American Studies 202:  
Investigating America: Cultural Resistors and American Identity

Course Syllabus:

Term: Spring 2012  
Class Time: MWF 11:00-11:50  
Location:  
Instructor: Susan Savage Lee  
Email: hoptgarten2@gmail.com or leess@slu.edu  
Phone: 502-487-1105  
Office Hours: By appointment  
Note: Please do not hesitate to call me; however, I generally prefer text message or emails. This helps me avoid playing phone tag.

Required Texts (available at the bookstore):


Additional Readings: Available under Course Documents in Blackboard.

Course Description:

American Studies 202 will introduce students to the major themes associated with American cultural history. This course is geared towards helping students understand the interdisciplinary nature of American Studies, a common source of confusion for many people. Throughout the semester, students will examine how American identity myths are countered by what Stephen Duncombe refers to as “cultural resistors.” Through resistance, many marginalized people offer distinct perspectives not contained within the typical portrayal of American history. We will discuss what it means to resist, where certain cultural myths come from, what they mean to different groups of Americans, and how resistance and cultural myths construct our identities as well as the society around us.

Objectives of this Course:

The first month of the course examines the importance, relevance, and key approaches of American cultural history and cultural resistance. We will examine broad themes in cultural history in order to analyze how different scholars have addressed the quintessential questions: What is culture? How does culture become politics? Why are there cultural resistors? How does culture create a sense of an American identity?
The rest of the course will focus on specific cultural myths related to American identity formation. We will discuss topics such as Indian Removal, race and gender issues, as well as immigration. In each case, it will become apparent that what we learn about our country’s history is formed by the culture surrounding that particular past moment. The time frame that we will cover over the course of the semester is the twentieth century (not necessarily in chronological order), a historical moment filled with anxieties about American identity, culture, and change.

**What to Expect:**
This is a seminar class meaning that a great portion of the class will involve class discussion. I do not expect you to understand the terminology when it is first presented to you, nor do I expect you to be an expert in American history and culture, so I will introduce key concepts and we will build upon them as the semester proceeds. From there, it is up to you to form your own ideas, based off of class discussion, the readings, and my lectures. At times, we may revisit troubling moments of the past which still concern us today. I do not expect you to agree with my opinions or the opinions of your classmates, but I do want to encourage you to express your thoughts during discussions. At the same time, racist, homophobic, sexist, or religious intolerance is not acceptable in this class. Please be courteous to your classmates about differences in opinion. Hopefully, by the end of the semester, you will be able to look at the world around you and critically think and engage with it.

**Course Requirements and Policies:**

**Attendance:**
Because the learning process in this class involves participation, your attendance is required. You are allowed three (excused or unexcused) absences for the entire semester. Excused absences consist of the following: an illness documented by a doctor’s note, a family emergency, and specific holidays that may or may not be covered under SLU’s policies. **After your third absence, your grade with drop by 1/3, meaning that if your final grade is a B+, you will receive a B. Students who accumulate five or more absences will automatically fail the course.**

**Participation:**
Your participation in discussions is welcomed and encouraged. Although class participation is a part of your grade, participation can also be used to speak your mind and engage with the materials covered.

**All Assignments:**
I do not accept late papers unless accompanied by a valid excuse. Part of the college experience is learning to follow deadlines and to prepare ahead of time. If you are absent the day an assignment is due, you can email me your work. I accept either emailed submissions with Microsoft Word attachments or you can turn in a hard copy.

**Plagiarism:**
Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism consists of using someone else’s work (another student’s or from a book, article, or website) and passing it off as your own. If I find that you have plagiarized any of the graded assignments in the course, you will automatically fail that assignment.

**Blackboard:**
I encourage you to access Blackboard a few times a week. There you can see your current grades and any pertinent announcements concerning the class. I will also have all additional course readings (as well as the Syllabus) posted under Course Documents. It is your responsibility to print and read these additional materials for our class discussions.

**Written Assignments:**

**Reading Questions:**
For every reading that is assigned, you should write two questions for each one. Your questions will demonstrate that you read the material, but they will also serve as a means to encourage discussion. You should email me your questions at least two hours before each class.

**Five Reading Reflections:**
For this assignment, you will write a one-page reflection on the author’s thesis and main points. Please do not spend most of your reflection summarizing. Try and respond to the author’s objectives by asking yourself the following: what aspects made you reconsider your previous beliefs; what surprised you about the author’s statements; or how the readings relate to others that we have covered.

