American Studies 202, Section 101: Cultures of Everyday Life in America
Tuesday, Thursday
12:30-1:45PM
1125 H. J. Patterson Hall
Spring 2013

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*This is a shared office phone line in the AMST Graduate Student Office. Please do not leave voicemail messages. Also, please note that I can only answer this line when I am in the office on Tuesdays during the specified times.

Course Description:
This class will examine the cultural significance of everyday life in the United States. By studying daily activities such as homemaking, eating, learning, leisure, work, and spiritual practice, this class turns away from “exceptional” in favor of more common, yet diverse, experiences. The class is organized chronologically so as to highlight different themes within historical contexts. Each week also showcases a selection of qualitative social scientific research methods used within the interdisciplinary field of American studies, including ethnography, oral history, and textual, visual, and material analysis. The course considers questions such as: How have scholars attempted to examine the smaller, often banal acts of everyday life? Which issues have been included and which have been left out? How are those who live in America both united and divided by these practices? By interpreting the categories of “everyday life” and “America” broadly, we work together to gain a deeper understanding of the different ways in which people navigate the social structures, cultural traditions, cultural narratives, norms, and forms of resistance that outline our everyday lives.

Course Goals: Students who satisfactorily complete all reading and writing assignments will have achieved the following Learning Outcomes (General Education Humanities):

- Demonstrate knowledge of fundamental concepts and ideas related to the study of everyday life in America.
- Demonstrate understanding of the role of social scientific methods in the interdisciplinary approach of American studies.
- Demonstrate critical thinking in evaluating the construction of arguments in interdisciplinary social science approaches, analyzing major assertions, background assumptions, and the use of explanatory evidence.
- Explain how culture, social structure, diversity and different relationships to institutions and power have an impact on individual perceptions, actions, and values.
- Show how historical and interdisciplinary social scientific methods can elucidate contemporary social issues.
REQUIRED MATERIALS:


2. Articles, Chapters, and Media: Aside from the required textbook, you will occasionally be assigned an article or chapter from another source. These readings will be posted as PDF files in the Course Modules section of this course’s Canvas site. Be sure to print out these readings or bring your notes to class.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES:

Keep up with the course readings.
The readings are the foundation of this course. Our classroom discussions, midterm and final examinations will be based on the readings, so if you want to do well in the course, it is crucial that you keep up with the readings.

Come to class prepared.
Readings and assignments are to be completed before class, and you must have questions and comments about the readings to ensure active participation.

Maintain a respectful classroom environment.
In this class we will discuss issues dealing with race, gender, sexuality and other sensitive topics. It is important to create an environment where everyone feels comfortable to voice their ideas. Mean-spirited and disrespectful remarks made either to the instructor or other students will not be tolerated. You are entitled to free speech and expression, and I ask you to recognize that everyone has those rights as well. I ask you to respectfully communicate with your classmates and me.

Laptops and cell phones.
The use of laptops in the classroom for taking notes or accessing information that contributes to our discussion is permitted. Using laptops to surf the web, check Facebook, instant message, or visit any site not pertaining to the class discussion will not be tolerated. If laptop use becomes more of a hindrance than an asset to our discussions, I reserve the right to ban their use in the classroom.

Talking on cell phones or text messaging during class will absolutely not be tolerated.

Turn in assignments on time.
I simply do not accept late assignments. You are required to turn in each assignment at the beginning of class on the day that it is due. If you are not in class on the day the assignment is due, you should email it to me before the class begins.

If you need help, ask!
I encourage students to take advantage of my office hours for questions and concerns about the course. If my scheduled office hours do not work for you, I will be happy to schedule an appointment with you for another time. I am here to help, so please do not
hesitate to ask. Remember, my ability to help you will be minimal directly before an assignment is due or at the end of the semester.

**Students with Disabilities**

If you have registered a learning or physical disability with UMD’s Disability Support Services ([http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/](http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/)), please inform me within the *first two* weeks of class so that we can make suitable accommodations.

**Excused Absences**

Excused absences include illness, religious observances, participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, and compelling circumstances beyond the student’s control. Students are responsible for contacting the instructor about projected absences within the first two weeks of the semester. You are responsible for making up any missed work.

