

AMS 2341: American Studies for the 21st Century: “Cities and Landscapes in America”
Fall 2016, M/W 4-5.15, HH 2.502

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Course Description

From the onset of European migration to North America, to the spectacular industrial growth of the late nineteenth century, and into our postindustrial era, America has never stopped building, both physically and metaphorically. The built environment of Euro-Americans has been continually reinscribed on the landscape, and the ideology of capitalism reiterated in both public and private discourse. Many of these trends become particularly visible in cities, places where people, capital, and culture centralize. Landscape, then, is much more than simply a photograph, a view, or an architectural tour. It also implies the physical manifestation of social relationships: relations of power and domination; labor, wealth and poverty; race, region, and gender. Most importantly, landscapes mean different things to different people, and their meanings are often contested. This course seeks to deconstruct some dominant landscapes and themes of American experience and put them in dialogue with more marginalized versions of America, starting with the local and moving toward the global.

An equally important goal of the course is to introduce students to the field of American Studies, a broadly conceived tradition of studying all aspects of American society (and relationships with global neighbors) using many methods. American Studies is interdisciplinary, meaning we will engage with fields such as History, Geography, English, and Sociology and read a wide variety of literature. America is built on disparate and often divisive ideas; the course reflects that theme by using a wide variety of sources and approaches.

Course Objectives

AMS 2341 serves as the gateway course for majors in American Studies and introduces students to the field of American Studies, emphasizing perspectives and skills that enrich students professionally and intellectually. As such the course is more than just a survey of American culture. This course is designed with three interrelated goals in mind: (1) To explore the complexities and contradictions underlying American society and culture, looking at how (or if) disparate Americans have shaped a shared American identity and culture, (2) To introduce students to important issues, significant works, and interpretive methods of American Studies as an interdisciplinary discipline, and (3) To experiment with cultural interpretation and learn to think critically and analytically about issues of identity, community, culture, and nation. The course is not intended to be a comprehensive survey of the American experience. Rather, it is intended to examine a selection of central ideas and experiences that illuminate a larger dialogue about American society and culture.

With these goals, questions, and themes in mind, students will be encouraged to think broadly and synthetically about the ideas and experiences that have shaped American society as it has evolved from

the colonial period to the present. And they will be encouraged to share their ideas and experiences with others in the class and the larger university community. Primary emphasis will be placed on discussion, analytical thinking, close textual readings, written and oral communication, and cultural analysis. How do scholars of American Studies, History, and Geography conceptualize and explain landscapes? How do they synthesize and interpret a range of texts, images, and perspectives? How do they develop interpretive arguments? The main concern of this class is to provide students with the perspective and skills to reflect on American society as it has emerged up to the present day and to be able to see various landscapes as products of human interaction. American Studies majors develop skills and perspectives that prepare them for a wide variety of careers, including law, business, journalism, teaching, writing, and many others. Above all this class, and American Studies more broadly, cultivates critical thinking, broad-based intellectual perspectives, and high-level communication skills that are valuable to students as professionals, intellectuals, and citizen

Skills

Critical Thinking: Through assigned reading, class discussion and debate, and the writing of analytical essays, students will learn to: (1) synthesize and interpret texts; (2) compare, contrast, and evaluate arguments in terms of underlying assumptions, logic, and the reliability of supporting data; and (3) apply, with accuracy and insight, scholarly concepts, theories, and debates to real world events.

Engaging with Other Learners/Communication: No matter your field of emphasis, written and oral communication are vital skills for success and enrichment. Throughout the semester, students will be expected to actively engage in class discussion of assigned readings, work in small groups to analyze and apply course material, present their work to the class, and provide feedback to their peers. As a result of the material covered in the course and the interactive methods of engaging it, students will improve their **ability to communicate and act respectfully across cultural and linguistic differences**.

Reflecting and Acting: This course encourages students to reflect on their positions as US citizens or guests, and how that positioning is affected by membership, or residency, in the United States. Students will come to better understand the nature of the challenges and opportunities they confront in diverse people in the US, and **their place and influence in that world** as citizens and consumers.

Learning Outcomes

Understand urban landscapes and their relationship to social, economic, political, and cultural themes and events throughout US history.

Identify, assess, and analyze scholarly arguments about why urban landscapes have evolved in a particular manner and about their relationship to broad societal trends.

Articulate arguments about cities, landscapes, and US society orally and in writing.

Develop interdisciplinary skills and perspectives, including critical thinking, information literacy, cultural awareness, and interpersonal communication (especially writing).

Be prepared to be more informed as citizens regarding public policy and be ready to contribute to the well-being of your communities and to the greater good by being civically engaged.

