AMST 101: Introduction to American Studies  
Spring 2013

Class Meetings
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10:00-10:50 am (section 0102)  
Holzapfel 0106

Instructor: Stephanie Stevenson  
Email: stephanie.stevenson10@gmail.com  
**Telephone: (301) 405-7621

Pre- or co-requisites: None

Course Description:
What do you do in American Studies? Seems like a simple question: “you study America.” However, the construction of “America” has been a social, cultural, political, and economic process fraught in both past and present with complications, contradictions, and contestations. To address the U.S.’ process of nation-building through inclusion and exclusion, this course will introduce students to the Department of American Studies’ three pillars of scholarship: the construction of identity and difference; the cultures of everyday life; and the transnational. Through these three pillars, this course will explore the meanings given to diversity, freedom, citizenship, and subjectivity within situated contexts and discourses. This course will introduce students to the key analytical categories of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, place, and dis(ability). As a lower-level course in the interdisciplinary field of American Studies, this course will also explore the various methodologies and questions of the field through the consideration of canonical and contemporary work in the field.

Course Goals:
After completing this course, students should be able to:
- Understand and appreciate the diversity and dynamic quality of Americans' cultures, including cultural identities, products, and everyday practices.
- Identify and apply appropriate concepts, methods, and technologies pertinent to research in the field of American Studies.
- Demonstrate critical thinking in evaluating the sources for and arguments about Americans' cultures.
- Develop a claim about a text in relation to American culture and society, and be able to construct an evidence-based argument that substantiates such claims.
• Identify and assess one's own values and beliefs about American culture, and be able to critically and self-reflexively evaluate those values and beliefs within the terms of class discussions and formal written arguments.

• Engage in visual, textual, and aural critical reading practices

• Practice college-level writing, research, reading comprehension, and public speaking skills

REQUIRED TEXTS
Both texts are available online and at the University of Maryland campus bookstore. Students will also be responsible for downloading additional readings located on the ELMS/CANVAS website, which have been designated on the course schedule.


COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES

Attendance and Participation: Students should attend all class meetings, be on time, and be prepared to participate on a substantive and analytical level in discussions of the readings and topics. If you do miss class, contact a classmate (all emails are on elms) to make sure you are up to date on topics, as you will still be held responsible for all class notes/discussions, readings, quizzes and exams. If you still have questions please feel free to email me. Bring the appropriate texts to class every time we meet. Note that UMD’s official attendance policy is available at (http://www.testudo.umd.edu/soc/atedasse.html).

Contacting the Instructor: You can always contact me by email. Please be sure to state your question or concerns clearly and respectfully. I will hold office hours by appointment or you can schedule office hours through the video chat option available on Canvas. Please feel free to speak to me after class on or class meeting days as well.

Academic Integrity: The University of Maryland takes the issue of academic honesty very seriously. We expect our students to uphold high standard of conduct. The University of Maryland is dedicated to ensuring academic integrity, symbolized by the Honor Code upheld by the Student Honor Council. The Student Honor Council defines the following as academic dishonesty:

• Cheating: intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.

• Fabrication: intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

• Facilitation: intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate any provision of the Honor Code.

• Plagiarism: intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise without citation.
Students are responsible for conforming to these policies:
(http://www.testudo.umd.edu/soc/dishonesty.html)

**Classroom Etiquette:** The University of Maryland values the diversity of its student body and is committed to providing a classroom atmosphere that encourages the equal participation of all students. At all times students should be respectful of others. If you disagree with someone you should express your alternative view using the evidence that led you to your interpretation. Personalized comments, inappropriate language, insults, sleeping, and raised voices will not be tolerated. Please place your cell phone on silent or “vibrate” mode while in class. You are welcome to use your laptop to take notes; please avoid using your laptop for purposes other than note-taking.

**Online Expectations:** I will assume that the e-mail address that you provided to the university is accurate, up to date and checked at least once a day during business days. If your official e-mail address is not up to date, please update it on Testudo. I will send emails primarily through Canvas www.elms.umd.edu so please do make sure that your Canvas profile allows you to be alerted about class announcements/email updates every day. In addition, all students will be required to sign into Canvas to obtain or view course-related files or information, write blog-posts, communicate with classmates, and finish quizzes.

**Writing Center:** The UMD English Department offers a campus writing center. I recommended that you bring your written work to the writing center so that they can help you improve your writing.