*Please note the University of Maryland’s policy regarding medically, excused absences: A student may provide a self-signed note once per semester indicating his or her illness; however, the University’s honor code must accompany this note. Please see University Statement below:*

“For every medically necessary absence from class (lecture, recitation, or lab), a reasonable effort should be made to notify the instructor in advance of the class. When returning to class, students must bring a note identifying the date of and reason for the absence, and acknowledging that the information in the note is accurate. If a student is absent more than 1 time(s), the instructor may require documentation signed by a health care professional. If a student is absent on days when tests are scheduled or papers are due [or other such events as specified in the syllabus] he or she is required to notify the instructor in advance, and upon returning to class, bring documentation of the illness, signed by a health care professional.”

**Unexcused Absences**

After three *unexcused absences*, I will deduct from your final grade 5 points for each subsequent unexcused absence.

**Inclement Weather Policy**

In case of inclement weather, emergency school closing, or any delays, students will be notified as soon as possible of schedule/reading adjustments via e-mail. Please consult the university’s website at [www.umd.edu](http://www.umd.edu) for official closures and delays.

**Academic Integrity**

Violations of expected academic conduct include plagiarism, inappropriate collaboration, dishonesty in examinations (in-class or take-home), dishonesty in papers, work done for one course submitted to another, deliberate falsification of data, interference with other students’ work, and copyright violations. These violations are all defined in the University of Maryland’s Honor Code (shc.umd.edu/code.html). Please familiarize yourself with the entirety of this code if you have not already done so.
When in doubt regarding appropriate academic conduct, including scholarly citations and other issues, please consult me rather than waiting for a problem to develop.

Copyright Notice
All class lectures and other materials are copyrighted and must not be reproduced for anything other than personal use without written permission by instructor.

Monitoring Canvas and your e-mail
Frequently, I will communicate via e-mail from Canvas, so students should monitor their e-mails and Canvas sites on a daily basis. Students are responsible for checking their e-mail accounts; the instructor will not be responsible for any missed messages sent via e-mail or posted on the Canvas site.

Additional Information on Missed Quizzes/Exams
A student is allowed to make-up an exam or a quiz only if he or she has provided written documentation from a medical professional, university official, or another party that legitimately states the reason for the missed absence. Legitimate reasons consist of illness beyond one’s control, university-sponsored activity, unforeseen family emergencies (such as funerals).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Course Participation (15% of final grade)

1. In-Class Contribution and On-line Participation: 10% of your final grade
This course is structured around a discussion-based format. The idea is that all of us (including me) will learn from one another as we explore the various concepts and issues found in the readings. To help us accomplish this goal, I will encourage you to address and share your ideas with one another, not just me. Therefore, it is useful for you to bring in comments, critiques, and questions about the readings that will engage and stimulate class discussions. Additionally, you will be responsible for on-line postings and discussions.

I will take attendance at every class session, but you need to do more than just be present—you will need to make a substantive contribution to the class discussion. It may not look like I am keeping track of participation over the course of the semester, but I am. If you are not present, then you, of course, are not able to contribute to the discussion.

Announced and Unannounced In-Class writing: 5% of your final grade

2. Quizzes: 10% of your final grade
Quizzes will be given during the semester. These quizzes will follow an objective, essay, and/or short answer format.

3. Essay/Project#1: 15% of your final grade
Essay #1 will ask students to use **ethnographic method** to develop a list of themes. This essay must be **at least 1000 words** (double spaced). Further information/instructions for this assignment will be placed on the Canvas site for your reference.

4. **Essay #2: 15% of your final grade**
   Essay #2 will be an in-depth **analysis of an object**, using material culture or **textual/visual analytic methods**, in which students will be required to situate the object in its historical context and to assess it, using the academic literature on “everyday life.” This essay must be **at least 1000 words** (double spaced). Instructions for this assignment will be placed on the Canvas site for your reference.

5. **Two Group Presentations: 5% of your final grade**

6. **Midterm Examination: 20% of your final grade**
   The midterm exam will address the material covered during the first eight weeks of the semester. The exam will test your understanding of the main arguments in the articles we have read and your ability to apply the various theoretical concepts in the “cultures of everyday life.” It will be a blue book exam made up of short answer, objective, and essay questions. We will discuss the midterm in greater detail later in the semester.

**Midterm Examination Date: Thursday, March 14th in 1125 H. J. Patterson Hall**

7. **Final Examination: 20% of your final grade**
   The final examination will be a blue book test that consists of essay and objective questions that test you on your knowledge of the articles and other material we have read and discussed. The exam is **cumulative**. We will discuss the exam in more detail as we approach the end of the semester.

