



**The University of Western Ontario**  
**HISTORY AS 9050A**  
**Methods and Practice in American Studies**  
**Fall 2018**  
**Thursdays 10:30am-12:30pm, Lawson Hall 1218**

**Instructor: Dr. Thy Phu**

Office Hours: Thursdays 12:30-2:30pm

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**Course Description:**

This course is designed to introduce graduate students to the interdisciplinary field of American Studies. We will spend some time on the history and development of American Studies, and most of our time reading good books written by American Studies scholars. By the end of this course, students will be able to name and describe the major influences and themes in American Studies scholarship since 1950. They will learn to read books from diverse disciplinary perspectives and connect them in original and innovative ways. Finally, they will identify ways in which their own research interests might intervene into American Studies scholarship.

**Course Syllabus:**

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**Course Objectives:**

- Research primary and secondary sources;
- Synthesize and critically assess the significance of these sources, situating them in larger debates in the field;
- Understand and apply theories, concepts, and methods;
- Identify major themes and movements in the field;
- Conceptualize and develop a scholarly analysis of a U.S. cultural text drawing on relevant theories, concepts, and methods.

**Course Materials:**

Rebecca Adelman, *Beyond the Checkpoint: Visual Practices in America's Global War on Terror*  
Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*  
Yen Le Espiritu, *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge*  
Ramzi Fawaz, *The New Mutants: Superheroes and the Radical Imagination of American Comics*  
Jason de León, *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*

A Naomi Paik, *Rightlessness: Testimony and Redress in U.S. Prison Camps since W.W. II*  
Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Culture*  
Susan Schweik, *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public*  
Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States*

Select essays and excerpts will be made available to students on the first day of the seminar. Please note that students will also be responsible for viewing select films on their own time before **before** class. We will also be consulting select entries in *Keywords in American Cultural Studies*. These excerpts will also be made available for you before class begins.

### Methods of Evaluation:

Attendance and Participation	Throughout the semester	20%
Academic Book Review (5)	Throughout the semester	25%
Discussion Leader (10-15 minutes)	Sign up for your preferred dates	10%
Symposium Presentation	December 6th	5%
Final Essay	December 13th	40%

### Attendance and Participation

You are required to be present and to participate actively at all classes, by sharing your ideas in relation to assigned texts and by connecting these texts to each other and to overall themes in the course. Please keep up with readings and come prepared to participate actively in discussion. In the spirit of collegiality, contribute to building a positive space for exchanging ideas by asking for clarification when you are confused and listening attentively to one another, bearing in mind that we will be working through intellectually challenging material together. This means avoiding put-downs (even humorous ones), interrupting your peers, monopolizing discussion or disengaging. You are encouraged to offer opinions with supporting evidence drawn from your readings, to challenge each other in respectful ways, to build on one another's comments, and to take responsibility for the quality of discussion. Please contact me if you must miss class due to illness or family emergencies.

### Seminar Discussion Leader (10-15 minutes)

Once during the semester, you act as leader, by facilitating our discussion of the assigned reading with a brief presentation, 10-15 minutes to the whole seminar. This presentation outlines: (1) the main argument; (2) methodologies; (3) sources; (4) the effectiveness of the author's argument and its implications for the field of study; (5) discussion questions. In addition to outlining these 5 components, as discussion leader, you will guide the seminar through a critical assessment of them (i.e. how persuasive was the argument? To what extent was the methodology successful or flawed; etc.). Thoroughly cover all of these five components in your outline and assessment, and you will earn 10 points.

### 5 Book Reviews (500-800 words)

There are 9 monographs (i.e. academic books), plus three essays by Kaplan that can be treated as a monograph. **You are required to write a book review on any FIVE of them, except for the one for which you are assigned as discussion leader.** Email each book review to [tpu@uwo.ca](mailto:tpu@uwo.ca) by 5pm on the Wednesday before class on the date we discuss the book. A good book review succinctly summarizes the thesis, methods, and sources of the study; situates this study in relationship to existing scholarship; identifies the most important implications of the research findings; considers the significance of major omissions or problems; and suggests new questions that this study raises for future research. By completing your book review *before* class, you will be prepared for our

seminar discussion of the text. For further guidance on how to write a book review, browse the review section of an academic journal that interests you.

### **Final Essay (4000-5000 words)**

Select a reasonably focused question to conduct research into primary and secondary sources to address it. You might choose to write on a cultural event or artifact or primary source to analyze. Alternatively, you might want to tackle one component of a larger research project (e.g., your MRP) to explore in this essay. You may draw on as many of our shared readings for this course that you find helpful in developing your ideas, though you are strongly encouraged to expand your research beyond the course as well. Papers must be double-spaced and use 12-point font and formatted in accordance with either MLA or Chicago Style guidelines. **Email me your final essay before midnight on December 13<sup>th</sup>. A one-page proposal of a topic for this paper, which includes a preliminary hypothesis and a plan for research is due October 18<sup>th</sup> in class.**

### **PechaKucha Symposium**

A PechaKucha consists of a slideshow presentation of 20 slides in 20 minutes; it's a fast-paced format meant to deliver key ideas in a concise way. (Templates can be found easily online.) Drawing on this format, share your preliminary thinking on your final essay as a work-in-progress for feedback from your peers (approx. 7 minutes). In this presentation, provide critical context, your provisional thesis, and how you will approach your analysis. For example, you might want to talk through the following questions: what prompted you to take up your research question? What method will you undertake? What are some of the possible implications of your research? What further questions have arisen in the course of your research and how do you plan to answer them? You may read from notes but are advised to avoid preparing a script.