Writing Center website: http://www.english.umd.edu/academics/writingcenter

Office Number: (301) 405-3785 Location: 1205 Tawes Hall

**Excused Absence due to Illness (IMPORTANT)***

For a medically necessitated absence from a single lecture, recitation, or lab, students should

a.) make a reasonable attempt to inform me prior to the absence

b.) submit a self-signed note, attesting to the date of their illness. Each note must also contain an acknowledgment by the student that the information provided is true and correct. Such documentation shall be honored as an excused absence unless the absence coincides with a Major Scheduled Grading Event.

c.) Providing false information to University officials is prohibited under Part 9 (h) of the Code of Student Conduct (V-1.00(B) UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT) and may result in disciplinary action.

d.) Students who experience a prolonged absence(s), or an illness during a Major Scheduled Grading Event are required to provide written documentation of the illness from the Health Center or from an outside health care provider that verifies the dates of treatment and indicates
the time frame that the student was unable to meet academic responsibilities. No diagnostic information shall be given.

**Religious Observances:** Please inform me at the start of the semester if you are going to miss any major scheduled grading events due to religious observances so that alternative arrangements can be made.

**Other Absences:** Official information can be found here: [http://www.faculty.umd.edu/teach/attendance.html](http://www.faculty.umd.edu/teach/attendance.html)

- If you are missing a day without any assignments due: keep in mind that, save for religious observances or official University-excused absences, you will not receive credit for active participation points.

- If you are missing a major scheduled grading event: due to University policies regarding fairness, I will not reschedule any major grading event without one of the following:
  - An official excuse from a university office signed by university personnel
  - A doctor’s note or a copy of a hospital bill
  - A note from an officer of the law or from a legal office
  - A collection of documents based on the instructor’s discretion
  - A funeral program

**Accommodations:** If you require any accommodations due to disability please inform me at the beginning of the semester so that I can make arrangements for our exams. In addition, please make an appointment with the Disability Support Services (DSS) so that you can learn the procedures and fill out the necessary paperwork.

DSS Website: [http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS](http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS)

Office number: (301) 314-7682 Location: 0106 Shoemaker Building

**Course Evaluations:** During the end of the semester, you will be asked to fill out online course evaluations via the website at [www.courseevalum.umd.edu](http://www.courseevalum.umd.edu). Please take the time to fill out these forms because the department takes them very seriously as tools which we can use to improve our teaching.

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<th>Assignment &amp; Grading Breakdown</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assignments</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Active Class Participation &amp; Fieldwork Assignments (4 Assignments= 5 points each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes (5 Quizzes=10 points each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blog Posts (6 blog posts each one worth 10 points)</td>
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MAJOR SCHEDULED GRADING EVENTS

Active Course Participation  (Approximately 45 class sessions, approximately .5pts/session)

Students must attend class to receive “Active Classroom Participation” points. I emphasize “active” because it highlights that students who just come to class may not be actually participating in class. Recognizing that students have various learning styles and approaches to classroom environments, I understand that participation can take many forms. As the semester progresses, I expect that students will contribute to class discussion and group work with respectful, thoughtful, and inquisitive comments and/or questions. At the very minimum, I expect that students will come to class and turn in assignments on time, stay awake in class, take thorough notes, and be attentive to the lecture and classroom discussions.

Due to the nature of our class, there will be no extended lectures or professor's monologues. Instead, our class meetings will be devoted to discussions of the reading that we’ll do together and of the films that we will watch. It is essential that you read and carefully consider the material assigned for a particular session. If you must miss a class, please inform me, by email or in person, of the reason for your absence.

Fieldwork Assignments (4 total, each one worth 5 points, 20 total)- Dates Listed on Syllabus

You will be conducting four Fieldwork Assignments throughout the semester. These are in class group/individual assignments that will be completed during and sometimes after class that will allow you to explore some of the methods that American Studies scholars use such as, visual culture analysis, film analysis, archival research, and ethnographic observations. Students should meet face to face and online to complete assignments.

Fieldwork #1: Historical/Archival Research
Fieldwork #2: Policy Analysis
Fieldwork #3: Pop Culture/ Media Analysis
Fieldwork #4: Material Culture Analysis

Each of these assignments will be discussed in-depth a minimum of a week prior to their due dates, and often even longer than that. Each assignment will have specific instructions posted on Canvas.

Our fifth Fieldwork Assignment will be held off campus (in Washington DC as a class…listed below).

