

AmSt 202 WORKSHOP IN CULTURAL ANALYSIS

Fall 2017, TTh 10:30, East College 102

Professor Amy E. Farrell

Office Hours: T 2-4, W 2-3 and by appointment

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This workshop in cultural analysis will provide you with an introduction to the theories, methods, and tools of American Studies, an interdisciplinary field of cultural studies. This course is the central introductory methods workshop for the American Studies major. The goal of this course is to provide students with ways of analyzing cultural representations, from novels, films, and popular culture to visual texts, documentaries, memorials, statues, and museum exhibits. Students will also explore the interplay between representational practices in the United States and social structures and institutions (structures of race, class, sexuality, and gender; the family, nation, the state, and economy, among others). We will also think about how historical context influences our cultural readings and how forms of representation change over time. Students will study the ways in which forms of representation can both reinforce institutions of dominant power and also challenge them. Overall, students will see that meaning is not “inherent” but represented, that social and economic interests shape meaning, and that representation itself is a “site of struggle” in which meaning can be contested by groups with less power.

Required Texts:

Representation edited by Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans and Sean Nixon (okay to have electronic edition)

The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison, 1st Vintage International Edition. This is available at the bookstore. You *must have* the correct paper edition. No etexts for this novel!

Essays and excerpts, available on Moodle

Recommended: *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* edited by James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton

Learning Goals:

1. Students will demonstrate the ability to write clearly and to develop their own mastery of specific forms of disciplinary writing.
2. Students will demonstrate strong skills in analyzing literary, cultural, and visual texts. Students will also learn to link the analysis of textual representations to historical and structural contexts.
3. Students will deepen their knowledge of theoretical models central to the field, developing a stronger understanding of the ways in which power, ideology, and social construction function historically and in the contemporary context.

Requirements:

*This is a **writing intensive course**. We will pay particular attention to the *process* of writing in this course; writing workshops, writing revisions, independent meetings with me, and trips to the writing center will all be part of the semester’s work. Be sure that you don’t wait until the last minute to try to see me or to make appointments with the writing center—schedules fill up! We will pay careful attention to how one engages with others’ published writing as well. I encourage you to purchase and use a good writer’s handbook and reference guide. Diane Hacker’s *A Writer’s Reference*, available in the bookstore, is especially good.

Everyone must complete both preliminary and final drafts. We will also have regular informal writing assignments that will become part of your participation grade.

*Participation: This course will involve much discussion, debate and analysis in class; thus, attendance is mandatory. Come to class with all readings and written work completed. Come to class prepared to ask questions and offer your interpretation!. The short, informal writing assignments will form part of your participation grade, as will group and individual presentations.

Please also note that this class requires your attendance at a number of outside events. We have a wonderful collection of events this semester. Please write up a short summary and response after you attend these, and turn in to me. These will be part of your participation grade.

*Participation: 20% of grade.

*Take Home Exam: 20% of grade

*Paper #1: 30% of grade

*Paper #2: 30% of grade

*Late papers will be penalized one grade per day late. Late means any time after the beginning of class.

Accommodating Students with Disabilities

Dickinson values diverse types of learners and is committed to ensuring that each student is afforded an equal opportunity to participate in all learning experiences. If you have (or think you may have) a learning difference or a disability – including a mental health, medical, or physical impairment– that would impact your educational experience in this class, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) to schedule a meeting with Director Marni Jones. She will confidentially discuss your needs, review your documentation, and determine your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. To learn more about available supports, go to www.dickinson.edu/ODS , email DisabilityServices@dickinson.edu, call (717) 245-1734, or go to ODS in 106 Dana Hall.

If you've already been granted accommodations at Dickinson, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can meet to review your Accommodation Letter and complete your "Blue Form" Implementation Plan. If you will need test proctoring from ODS, remember that you will need to provide them with at least one week's notice. This will not be relevant in this course, however, as there will be no in-class exams.

Note on course notetakers: I have found that sharing notes improves the educational experience for all students, whether they have been granted accommodations or not; therefore, each week two students will sign up as a notetaker. These notes need to be sent to me as an email attachment by the Sunday evening following the assigned week. You don't need to put your name on it. I'll share these notes on Moodle.

It's fine if you'd like to use a computer to take notes. Don't even think about doing email or surfing the web while you're in class. It's *much* better to print out materials and read them on paper. I'd like to see your materials underlined, with notes in the margins, questions, thoughts. There is a lot of reading. Look ahead. Keep up. Class meetings work only if everyone has done the reading.

The schedule and assignments may need to be changed. I will announce any changes in class.

Schedule:

T August 29: Introductions

What is American studies? How do we *do* American studies?

Representing Meanings/ Reading Texts

Th Aug 31: Read "The Work of Representation," p. 1-36 (plus connected readings)

T Sept 5: Read "The Work of Representation," p. 36-59 (plus connected readings)

Th Sept 7: Read "The Spectacle of the 'Other'" by Stuart Hall, entire chapter.