**Final Examination Date: Thursday, May 16th; 1:30-3:30PM in 1125 H. J. Patterson Hall**

**COURSE GRADING:**
The following scale will designate your final grade:

- A 94%-96%
- A- 90%-93%
- A+ 97%-100%
- B 84%-86%
- B- 80%-83%
- B+ 87%-89%
- C 74%-76%
- C- 70%-73%
- C+ 77%-79%
- D 64%-66%
- D- 60%-63%
- D+ 67%-69%
- F 59% and below

An A-, A, or A+ indicates excellent mastery of the subject and outstanding scholarship. A B-, B, or B+ indicates good mastery of the subject and good scholarship.
A C-, C, or C+ indicates satisfactory mastery of the subject and average expected achievement.
A D indicates borderline comprehension of the subject and marginal performance.
An F indicates failure to understand the subject and unsatisfactory performance.

COURSE CALENDAR (The syllabus is subject to changes with notice; updates to the syllabus can be viewed on the Canvas Site). Instructor will notify students in advance of important changes that could affect grading, assignments, and other criteria.

Week 1: Introduction to the Course
Thur., Jan. 24 ➢ Introductions and Syllabus Review

Week 2: Ethnography/Culture

➢ Michigan State University, “What is Culture?”
www.studyabroad.isp.msu.edu/studenthandbk/crossing_cultures/culture.html

Thurs., Jan. 31 ➢ Clifford Geertz, “Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight” (Available in the “Course Documents” Section on ELMS/Canvas)
John Caughey, Chapter Two from *Negotiating Cultures and Identities: Life History Issues, Methods and Readings* (Available in the “Course Modules” Section on Canvas)

*Weekly Take-away Information: What is a Method? What is Methodology? What is Ethnography? What is Culture?*

Week 3: The Everyday in Early Native-American Life (Visit Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian; closest Metrorail Stop is L’Enfant, exit at Maryland Avenue) What is the significance of this “cultures of everyday life” exhibit? Think historical relevance and cultural practices?

*Assignment: Bring in your example of an ethnography in practice on Tuesday, February 5, 2012*

LAST DATE FOR ADD/DROP: FEBRUARY 5

Tues., Feb. 5 ➢ Discuss Museum Visit to National Museum of the American Indian--What is material culture? Please focus on the Exhibit: *Our Peoples: Giving Voice to Our Histories* (If you have the opportunity, you should take advantage of the highlights tour conducted by the Museum’s cultural interpreter)

Thurs., Feb. 7 ➢ Discussion of Exhibit Continued
Weekly Take-away Information: What is the significance of the material objects/artifacts displayed? What is material culture? How do you apply material culture analysis in museum studies to everyday life?

Week 4: The Everyday in Early America: Town Life

Tues., Feb. 12
➢ Ben Highmore, Introduction in The Everyday Life Reader

Thurs., Feb. 14
➢ Ben Highmore, Intro in The Everyday Life Reader Continued…
➢ Nancy Struna, “Sports and Colonial Popular Culture: 1680s—1730s” from People of Prowess: Sport, Leisure, and Labor in Early Anglo-America (Available in the “Course Modules” Section on Canvas)

Week 5: Everyday Life and Emerging Industrialism: Labor and Identity
Assignment: Essay #1 due on Tuesday, February 19th. Participant/observation project (Ethnography): See Course Modules Section on Canvas for detailed instructions and guidelines

Tues., Feb. 19
➢ Sutherland, Ch. 7-8 “Working in Town: The Laborers” (Essay #1 Due) “Working in Town: Shopkeepers and Professionals” (Available in the “Course Documents” Section on ELMS/Canvas)

Thurs., Feb. 21

Week 6: Everyday Life of the Enslaved during and after the Civil War/Emancipation Proclamation Act (Museum Visit at the National Museum of African American History and Culture’s Gallery located at the National Museum of American History; a Metrorail stop is Federal Triangle on the Blue/Orange Lines)
What is the “everyday cultural” significance of this exhibit? Think historical relevance.