Blog Posts (6 blog posts each one worth 10 points, 60pts total)

Students will respond to prompts provided by the instructor.
- relate larger themes of the class and cite textual evidence to support their claims

- be written in a way that invites comments and participation

- include at least 1 form of related media content that relates to the major themes, briefly explain the content, and discuss their relation to the major themes discussed in your post.

Examples of media content that you can introduce:

- Journalism: Long form feature stories or in-depth breaking news that show how the week's issues are developing in the real world. May introduce developments from places, spaces, or people that aren't adequately addressed in class;

- Videos, TV Shows, Documentaries, etc: Full-length narratives or shorter pieces, video series or clips, interviews, or art projects. It's important to see and hear these ideas as well as read them. Indeed, some ideas (e.g., remix, surveillance) may be better expressed in different media.

- A political event or campaign: A politician or government agency may have made a major statement or action that reflects how powerful institutions consider these ideas. Activists of one type or another may be trying to change those same institutions.

- Games or programs: There may be a particular game or data tool that is being used in exciting, interesting ways and shows people working within, around, or outside of the social dynamics we discuss in class.

- These are just a few ideas. This is an opportunity to be creative and introduce perspectives, yours or others, that you feel aren't getting enough representation in class—so be creative and take chances.

**Quizzes:** (5 total, each worth 10pts= 50 points): I will give 5 pop quizzes over the semester during class and/or online. In each case students will have 10 minutes to complete the quiz (which may be multiple choice, fill in the blank, and/or 2 short answers). These quizzes will help assess completion of reading assignments and allow me to see how you are working with the material we are covering. Each quiz will individually be worth 10 points for a total of 50 points possible.

**Midterm Examination (100 points) Mon. Feb 25th (In Class: Regular Class Time)**

The midterm will test your understanding of the main arguments in the articles we have read and your ability to apply the various keywords we have studied. It will be an exam made up of multiple choice, short answer, fill in the blanks, and essay questions. We will discuss the midterm in much, much more detail later in the semester.

**Field Trip/ Final Group Fieldwork #5: Cultural Landscapes/Ethnographic Analysis (20 points) TBA Anytime b/w Wed, April 17th * Fri, April 19th (need about 2hours) Worksheet Due Monday April 22nd by 11:59 pm**
You will complete this fieldwork assignment with group members to analyze observed cultural landscapes in Washington, D.C. We will visit the historic U Street area as a class in the Spring. You will be expected to make connections between the assignment and the larger themes of the class. We will discuss the specifics of this paper more in-depth as the semester starts. Students will be expected to create a Power Point or Prezi Presentation to describe their experiences and major observations.

**Final Examination (125 points)** Friday May 17th – Final Exam 8:00am-10:00 am (In Class)

Like the midterm, the final examination will be an in-class written examination that consists of multiple choice, fill in the blanks, and short answer questions that test you on your knowledge of the articles and keywords we have read and discussed. The exam is partially cumulative. It will only cover the articles we have read since the midterm; however, it will address the all of the keywords we have studied over the course of the semester. We will discuss the exam in more detail as the date approaches.

**Grading Guidelines:** Students earn grades based on their performance on the course requirements listed above. This is a description of the grading criteria according to the UMD Faculty Handbook [http://www.faculty.umd.edu/teach/grades.html](http://www.faculty.umd.edu/teach/grades.html):

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+, A, A- (100% - 90%)</td>
<td>“Denotes excellent mastery of the subject and outstanding scholarship.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+, B, B- (89.9% - 80%)</td>
<td>“Denotes good mastery of the subject and good scholarship.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+, C, C- (79.9% - 70%)</td>
<td>“Denotes acceptable mastery of the subject and the usual achievement expected.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+, D, D- (69.9% - 60%)</td>
<td>“Denotes borderline understanding of the subject. These grades denote marginal performance, and they do not represent satisfactory progress toward a degree.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F (59.9% - 0%)</td>
<td>“Denotes failure to understand the subject and unsatisfactory performance.”</td>
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**Course Calendar**

*Is subject to minor adjustments. The dates listed are the days that we have class, and therefore the day by which to complete the readings.*

**Unit 1: What is American Studies?**

**Week 1: Introductions, framing the course & the field**

Wed, Jan. 23rd
Class Introductions and expectations for the semester.

In-class discussion: “What is Culture and why do we study it?”