T Sept 12: Read excerpts, *The Indigenous History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz (on Moodle)

REQUIRED EVENING TALK: ATS, 7pm, Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

Optional: Salon/Panel Discussion: Confederate Monuments 4:30-6 Allison Community Room 9/13

Th Sept 14: Bring Response to Dunbar Ortiz and, if relevant, to Confederate Monuments

T Sept 19: Read Blight, “If You Don’t Tell It Like It Was, It Can Never Be as It Ought to Be” (Moodle)
Read “Slavery in American History: An Uncomfortable National Dialogue” by James Oliver Horton (Moodle—both from *Slavery and Public History*)

Th Sept 21: No class, Rosh Hashanah

T Sept 26: Review for Take Home Exam

Th Sept 28: Exam Due, beginning of class.

T Oct 3: Visit to Army Heritage Educational Center (leave at 10:20am)

Reality, Memory and Memorials

W Oct 4: Required: Raquel Cepeda, “Remixing the American Dream,” ATS 7pm

Th Oct 5: Responses due from AHEC visit.

Friday Oct 6, by 4pm, 255 W. Louther, upstairs: Response due from Cepeda

T Oct 10: Read “The Enola Gay Controversy” by Michael J. Hogan (on Moodle)

Th Oct 12: Read “Avoiding History: Thomas Jefferson, Sally Hemings, and the Uncomfortable Public Conversation on Slavery” by Lois Horton AND
“Southern Comfort Levels: Race, Heritage Tourism and the Civil War in Richmond,” by Marie Tyler-McGraw (all from *Slavery and Public History*; all on Moodle)

T Oct 17: No class, Fall Pause

Th Oct 19: Read selected pieces on Confederate Monuments:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/20/opinion/confederate-statues-american-history.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=opinion-c-col-left-region®ion=opinion-c-col-left-region&WT.nav=opinion-c-col-left-region>

In this article, esteemed U.S. historian Eric Foner lays out the original reasons for Confederate monuments and his thinking on their relevance today.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/28/opinion/white-power-and-the-fear-of-replacement.html> In this article, Abigail Levin and Lisa Guenther lead us through the thinking that connects anti-Semitism and pro-Confederacy and white supremacy.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2017/08/16/the-whole-point-of-confederate-monuments-is-to-celebrate-white-supremacy/?tid=a_inl&utm_term=.9334938712ad

In this article, historian Karen Cox explores the roots of the myth of the Lost Cause and how it relates to the controversy over Confederate monuments today.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/28/world/americas/canada-john-a-macdonald-kingston.html>

In this article, *New York Times* reporter Ian Austin draws our attention to the similar battles over monuments and memorials happening in Canada—in this case, the monuments honoring Sir John MacDonald, founder of the Canadian schools for indigenous peoples.

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/23/opinion/mitch-landrieus-speech-transcript.html?_r=0

In this speech, mayor of New Orleans Mitch Landrieu explains in great detail why he supported taking down all of the Confederate monuments in his city.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/go-ahead-topple-the-monuments-to-the-confederacy-all-of-them/2017/08/18/6b54c658-8427-11e7-ab27-1a21a8e006ab_story.html?hpid=hp_no-name_opinion-card-b%3Ahomepage%2Fstory&utm_term=.eb8531e3cd26

In this article and video, activist Bree Newsome, the woman well known for taking down the Confederate flag flying over the capitol building in Columbia, S.C. (after the massacre in the Charleston church by an avowed white supremacist), urges readers to support the elimination of all monuments to the Confederacy.

<http://www.nationalreview.com/article/450470/charlottesville-virignia-robert-e-lee-statue-remove-right-decision-confederate-monuments-museums> In this *National Review* editorial, conservative Rich Lowry argues we should “mothball” Confederate monuments, placing them in cemeteries and museums.

T Oct 24: “The Poetics and the Politics of Exhibiting Other Cultures,” by Henrietta Lidchi, p. 120- 157
Required, Erica Frankenberg, “Contemporary School Segregation,” ATS, 7pm

Th Oct 26: “The Poetics and the Politics of Exhibiting Other Cultures,” by Henrietta Lidchi, p. 157- 191

T Oct 31: Read “Recording Reality: Documentary Film and Television,” by Frances Bonner, p. 60-89
See “Thomas Jefferson’s Daily Ride” on the Monticello website

Th Nov 2: Bring to class a one page description of your text. Share with the class!

T Nov 7: Individual Meetings in my office, 255 W. Louthier, Monday and Tuesday (no regular class). Draft Due, emailed to me, by Sunday 11/5 at noon.

Th Nov 9: no class, ASA Conference. Instead, go to:
Required: Th Nov. 9 Attend Jonathan Albright, “The Shadow of ‘Fake News,’” ATS, 7pm

T Nov. 14: Second Drafts Due IN CLASS; Bring 2 copies; Writing Workshop

Th Nov 16: Papers Due; See documentary interview with Toni Morrison in class.

Literature and Representation

T Nov 21: Come to class with all of *The Bluest Eye* read! Include the Foreword by Toni Morrison

Th Nov 23: No class, Thanksgiving

T Nov 28: Read selected essays, on resistance and pedagogy, on Moodle.

Th Nov 30: Read excerpts, Solmaz Sharif’s poetry (on Moodle)

Required, “An Evening with Solmaz Sharif,” 7pm, ATS

T Dec 5: Discuss Sharif poetry

Th Dec 7: Writing Workshop. Bring 2 copies of your draft of the final paper.

Your final paper is due to me, in my Clarke Forum mailbox, no later than Wednesday, December 13, by 2pm.