Required Readings

1. Upton Sinclair. *The Jungle* (There are a number of acceptable copies of this book)
2. Tricia Rose. *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994)

The majority of your readings will come from a list of articles, book chapters, and other novels and journalistic pieces that are compiled on our class Blackboard site. This way you will be able to read a wide variety of materials related to American culture without spending a lot of money. Each week's readings are listed under "Course Schedule" below. Sometimes I will email a study guide along with the readings.

Assignments

All the assignments listed below will be discussed further in class. Each one has its percent weight in terms of your final grade listed next to it. All written assignments need to use one inch margins, 12 point font, and be double spaced. Papers should conform to MLA or Chicago Manual of Style standards for format and citation of sources. Please consult me, a librarian, and/or the writing center <http://www.utdallas.edu/studentsuccess/writing/index.html> for assistance.

-Exams(midterm 20%, final 20% - 40% total) You will take two exams throughout the semester, one midterm(on October 10) and one take home final. The midterm will be a standard blue book exam. You will have one hour (60 minutes) to finish it. It will consist of a mix of ID questions, designed to test to test your ability to recognize and assess important people, events, and places; and essay questions, which are designed to test your analytical ability regarding larger class themes. The final will be a take-home essay similar to an argument paper. Each exam will cover half the course, keeping in mind the first two week's material; the final will not be comprehensive.

-Argument Papers (two papers – first at 20% and second at 20% – 40% total) One of the main goals of AMS 205 is to improve writing skills. You will write and turn in two short (3-4 p) papers. The papers will be related to class material and will ask students to analyze urban issues, social issues, geography, landscape, or something else related to the class. The paper should be analytical rather than merely descriptive, and will contain a thesis statement supported by evidence and logic. I will be giving out a handout detailing what the papers should entail and address, and we will discuss the papers in detail during class.

-Pop Reading Quizzes (10%) On four days throughout the semester you will be given a pop quiz on the readings for that day. The pop quizzes won't be announced. You may use notes from readings but not the text itself. Each of these quizzes will be worth 2.5% of the overall grade, for 10% total. These quizzes cannot be made up for any reason unless you've discussed an excused absence with the instructor before the class.

-Attendance/Participation (10%) This is a measure of your attendance and the easiest way to accumulate points in the course. Class discussions and readings are imperative to students' growth in this course. Periodically you will be asked to free write about daily topics or connect daily topics to larger themes. There will be short reading quizzes at the instructor's discretion throughout the semester and homework (not listed on syllabus). You will also be asked to assess films and other visual material and to conduct peer review sessions and discussions with your classmates. Finally, oral communication and working with others are important components of the class and will be assessed here. On days you don't attend you will get no points for participation.

Each day you will be required to write your name on an index card to demonstrate that you attended class (there may also be a question on the reading material). You **MUST** supply the index card. You have one free, unexcused absence. After that, I will begin deducting points from your grade. If you miss five (5) classes unexcused, you will receive a zero in attendance (and obviously your participation score will suffer greatly). If you miss eight (8) classes unexcused, you will automatically fail the course. There are no exceptions to this rule. Keep in mind there are only 27 class meetings this semester. Excused absences must be determined before the class date of the absence, or must be verified by a note from the doctor, employer, etc. The only official excused absences per the university are for religious holidays. You will not receive any warnings from the instructor regarding absences, and the student is responsible for rectifying any discrepancies in his or her attendance.

Grading Policy

Late assignments – Assignments turned in after the due date and time are considered late. Your assignments will be due on the day noted on the syllabus under “Course Schedule” below at the beginning of class. Assignments not turned at the beginning of class will be considered late and will have one full grade deducted for each day late (so from an 86 to a 76). Assignments will not be accepted after two full days late (for example, if the assignment is due on Wednesday and it is not turned in by Friday) it will be recorded as a zero.

Exam make ups – Exam make ups **MUST** be scheduled before the exam. Any missed exams not accounted for before the exam will be recorded as zero with no exceptions. If you are going to miss an exam you must consult directly with Instructor Andrew Busch at least two days before the exam, and you must have documentation as to why you are missing the exam.

Grade changes – You must wait at least 24 hours after receiving a graded exam or paper before meeting to discuss a grade change. After 24 hours you can request a meeting with the instructor for up to four days. After this period you may not meet with the instructor to request a grade change. If you do want a meeting, be sure to have an argument prepared as to why your grade should be changed.

A+ 98-100; A 92-98; A- 90-92

B+ 88-90; B 82-88; B- 80-82

C+ 78-80; C 72-78; C- 70-72

D+ 68-70; D 62-68; D- 60-62

F >60

Academic Integrity

Turning in work that is not your own, or any other form of scholastic dishonesty, will result in a major course penalty, possibly failure of the course.