**Midterm Exam:**
The midterm exam will cover all the readings discussed before Spring Break. I will provide you with a study guide containing five possible essay questions. You will receive the study guide by email two weeks before the actual test. I will choose two questions from the study guide for the midterm. Then you will write about one of these questions. The best way to prepare is to make outlines or write down possible examples from the readings based on the study guide questions. While you cannot bring your notes to the exam, preparing possible answers ahead of time will help keep you on track during the timed exam (one hour).

**Final Exam:**
The final exam will follow the same format as the midterm, except that the final will cover the entire semester’s material. More emphasis, however, will be placed on the materials we read after Spring Break. You will be given a study guide two weeks before the final exam date.

**Evaluation:**
- Class Participation: 25%
- Five Reading Reflections: 25%
- Presentation: 10%
- Midterm Exam: 10%
Final Exam: 20%
Reading Questions: 10%

Reading and Assignment Schedule:

**What is Culture?**

**First day of Class:** January 18

January 20: Read Raymond William’s “Culture,” p35-40; Matthew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy*, p.49-57 from *Cultural Resistance Reader*

**How does Culture Become Politics?**

January 23: Read Robin D.G. Kelley from *Race Rebels* p.96-98; and Adolpho Reed’s “Why Is There No Black Political Movement,” p.99-100; “Huge Mob Tortures Negro” p. 131-34 from *CRR* (*Cultural Resistance Reader*)

January 25: chapter from George Lipsitz’s *The Possessive Investment of Whiteness*, located on Blackboard.

January 27: chapter from Elizabeth Cook-Lynn’s *Anti-Indianism in Modern America*, located on Blackboard.

January 30: chapter from Jacqueline Fear-Segal’s *White Man’s Club*, located on Blackboard.

**Why are There Cultural Resistors?**

February 1: E.J. Hobsbawm’s *Primitive Rebels*, p.135-48; Stuart Cosgrove’s “The Zoot-Suit and Style Warfare” 157-65 in *CRR*. **First Reading Reflection due.**


February 6: Kathleen Hanna’s Interview p. 180-82; Stuart Hall’s “Deconstructing the Popular” p. 185-92, from *CRR*.

February 8: Powerpoint presentation “A Fashionable Exchange.”

**How do Marginalized Groups Become Cultural Resistors? Why?**


February 13: excerpts from *Images that Injure*, located on Blackboard.

February 15: chapter from *Reservation Reelism*, located in Blackboard. **Second Reading Reflection due.**

February 17: meet at Saint Louis Museum of Art

February 20: chapter from *Going Native*, located on Blackboard.

February 22: Lawrence Levine’s “Slave Songs and Slave Consciousness” p. 215-30 from *CRR*.

February 24: George Lipsitz’s *Dangerous Crossroads*, p. 231-39 from *CRR*.

**Why Do Women Culturally Resist? How Do They Do It?**

February 27: chapter from *Ideas of Women’s Suffrage Movement*, located on Blackboard.

February 29: **Third Reading Reflection due.**

March 2: Review day for midterm
March 5: Virginia Woolf p. 240-47 from CRR.
March 7: Midterm Exam
March 12-16: Spring Break
March 19: Read “The Woman-Identified Woman,” p. 248-53 from CRR.
March 23: John Fiske p. 267-74 from CRR.

What is Pop Culture? How do Cultural Resistors Use It as Protest?
March 26: Malcolm Cowley p. 312-16; Thomas Frank p. 316-26 from CRR. Fourth Reading Reflection due.
March 30: Presentation on Pop Culture
April 2: Jason Grote p. 358-68 in CRR.
April 4: Andrew Boyd p. 369-78 in CRR.
April 6: Good Friday (no class)
April 9: Easter Monday (no class)

How Do Cultural Resistors Recreate Their Own Self-Image?
April 11: Chris Eyre’s Imprint
April 13: Chris Eyre’s Imprint
April 16: Chris Eyre’s Imprint Fifth Reading Reflection due.
April 18: chapter from Orientalism’s Interlocutors, located in Blackboard.
April 20: The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta p. 7-30
April 23: The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta p. 31-60
April 25: The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta p. 61-90
April 27: The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta p. 91-110
April 30: The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta p. 111-30
May 2: The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta (finish the novel, approximately 25 pgs)

End Of Semester Review
May 4: Final Exam Review
May 7: Final Exam Review
May 9-15: Final Exams our Final Exam TBA