**Methods in American Studies**

**CSER 5001**

**Spring 2020**

**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 sets out to help students to think methodologically in the context of an intersection between two fields, American Studies and Ethnic Studies, both sometimes beset by confusing range of methods. Rather than prescribing a taxonomy or hierarchy of ways of doing research, the course is designed to encourage students to find their own preoccupations, skills, and predilections on the map of disciplinary practices.

The syllabus works through a mode of instruction normally reserved for early childhood education, known colloquially as the “I do, we do, you do” model (more technically as “scaffolded instruction” or the “gradual release” model”). The idea is at each stage students should be more empowered to do their own intellectual problem solving.

In our application of this model, we’ll work first through an ongoing research project of mine on a nineteenth century Black temperance newspaper and then through an ongoing collaborative research project I’ve done with a series of classes on the history of the protests that led to the founding of CSER. Lastly we’ll look at some of the better guides to academic writing and the practice of American Studies as you begin or complete your theses.

The writing assignments for the class will primarily consist of a project journal, in which you’ll record your responses and (in some instances) contributions to our collaboration through the semester (instead of a frenetically composed final research project). The idea here is to sharpen your self-consciousness as a researcher and writer.

**Grading:**

--Participation: 20%

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

--12 x 2-3 page Journal Entries: 60%

(see prompts below)

--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:**

Most of the assigned readings listed below are available in .pdf form on the Courseworks page for the course. At several moments through the semester, I’ll ask you to consult the following texts, available at Book Culture on 111th St. btw. Broadway and Amsterdam Ave.

Burgett, Bruce and Hendler, Glenn, eds. *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*. New York: New York UP, 2014, 2nd edition. (also available online at Columbia libraries, but it might be nice to have a physical copy laying around)

Deloria, Philip J. and Olson, Alexander I.. *American Studies: A User’s Guide.* Berkeley: U. of California P., 2017.

**Schedule:**

**Jan. 27: Introduction: “I do, then we do, then you do”**

Gary Okihiro, “The History of Ethnic Studies”

Deloria and Olson, “Introduction”

entries from Burgett and Hendler on “America,” “race,” “class,” and “gender”

**\*\*\*Jan. 28, 7:30pm, Angela Reyes (Hunter College), American Studies University Seminar, Faculty House, Morningside Dr.\*\*\***

**Unit One: Approaching an Archival “Discovery”**

**Feb. 3: Temperance and Abolition, Pt. 1: Primary Sources**

Alfred Gibbs Campbell, *The Alarm Bell*

some selections from period reform literature…

entries from Burgett and Hendler on “slavery” and “freedom”

journal prompt: Visit an online database devoted to African American or ethnic periodicals (see, at Columbia Libraries online: African American Periodicals, Chronicling America, Making of America, Voices from Nineteenth Century America, etc.). Search for terms used in the reading. Choose an article you find interesting, describe it, and try to find out something about the author.

**Feb. 10: Temperance and Abolition, Pt. 2: Secondary Sources**

Michael Warner, “Whitman Drunk”

Donald Yacovone, “The Transformation of the Black Temperance Movement, 1827- 1854: An Interpretation”

Ronald G. Walters, from *American Reformers, 1815-1860*

entries from Burgett and Hendler on “literature” and “liberalism”

journal prompt: Take note of the cultural and historical circumstances of the antebellum reform movement. Which aspects seem to echo in other historical moments that might be of interest to you? Perhaps have a look at Burgett and Hendler for conceptual tools. How might the thematic and political concerns of the moment held in place?

**\*\*\*Barnard “Black Collectivity” event, feat. Patricia Spears Jones, Kimberley Springer, and Courtney Thorsson, James Room, Barnard Hall, after class at 6:30pm\*\*\***

**Feb. 17: Theories of Addiction and U.S. Cultural History**

Trysh Travis, from *The Language of the Heart: A Cultural History of the Recovery Movement from Alcoholics Anonymous to Oprah Winfrey*

Eve Sedgwick, “Epidemics of the Will”

Bruce K. Alexander, from the *The Globalisation of Addiction: A Study in the Poverty of Spirit*

entries from Burgett and Hendler on “democracy” and “media”

journal prompt: Addiction has long been the subject of heated debate. Positions within that debate take off from theories of psychology and desire as well as biology and society. If your own work in American Studies were to require such a theory, what might it look like?

**Feb. 24: Auto-Ethnography, Autotheory, and the War on Drugs**

Antonio Lopez, “Around 1979: Mariel, McDuffie, and the Afterlives of Antonio”

Victor Ríos, “The Liquor Store and the Police”

Carl Hart, from *High Price: A Neuroscientist's Journey of Self-Discovery That Challenges Everything You Know About Drugs and Society*

journal prompt: Scholars have written compellingly about their experience of the War on Drugs, and built transformative research projects around their accounts. To what extent does personal experience inform your research? And perhaps more importantly, how has research taken you afield of the particulars of your own life?