Accommodations

Accommodations are available for students who qualify. Students must provide paperwork from UT-Dallas directly to the instructor in order to be eligible. Please visit:

<http://www.utdallas.edu/studentaccess/> for more information.

Technology in the Classroom

While I prefer no cell phones, laptops, or tablets in the class, some students feel more comfortable using these devices for class activities such as notetaking. Therefore, I allow these devices but reserve the right

to confiscate any device being used for non-class purposes and to deduct participation points for any such use.

Comet Creed

This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:

“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus.

Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.

Weekly Schedule

Week One (August 22 and 24) – Introduction; What is America?

Mon: Intro and Syllabus, no readings

Wed: *Readings:* Linda Kerber, “The Meanings of Citizenship”;

<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200711/essays> Read short essays by Alan Brinkley, William F. Buckley, Greil Marcus, Joseph Nye, Anne-Marie Slaughter, and Tom Wolfe

Week Two (Aug. 29 and 31) – American Cities, Landscapes, and American Studies

Readings: **Mon:** Mumford, “What is a City?”; Legates, “How to Study Cities” (read p. 11-12 and skim the rest); Zukin, “Whose Culture? Whose City?” **Wed:** Nash, “The Web of Seaport Life”

Week Three (Sept. 7) – Emergent Urban Landscapes: Revolution, Labor, and Capital on the Eastern Seaboard

Readings: **Mon:** NO CLASS, HAPPY LABOR DAY! **Wed:** Johnson, “Society”

Week Four (Sept. 12 and 14) – Widespread Panic: Immigration and the Changing City

Readings: **Mon:** Wilentz, “By Hammer and Hand” **Wed:** Burrows and Wallace, “City of Immigrants”

Week Five (Sept. 19 and 21) – Industrialization: The New American Landscape

Readings: **Mon:** Gorn, “Goodbye Boys, I Die a True American” **Wed:** Begin *The Jungle* ***PAPER ONE DUE, VIA BLACKBOARD, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23***

Week Six (Sept. 26 and 28) – Industrialization and Urban Culture

Readings: **Mon:** Continue *The Jungle*; Dreiser, excerpt from *Sister Carrie* **Wed:** Leach, “Transformations in a Culture of Consumption”

Week Seven (October 3 and 5) – Reforming the City through Landscape and Law

Readings: Mon: Olmsted, “Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns”; Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*

Wed: Finish *The Jungle**

Week Eight (Oct. 10 and 12) – *MIDTERM* and Landscapes of Postwar Plenty: the ‘Burbs

Mon: MIDTERM QUIZ, MONDAY, OCTOBER 10

Readings: Wed: Jackson, “Baby Boom and the Age of Subdivision”

Week Nine (Oct. 17 and 19) – Landscapes of Postwar Plenty II

Readings: Mon: Gans, “Levittown and America”; Duany and Platter-Zyberk, “Neighborhoods and Suburbs” (photo essay) **Wed:** Cohen, “From Town Center to Shopping Center”

Week Ten (Oct. 24 and 26) – Landscape of Postwar Naught: Battles for the City

Readings: Mon: Hirsch, “Massive Resistance in the Urban North” **Wed:** Brown, “Manchild in the Promised Land”; Sides, “Straight into Compton”

Week Eleven (Oct. 31 and Nov. 2) - Landscapes of Postwar Naught II: Urban Renewal

Readings: Mon: Bauman, “Expressways, Public Housing, and Renewal” **Wed:** Wilson, “From Institutional to Jobless Ghettos”

Week Twelve (Nov. 7 and 9) – Neoliberalism, Deindustrialization, and the City

Readings: Mon: No Readings **Wed:** Harvey, “Neoliberalism”

Monday, November 9: PAPER TWO DUE, Hard Copy in Class

Week Thirteen (Nov. 14 and 16) – Deindustrial Cities and Hip Hop Culture

Readings: Mon: Rose, *Black Noise*, Intro and Chapter One **Wed:** Rose, Chapter Two

Week Fourteen (Nov. 21 and 23) –HAPPY THANKSGIVING! NO CLASS!

Week Fifteen (Nov. 28 and 30) – Deindustrial Cities and Hip Hop

Readings: Mon: Rose, Chapter Three **Wed:** Rose, Chapter Four

Week Sixteen (Dec. 5 and 7) – Diversity and the City

Readings: Mon: Zukin, “Gentrification” **Wed:** No Readings

Final Take home Exams will be distributed in class Monday, Dec. 5 and due in my office, 2.142 Hoblitzelle, on Monday, December 12 at 3pm.