Discussion Based off of:

- Look at: Dr. Jharna Chatterjee “A Short Discourse on Culture”
  [http://www.now2gether.org/topic_files/A_Short_Discourse_on_Culture_SS_final_W.htm](http://www.now2gether.org/topic_files/A_Short_Discourse_on_Culture_SS_final_W.htm)

Friday, Jan 25th

Discussion of the Evolution of American Studies as a Discipline

- Review our UMD AMST website [www.amst.umd.edu](http://www.amst.umd.edu) and the American Studies website of one additional university. After reviewing these websites be ready to explain what these departments focus on during our class discussion today.
- Read: *Keywords*, “America”
- Brief In Class Discussion of Methods: ethnography, textual analysis, historical/archival research, mapping technologies, and material culture research

Unit 2: Cultural Constructions of Identity & Difference

Week 2: Race, Ethnicity & Nation

Mon. Jan 28th

- Read: *Keywords*: Nation & Citizenship
Watch in Class Race the Power of an Illusion, Episode 2 “The Story We Tell”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UZS8Wb4S5k

Wed. Jan 30th

- Read Keywords: Race & Ethnicity
  - Read ELMS: James E. Barrett and David Roediger, Ch. 2 “How White People Became White” in White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism (Rosenberg, 2005).

Fri. February 1st

- Watch PBS’s Race The Power of Illusion from the beginning to 24 mins: 18 seconds
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCPu8BF5khk

- In Class-Fieldwork #1: Historical/Archival Research:

Mon. Feb.4th

- Read Keywords: “Capitalism,” “Class,”

- Read ELMS: George Lipsitz, The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics p. 402-410

- Watch PBS’s Race The Power of Illusion from 24mins:19 seconds to the end
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCPu8BF5khk

- In Class Discussion about this week’s topics and the documentary below

Wed. Feb 6th = CLASS CANCELLED (University Travel)


Fri. Feb 8th


**Week 4: Gender & Sexuality**

Mon. Feb 11th

- Read Keywords: “Gender,” & “Sex,”


- Watch in Class “Class Sex and the City’s Roots and Legacy”
  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vg-D0vVs6bg&feature=player_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vg-D0vVs6bg&feature=player_embedded)

- Watch Episodes of *Mad Men* and *Board Walk Empire* in Class

- In Class-Fieldwork #2: Pop Culture/ Media Analysis

Wed Feb. 13th

- Read Keywords: "Queer"

- Read ELMS: John D’Emilio’s “Capitalism and Gay Identity”


Fri. Feb 15th

- Watch: Hip Hop: Beyond Beats & Rhymes -Byron Hurt
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODZYkrCeaUI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODZYkrCeaUI)

**Week 5: Dis(ability)**

Mon. Feb 18th
Read Keywords: “Disability”


Watch at Home: Rosmarie Garland Thompson
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jALSdVW63wo

Watch in Class: Team Long Brothers: The Journey of Brotherly Love!
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHEBhOILITE

Skim: (will discuss in class) Census Bureau. “Profile America: 20th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act

In class: Watch Aimee Mullins: “How my legs give me super powers”
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQ0iMulicgg

Wed. Feb 20th

In Class Review for Midterm

Fri. Feb 22nd --- Class Cancelled

Unit Three: Performance & Practice in Everyday Life

Week 6: Space & Place

Mon. Feb 25th

Midterm

Wed. Feb 27th


- Watch part of Pruitt Igoe in Class

Fri. March 1st

- Read Keywords: “City” and “Region”

- Watch in Class The Demographic Transformation of the U.S. 
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQ5u2tV1DtY

- **Look at in class: New York Times: Mapping America: Every City, Every Block-**

- **In Class-Fieldwork #3: Policy Analysis**

  **Week 7: The American Body**

  **Mon. March 4th**

  - Read Keywords: “Body”

    American Quarterly, 64(2). p.185-204.

  - Watch at home “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot - Official Trailer” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vow1ePzuqo


    Watch in Class: “The Way of All Flesh 1/4”
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVhm4emsNus

  **Wed. March 6th**

  - Body Ritual Among the Nacirema
    https://www.msu.edu/~jdowell/miner.html?pagewanted=all


  - Watch in Class Dreamworlds 3: Desire, Sex & Power in Music Video (watch in class)
    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDm5cI[N3A
Fri. March 8th

- Review and Analyze Planet Fitness’ Website [http://www.planetfitness.com/](http://www.planetfitness.com/)