Tues., Feb. 26
➢ Discuss Exhibit: Changing America: Emancipation Proclamation 1863, March on Washington 1963; focus on the Emancipation Proclamation Section (Class will be divided into groups and discuss exhibit; further instructions will be given later) Focus on the material culture/objects

Thurs., Feb. 28
➢ Discussion of Exhibit Continued (Class will be divided into groups and discuss exhibit; further instructions will be given later) Focus on Historical/Social Significance of Emancipation Proclamation/the Enslaved

Week 7: Reconstruction

Tues., Mar. 5
➢ Viewing of Documentary: Reconstruction: The Second Civil War: The American Experience. Assignment: Post critical response to film on Canvas (one meaty paragraph); due Wednesday, March 6 by 5:00PM.
Week 8: MIDTERM
Tues., Mar. 12 ➢ Review for Midterm Examination
Thurs., Mar. 14 ➢ Midterm Examination

Week 9: Spring Break (NO CLASS)
March 17-24, 2012

Week 10: Crafting and Consuming Identities in Victorian America
Tues., Mar. 26 ➢ Michel de Certeau, “General Introduction to The Practice of Everyday Life” in The Everyday Life Reader
Thurs., Mar. 28 ➢ Schlereth, “Introduction,” “Prologue” (Available in the “Course Modules” Section on Canvas)
➢ Schlereth, Chapter 4 of “Consuming” (Available in the “Course Modules” Section on Canvas)

Take-away Information: de Certeau focuses on consumption practices of everyday life; key concepts are “strategies” and “tactics.” Think about the activities of the “producers” and the “consumers.”

Week 11: Everyday Life in the 20th Century: Leisure and Travel
Tues., Apr. 2 ➢ Lefebvre, “Work and Leisure in Everyday Life” in The Everyday Life Reader
➢ Kristin Ross, “Fast Cars, Clean Bodies” in The Everyday Life Reader

Week 12: Everyday Life in the World Wars and Food

Essay #2: Material/Visual Culture Due on Thursday, April 4th; See Canvas for detailed instructions and guidelines.

APRIL 10th IS THE LAST DAY TO DROP WITH A “W”

Tues., Apr. 9 ➢ Psyche Williams-Forson, Chapter 2 from Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, and Power (Available in the “Course Modules” Section on Canvas) Guest Speaker: Jessica Walker

Thurs., Apr. 11 ➢ Eric Schlosser, Chapter 1 from Fast Food Nation (Available in the “Course Modules” Section on Canvas)
➢ Eric Schlosser, Chapter 5 from Fast Food Nation (Available in the “Course Modules” Section on Canvas) Class will be divided into groups and discuss the articles.
**Weekly Take-away Information:** How does Food impact us locally, nationally, and internationally? *In other words, how does it shape the daily acts of our lives?*

### Week 13: Everyday Life during the Civil Rights Movement

**Tues., Apr. 16**
- Robin D.G. Kelley, “We Are Not What We Seem” (Available in the “Course Modules Section on Canvas”)

**Thurs., Apr. 18**
- Discuss Documentary: *Eyes on the Prize (Class will be divided into groups and discuss the documentary)* Focus on Material/Visual Culture; what are the tenets of the Civil Rights Movement?

### Week 14: Everyday Life in the 20th Century: 1960s and Subculture

**Tues., Apr. 23**
- Raymond Williams, “Culture is Ordinary” in *The Everyday Life Reader Quiz 2*

**Thurs., Apr. 25**
- Film/Clip on Visual/Material Culture (TBD)

### Week 15: Everyday Life in the 20th Century: Postmodernity and Pop Culture

**Tues., Apr. 30**
- Roland Barthes, “Plastics” in *The Everyday Life Reader*
- Jean Baudrillard, “Structures of Interior Design” in *The Everyday Reader (Class will be divided into groups and discuss readings)* Research the question: What is postmodernism?

**Thurs., May 2**
- Discuss the Film: *Across the Universe—Guest Speaker: Craig Link.* 15 minute talk, 15 min. Q&A. Please bring in questions to class regarding the impact of this film on the 21st Century cultural practices of everyday life.

*How do Postmodernism and Popular Culture affect our perceptions of everyday cultural practices? What is the bridge between music and the cultural practices of everyday life? Why have the music of The Beatles and other popular musical groups maintain longevity in American cultures?*

### Week 16: Group Presentations on Everyday Life in 21st Century Popular Culture/Wrap Up

**Tues., May 7**
- Ten-Minute Group Presentations on Everyday Life of the 21st Century: Music, Film, Politics, Newspapers, Magazines, Television Shows, Art & other aspects of popular culture. Analyze how these forms of popular culture affect or represent our everyday cultural practices (Further instructions will be posted in Course Modules Section on Canvas).

**Thurs., May 9**
- Final Examination Review

*Final Examination: Thursday, May 16th; 1:30-3:30PM in 1125 H. J. Patterson Hall*