

AMERICAN STUDIES 3310G (cross-listed as HIS 3310G)
Advanced American Studies: Being American

Winter Term 2024

Instructor: Professor Aldona Sendzikas

E-mail: asendzi2@uwo.ca



Image: Crowd of people looking at posters representing various American groups and minorities who constitute "We the People." (Images courtesy of amplifier.org.)

This is a draft syllabus. Please see your course OWL site for the final syllabus.

Course Description

What defines being "American"? How is the American identity constructed, and how and why is it frequently contested? This course employs an interdisciplinary approach to explore the meaning(s) and definition(s) of American identity from multiple viewpoints, and within the context of US history, politics, regions, values, and culture.

Prerequisite(s):

1.0 History course at the 2200 level or above or enrolment in an American Studies module.

Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Antirequisite(s):

History 3310F/G.

Course Syllabus***Course content and objectives:***

In this course, we will engage in the “doing” of American Studies by bringing together sources from a variety of disciplines—including History, English, Political Science, Popular Culture, *etc.*—as well as current events, in order to explore and examine a variety of topics, in an attempt to answer the question: What defines being “American”? Who determines this definition? What unites Americans, and what divides them? How is the American identity constructed, how has it evolved, and how and why is it frequently contested? How and why has the definition of “being American” changed? Who has been excluded from “being American,” and why?

Learning outcomes:

In this course, students will:

- Practice applying an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the United States.
- Use both primary and secondary sources, drawn from a range of disciplines, to interpret and analyze issues in American history and society.
- Learn to situate contemporary issues in the context of historical events, as well as in the broader context of American Studies.
- Develop a research question and answer it in a written assignment, integrating both primary and secondary sources, and employing an interdisciplinary approach, in formulating the argument.
- Develop improved essay writing and research skills.
- Develop improved presentation and communication skills through classroom discussion.

Course Materials***Required texts:***

- *A New Literary History of America*, edited by Greil Marcus and Werner Sollors (Cambridge, MA and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012). This paperback book will be available for purchase at the Book Store at Western. (The 2009 hardcover version is okay to use—but this is a big book, and it will be heavier to carry around!)
- Additional weekly online readings, which will be posted on the OWL course website and available online.

Methods of Evaluation

Grading:

- Class participation 20%
- Three short written assignments* (3-4 pp. each) 10% x 3 = 30%
- Leading class discussion on one of the readings 20%
- Essay proposal 5%
- Research essay (10-12 pages) (due March 29th – April 5th, 2023) 25%

*One of these short assignments will be a follow-up paper to your chosen class discussion, and will be due one week after the date on which you lead class discussion. The other two short papers will be on topics assigned by the instructor, and at least one of the two will be written in class.

Written assignments:

Written assignments must be submitted at the specified time on the due date. Some assignments will be assigned during class, with time allotted for completion during class time. Other assignments are to be completed at home, and submitted electronically, in Word format, via the submission link on the OWL course website. (By using the submission link on the course website, your paper will automatically be submitted to Turnitin.com.)

Further instructions regarding the above assignments will be provided in class.

Please note that AS3310G is an essay course. According to Western's Academic Handbook, an essay course "...must be so structured that the student is required to demonstrate competence in essay writing to pass the course." In this class, that means that all of the written assignments must be completed and submitted in order for a student to pass the course.

Absences and late assignments:

Weekly attendance and participation are important components of this course. Should you have to miss a class, due to illness or other reason, it is your responsibility to ask one of your classmates for a copy of their notes for that day. If you are absent, you will receive a grade of 0 that day for participation (unless your absence has been documented by Academic Counselling). To make up partial participation marks, you may contact the instructor within 48 hours of your absence for a make-up assignment.

Late assignments: A late penalty of 2% per day (including Saturdays and Sundays) will be incurred for all written work submitted after the due date and time. Papers submitted on the due date but after the due time will be considered late and will be penalized 2%. Keep a copy of each of your written assignments until you receive the grade for it.

A late penalty will not be waived unless the student has provided to the instructor documentation from Academic Counselling. In that case, the student must contact the professor as soon as possible (*i.e.*, within 48 hours of the missed deadline) to discuss an alternate assignment and/or due date.

Late assignments will **not** be accepted more than 10 days after the due date of the assignment.

Expectations:

- Regular attendance. (Absences will affect your participation mark.)
- Completion of all assigned readings and active, informed participation in class discussion, based on those readings.
- Courtesy and respect towards other members of the class. We will be discussing controversial issues, and we want everyone to feel safe expressing their opinion. Hate speech, intolerant language, or rudeness will not be tolerated. Students who are disruptive or behave inappropriately will be asked to leave and will not receive credit for attending that day's class.
- Be present: avoid distractions during the seminar, and try to engage with the class! (See policy on Use of Electronic Devices, listed below.)

Additional Statements***Communications policies:***

The best way to contact me is by e-mail. (Please put the course number or course title in the subject line of your e-mail.) I may not be able to answer your e-mail immediately, but I will do my best to respond within 48 hours. You are also welcome to speak with me in person before or after class or during breaks, or to drop by my office to see me during my office hours. You can also e-mail me to request a meeting over Zoom. I look forward to chatting with you, and getting to know each of you on an individual basis—so don't hesitate to drop by!

Use of electronic devices:

Students may use laptops during class to access course readings and to take notes, but not for any other purposes. The use of other electronic devices (*e.g.*, cell phones) is not permitted during class.

Use of generative AI tools:

All work submitted in this course must be your own. You may not make use of generative AI tools like ChatGPT for any assignments in this course.

Additional information:

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.