**Week 8: Foodways**

Mon. March 11th

- In Class Movie *Food Inc.*
- Read ELMS: Psyche Williams-Forson and Carole Counihan, *Taking Food Public* Introduction
- Meredith E. Abraca *Mexican Women Speak from Their Public Kitchens* and pp. 94-111

Wed. March 13th

- Read ELMS: Psyche Williams-Forson and Carole Counihan, *Taking Food Public*, pp. 138-154 *Other Women cooked for my Husband*

Fri. March 15th

- **Watch in Class** The Early Show – “Paula Deen Wrote the Book on Southern Cooking” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCngqEw9Ecw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCngqEw9Ecw)
- **In Class Fieldwork #4: Material Culture Analysis**

**Spring Break March 17th through March 24th**

**Week 9: Popular Culture**

Mon. March 25th

- Christopher Roberts.(2012). My Django Review: Spaghetti, Master’s Tools, and Inspiration ALL in One (Spoiler Alert).

Wed. March 27th
• Read ELMS: Stuart Hall, Notes on Deconstructing the Popular
• Watch “Representation & the Media: Featuring Stuart Hall” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTzMsPqssOY

Fri. March 29th – No Class Away on University Travel

Week 10: Citizenship & Borders

Mon. April 1st
• Keywords: Citizenship & State

Wed. April 3rd
• Keywords: Immigration
  ▪ Watch in class: “Stop Your Racism To Hispanics” -- Liberty Wall http://www.youtube.com/user/9500Liberty#p/a/4D00BB8C9BE37DB2/0/k_Dw1ioGPGY
  ▪ Watch in class: “9500 Liberty: Moms with a Mission” http://www.youtube.com/user/9500Liberty#p/a/u/2/C9PXi1hGGy0

Fri. April 5th –
• Keywords, “Exceptionalism”- Pease (pg. 108-112)

• Watch in Class: *On Orientalism—Edward Said.*
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwCOSkXR_Cw

• Watch In class: CNN Presents: Unwelcome: The Muslims Next Door
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-WbdNIEPE1Y

**Unit Four: Beyond U.S. Borders, America & the World**

**Week 11: Local Worlds**

**Mon. April 8th**

- History of College Park & Lakeland (TBA)
- In Class Movie and Discussion of Cultural Landscape Studies/Ethnography

**Wednesday April 10th**

- History of Baltimore (TBA)

**Friday, April 12th**

- History of Washington DC


- “There goes the neighbourhood” (2010). Al Jazeera English.
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzsOl5zVw-8

- Review the [http://www.wmata.com/](http://www.wmata.com/) website (especially the Trip Planner)-analysis time, space, and cost

**Week 12: (Local) National Worlds Continued**

**Monday, April 15th** *Boom the Sound of Eviction* (2001) Watch parts 1-3 & 11
  - Part 2: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=OCE7apdoJ58](http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=OCE7apdoJ58)
  - Part 3: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlX-hz5V-xY&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlX-hz5V-xY&feature=related)

**Preparation for the Trip: Brief Discussion of U Street & Metro**
Wed, April 17th * Class Trip (Portion of the Class Choose Day)*TBA

Thursday, April 18th - Class Trip (Portion of the Class Choose Day)*TBA

Fri, April 19th - Class Trip (1/2 Class Choose Day)* TBA

Week 13: Diaspora, Transnational, & Global

Mon. April 22nd - Class Cancelled –Submit Fieldwork 5 Worksheets by 11:59pm

Wed, April 24th

• Read, *Keywords*, “Diaspora”

• Read: ASA: The Practice of Diaspora –Brent Hayes Edwards  p. 33-40


Fri. April 26th

• Read, *Keywords*, "Globalization."


Week 14: Diaspora, Transnational, & Global Continued/
Reviewing, and Lingering Questions

Mon. April 29th

• Watch & Discuss in Class: *Life and Debt* in Class
(Trailer) [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJOSsUeWPQw&feature=related]

Wed, May 1st

• (Watch and Discuss in Class) “Hip Hop: The Furious Force of Rhymes”
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YF3n2WJcbH4&list=ELnqrCMmARcYI]

Fri. May 3rd - Class Cancelled (Make Review Questions at Home)
Week 15: Reviewing, and Lingering Questions

Mon. May 6\textsuperscript{th}
*Review for Final and Reflect on the Semester-

Wed. May 8\textsuperscript{th} - Last Day of Class
*Review for Final and Reflect on the Semester-

Friday May 17\textsuperscript{th} – Final Exam 8:00am-10:00 am (In Class)