**\*\*\*Feb. 25, 7:30pm, Stan Thangaraj (City College of New York), American Studies University Seminar, Faculty House, Morningside Dr.\*\*\***

**Unit Two: Building and Maintaining an Archive**

**Mar. 2:** **Ethnic** **Radicalisms in the Universities of the 1960s**

Martha Biondi, from *The Black Revolution on Campus*

Daryl Maeda, “Campus Activism” (from *Rethinking the Asian American Movement*)

Stefan Bradley, “‘Gym Crow Must Go!’ Black Student Activism at Columbia University, 1967-1968”

entries from Burgett and Hendler on “youth” and “politics”

journal prompt: Familiarize yourself with the narrative of the CSER strike. Which aspects of the story, incomplete as it is, are you curious about? What research might we be able to do to answer your questions? What might we never find out?

**Mar. 9:** **The Institutionalization of Ethnic Studies**

Evelyn Hu-DeHart, “The History, Development, and Future of Ethnic Studies”

Manning Marable, “The Problematics of Ethnic Studies”

Robin D.G. Kelley, “Over the Rainbow: Second Wave Ethnic Studies Against the Neoliberal Turn” [video]

entries from Burgett and Hendler on “diversity,” “Asian,” and “Latino, Latina, Latin@”

journal prompt:The researchers here, two of who played key roles in the early life of CSER, view the history of Ethnic Studies as redefined in moments of crisis (late 1960s, late 1980s-90s). How might the concept of crisis inform your work?

**Mar. 16:** **Spring Break**

**Mar. 23: Student Movements** **and** **Public Disinvestment**

Roderick Ferguson, from *We Demand: The University and Student Protests*

Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, from *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*

Jodi Melamed, “Being Together Subversively, Outside in the University of Hegemonic Affirmation and Repressive Violence, As Things Heat Up (Again)”

entries from Burgett and Hendler on “Indian” and “neoliberalism”

journal prompt: Higher education today is understood as an important site of “neoliberalization” as a result of its spiraling cost, the student loan bubble, and steep cuts in public funding. In what ways might writing and research in American Studies make a response to these changes? Your answer can focus on higher ed itself, or it can speak to how you might frame your own work in the context of rapidly diminishing support?

**\*\*\*March 24, 7:30pm, Ben Balthaser (Indiana University, South Bend), American Studies University Seminar, Faculty House, Morningside Dr.\*\*\***

**Mar. 30:** **Globalization and The War on Terror on Campus**

Nicholas De Genova “Within and Against the Imperial University”

Ashley Dawson, “Crisis at Columbia: Academic Freedom, Area Studies, and Contingent Labor in the Contemporary Academy”

Gary Okihiro, “The Future of Ethnic Studies”

journal prompt: American colleges and universities have begun to focus their energies on expanding operations and recruitment overseas, but their preparedness for those efforts has been mixed, as has their results. You might write about the global/transnational implications in your own work, in the work of the 1996 protestors, or in the activities of Columbia and its affiliates today.

**Unit Three: Developing a Research Practice**

**Apr. 6: On Academic Writing**

Wayne Booth, from *The Craft of Research*

Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, from *They Say, I Say*

Eric Hayot, from *The Elements of Academic Style: Writing for the Humanities*

journal prompt: write up an abstract for a paper you’ll write in another class. What are the ways that paper works through American Studies methodologies?

**Apr. 13: Defining Your Terms, Mixing Your Methods**

Philip Deloria and Alexander Olson, from *American Studies: A User’s Guide* (read the whole thing, but we’ll especially focus on chapters 1, 4, 8, and 9.

journal prompt: is there a concept missing from Burgett and Hendler that’s useful for your research? If so, define it, write up a quick genealogy of its uses.

**Apr. 20: Is Research Creative?**

Mason Currey, from *Daily Routines*

Twyla Tharp, from *The Creative Habit*

Brian Eno and Philip Schmidt, *Oblique Strategies* [website]

journal prompt: apply a suggestion from Eno or Tharp to one of your ongoing research projects. Make an account of the results.

**\*\*\*April 21, 7:30pm, Sarah Blackwood (Pace University), American Studies University Seminar, Faculty House, Morningside Dr.\*\*\***

**Apr. 27:**

brief oral reports on related projects

journal prompt: reflect on your experience in this class. What are the ways that you intend to make use of American Studies approaches in the future?

**May. 4:**

last day, complete journals due