### **Accommodation:**

If you require accommodation for illness or on compassionate grounds, please submit documentation to the appropriate Faculty Dean's office and not to the instructor. It will be the Dean's office that will determine if accommodation is warranted. For more information, refer to the university's Policy on Accommodation for Illness ([http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_illness.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf)).

### **Late submissions:**

For your final essay, late submission will be penalized 1% per day including weekends.

### **Additional Statements**

#### ***Academic Offences:***

Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitute a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

#### ***Accessibility Options:***

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:

[www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated\\_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html)

### ***Medical Issues***

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Please go to:

[https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical\\_accommodations\\_link\\_for\\_OOR.pdf](https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical_accommodations_link_for_OOR.pdf)

to read about the University's policy on medical accommodation. This site provides links to the necessary forms. In the event of illness, you should contact Academic Counselling as soon as possible. The Academic Counsellors will determine, in consultation with the student, whether or not accommodation should be requested. They will subsequently contact the instructors in the relevant courses about the accommodation. Once the instructor has made a decision about whether to grant an accommodation, the student should contact his/her instructors to determine a new due date for tests, assignments, and exams.

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation: [http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical\\_accommodation.html](http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html)

### ***Plagiarism:***

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

- A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of Publication and page number. Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

- B. In adopting other writer's ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source; these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important

consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction, your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases, in their suspension from the University.

### ***Scholastic Offences***

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### ***Support Services***

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western, [http://uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/](http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

### ***Use of Electronic Devices***

Laptops may be used for note-taking during the seminar so long as they are not distracting for other students. Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact, Heidi Van Galen, Administrative Officer, Department of History, 519-661-2111 x84963 or e-mail [yangalen@uwo.ca](mailto:yangalen@uwo.ca).

## COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS:

### WEEK 1 WHAT IS AMERICAN STUDIES?

September 6<sup>th</sup>

Because we have a lot to cover in the short time we have together in this semester, please read all of these assigned articles and come to class prepared to discuss them on our first meeting, on September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018. They are all online, via Western Libraries.

- *Encyclopedia of American Studies* (<http://eas-ref.press.jhu.edu/>) – read “American Studies: An Overview,” “American Studies in Canada,” “American Studies: A Discipline,” “American Studies: Approaches and Concepts” and anything else that looks interesting to you.
- Marx, Leo. “On Recovering the ‘Ur’ Theory of American Studies.” *American Literary History* 17.1 (2005): 118-134.
- Rivka Maizlish, “Rethinking the Origins of American Studies (with help from Perry Miller)” S-USIH Blog, online: <http://s-usih.org/2013/11/rethinking-the-origin-of-american-studies-with-help-from-perry-miller.html>

ASSIGNMENT: Skim the Tables of Contents in the First volume of AQ (*American Quarterly*), most recent volume of AQ, and one in the middle somewhere. What patterns or themes did you notice? What titles stood out for you and which did you want to read?

### WEEKS 2-4 LITERATURE, LAW, AND AMERICAN CULTURE (2 weeks)

September 13<sup>th</sup>

“Gender,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*

Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Culture*

Watch: *Bridesmaids*

Discussion Leader:

September 20<sup>th</sup>

“Race,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*

Ramzi Fawaz, *The New Mutants: Superheroes and the Radical Imagination of American Comics*

Watch: *Black Panther*

Discussion Leader:

September 27<sup>th</sup>

“Disability,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*

Susan Schweik, *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public*

Discussion Leader:

### WEEKS 5-7 HISTORY AND AMERICAN STUDIES: CRITIQUES OF U.S. EMPIRE

October 4<sup>th</sup>

“Empire,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*

Amy Kaplan, “‘Left Alone with America’: The Absence of Empire in the Study of

American Culture” in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease (Durham: Duke UP, 1993).

Amy Kaplan. "Manifest Domesticity." *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (1998): 581-606.

Amy Kaplan, "Where is Guantánamo?" *American Quarterly*, Volume 57, Number 3, September 2005, pp. 831-858

Excerpt from: *The Sympathizer*

Watch: *Apocalypse Now*

Discussion Leader

### **October 11<sup>th</sup> – FALL READING WEEK, NO CLASS**

#### **October 18<sup>th</sup>**

“War,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*

Yen Le Espiritu, *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge*

Discussion Leader:

**Essay proposals due.**

### **WEEK 8 VISUAL CULTURE: (IN)VISIBLE SUBJECTS (2 WEEKS)**

#### **October 25<sup>th</sup>**

“Visual,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*

Joseph Masco, *The Theater of Operations*

Discussion Leader:

### **WEEKS 9-10 SOVEREIGNTY AND CITIZENSHIP (2 WEEKS)**

#### **November 1<sup>st</sup>**

“Citizenship,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*

Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Border of Settler States*

Read: <http://superindiancomics.com/comic/here-comes-the-anthro-02-02/>

Discussion Leader:

#### **November 8<sup>th</sup>**

“Queer,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*

Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton University Press, 2009)

Watch: *Loving*

Discussion Leader:

### **WEEKS 11-12 MIGRATION AND DETENTION (2 WEEKS)**

#### **November 15<sup>th</sup>**

“Internment,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*

Naomi Paik, *Rightlessness*

Watch: *The 13<sup>th</sup>*

Discussion Leader:

**November 22<sup>nd</sup>**

“Border,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*

Jason de Leon, *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*

Watch: *The Sleep Dealer* (2008)

Discussion Leader:

**WEEK 13**

Research symposium