30): Digital Humanities**

--Chad Wellmon and Andrew Piper, “Publication, Power, and Patronage: On Inequality and Academic Publishing”

--Safiya Umoja Noble, “Google Search: Hyper-visibility as a Means of Rendering Black Women and Girls Invisible”

--Daniel Allington, Sarah Brouillette, and David Golumbia, “Neoliberal tools (and Archives): A Political History of Digital Humanities” (online only no pdf)

**Week 5 (Oct. 7): Film Studies**

--Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”

--Manthia Diawara, “Black Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance”

--Jerome Christensen, “The Time Warner Conspiracy: JFK, Batman, and the Manager Theory of Hollywood Film”

**\*\*First 3 Response Proposals Due\*\***

**Week 6 (Oct. 14): Race, the Law, Migration, and Incarceration**

--Mae Ngai, “The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924”

--Kandice Chuh, from *Imagine Otherwise*

--Karen Inouye, selection from *The Long Afterlife of Nikkei Internment*

**\*\*University Seminar in American Studies with Karen Inouye\*\***

**Tuesday Oct. 15th, 7pm, Faculty House, 116th & Morningside**

**Week 7 (Oct. 21): Studies of Curation**

--Paul O’Neill, “The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse”

--Christina Kreps, “Indigenous Curation, Museums, and Intangible Cultural Heritage”

--Jeremy Morris and Devon Powers, “Control, Curation and Musical Experience in Streaming Music Platforms”

**\*\*Two events\*\***

**October 24th, 4:30pm tour of Jewish Museum exhibition “Edith Halpert and the Rise of American Art”**

**October 26th, time TBA, Brooklyn Public Library, “’Til Victory” (an event in remembrance of 1619 beginnings of slavery in what would become the U.S.)**

**Week 8 (Oct. 28): Environmental Studies**

--William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature”

--Julia Sze, “Gender, Asthma Politics, and Urban Environmental Justice Activism”

--Anna Tsing, “Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species”

**\*\*2nd 3 Response-Proposals due\*\***

**Week 9 (Nov. 4): No Class, Election Day**

**Week 10 (Nov. 11): Medical Humanities**

--Jonathan Metzl, selections from *Dying of Whiteness*

--Elizabeth Wilson, selections from *Gut Feminism*

--Greta LaFleur, “‘Defective in One of the Principle Parts of Virility’: Impotence, Generation, and Defining Disability in Early North America”

**Week 11 (Nov. 18): Literary Studies**

--Michael Warner, “Franklin and the Letters of the Republic”

--Ezra Tawil, “Seduction, Sentiment, and the Transatlantic Plain Style”

--Edward Cahill, “Liberty of the Imagination in Revolutionary America”

**\*\*University Seminar in American Studies with Ezra Tawil\*\***

**Tuesday Nov. 19th, 7pm, Faculty House, 116th & Morningside**

**Week 12 (Nov. 25): Oral History/ Fieldwork**

--Amy Starecheski, “Squatting History: the Power of Oral History as History Making Practice”

--Alistair Thomson, “Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History”

--Gary Okihiro, “Oral History and the Writing of Ethnic History: A Reconnaisance into Method and Theory”

**Week 13 (Dec. 2): The Model Minority Myth**

--Claire Kim, “The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans”

--Jennifer Lee and Min Zhou, “The Success Frame and Achievement Paradox: The Cost and Consequences for Asian Americans”

--Pensri Ho, “Performing the Oriental: Professionals and the Asian Model Minority Myth”

**\*\*University Seminar in American Studies with Paul Nadal\*\***

**Tuesday Dec. 3rd 7pm, Faculty House, 116th & Morningside**

**Week 14 (Dec. 9): Wrap-Up, Literature Review Papers Due**