In this course, we critically examine the idea of “America” and what it means to be an “American.” Access to “Americanness” is shaped by factors such as class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, and region—categories which themselves change in meaning over time. In addition, understanding Americanness requires moving beyond national boundaries and situating the United States and its interventions in the world. Rather than a comprehensive, chronological survey of American history, or a specialized study of any one aspect or period of literature or popular culture, this course is an introduction to the interdisciplinary field of American Studies, a field defined both by the range of artifacts we interpret (essays, literary texts, autobiographies, photographs, films, music, architecture, historical documents, legal texts), and by the questions we ask of them. Those questions include: How have different people imagined what it means to be an American? What ideas about national history, patriotism, and moral character shape visions ofAmericanness? How do these visions both reflect and help to shape the boundaries that define who belongs within the nation and who gets excluded? What uses have been made of the claim to an American identity, and what is at stake in that claim? How have Americans imagined national citizenship, a national landscape, a national culture, and to what ends? And given the nation’s historically shifting contours, the projection of US power in today’s world, and the global flows of people, money, ideas, cultural artifacts, and capital, where is “America” to be found?

**Required Texts:**

- Bruce Burgett and Glen Hendler, *Key Words in American Studies* (NYU)
- Samuel Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (NYU)
- Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Dover)
- Course Reader

Books are available at **Water Street Books**. The course reader is available in the 37 House (51 Park St.) Selections from the reader are marked by a dot [.] in the syllabus.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

| Essays 1, 3 (7 pages each) | 45% (total) |
CLASS PARTICIPATION, ATTENDANCE AND GLOW POSTS
The success of this class depends upon the level of participation of all class members. I expect you to attend class consistently; if you do not do so, I reserve the right to lower your grade beyond the 25% allocated for participation. Persistent non-attendance may result in failing the course. You should arrive at class prepared to engage fully in class discussion, having thoroughly read and/or viewed the assigned materials. Anyone can have a day where he or she has nothing to say, but I expect each of you to participate in the conversation most days. Because of all the ways electronic devices impede engagement, I ask that you not use them during class—even for notes—and that you silence your cell phones. (If, however, you have an accommodation involving the use of laptops, or you otherwise have reason to think the no electronic devices rule will interfere with your learning, please talk to me about it.) Since their main purpose is to improve engagement in the class and the quality of our discussions, I am including the required Glow posts in my assessment of your participation. You must write 8 posts (one or two paragraphs) over the course of the semester. The posts should be in response to readings (of films, pictures, songs, etc.), posted no later than the midnight before the day in which we will take up the readings in class. You may choose which materials you engage in your posts, but you must post at least once in each of the four sections of the course.

ESSAYS
You must write three papers, but you have some flexibility about when you do it. The syllabus is divided into four units. I will provide paper topics for each unit. You will write two 7 page papers, each of which responds to either unit I, or unit II, or unit IV. You must write an 8-10 paper in response to unit III. (That is you may pick any of the following three combinations: I, II, III; I, III, IV; II, III, IV.)

Honor Code
All students are expected to abide by the College Honor Code. I encourage you to discuss course work with your fellow classmates inside and outside of class, but you must be careful to cite all sources, and written work must be your own. If you are at any time uncertain about what this means or how the code applies, please ask me. And if you have concerns about your ability to do an assignment, please come talk to me—do not plagiarize.

READING SCHEDULE
Wed. February 4
Course Introduction And Expectations
In class exercise: “America” as symbol and feeling.

UNIT 1: ORIGIN STORIES AND COUNTER-STORIES

Monday, February 9
. Michael Rogen, “Political Repression in the United States,” pp. 44-80 and “Two
  Declarations of Independence” (excerpt), pp. 23-27.
. Barack Obama, “Address to the Democratic National Convention”
You may read the Obama (text is available online), but better to watch it here:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWynt87PaJ0

Thursday, February 12
. Christopher Columbus, Journal Excerpts (8 pp.)
. “Pokagon’s Address at the World Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893,” pp. 191-200

Monday, February 16
Keywords for American Cultural Studies: “Exceptionalism”
. George W. Bush, “Second Inaugural” (3 pp.).

Thursday, February 19
Keywords for American Cultural Studies: “Nation”
. “A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States of America,” pp. 858-862.
. Frederick Douglass, “What to a Slave is the Fourth of July?” pp. 359-388.

Monday, February 23
. William Apess, Eulogy on King Philip, pp. 275-310.
Exercise: Walk to Williams Inn; read historical markers on front lawn (required).

UNIT 2: READING SLAVERY, WRITING FREEDOM

Thursday, February 26
Keywords for American Cultural Studies: “Slavery”
1-5, 8-80
**Friday, February 27: Essay #1 due by 5 p.m. on Glow**

**Monday, March 2**

**Thursday, March 5**
. Walter Johnson, “Turning People into Products,” pp. 116-134
VIEW: Zealy/Aggassiz Slave Daguerreotypes

**Monday, March 9**
. Melville, “Benito Cereno”

**UNIT 3: CARTOGRAPHIES OF CITIZENSHIP**

**A. FRONTIER MYTHS AND NATIVE LIVES**

**Wednesday, March 11**
Screening: *The Searchers* 7:00 p.m., Schapiro 129.

**Thursday, March 12**
*Keywords for American Cultural Studies*: “West”
Discuss Readings and film.

**Saturday, March 14: Essay #2 due by 12 noon on Glow**

**Monday, March 16**
*Keywords for American Cultural Studies*: “Indian”
Edward S. Curtis, “The Vanishing Red Man” (look at all photos, read only pp. 245-6, 253, 308):
https://books.google.com/books?id=tU9IAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA245&lpg=PA245&dq=edward+s.+curtis+vanishing+hampton+magazine&source=bl&ots=HKaAhkHFC7&sig=Qq4wxZ5c5FpETICmtXtjaUHw0nI&hl=en&sa=X&ei=K6CxVIidCMOHNtvgPgO&ved=0CB4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=edward%20s.%20curtis%20vanishing%20hampton%20magazine&f=false
VIEW: additional Curtis photos (TBA) and Matika Wilbur, Project 562:
http://www.matikawilbur.com/
B. WHITENESS AND CITIZENSHIP

Thursday, March 19

*Keywords for American Cultural Studies*: “Citizenship”


*Plessy v. Ferguson* (including the dissent by Justice Harlan):

. Chinese Exclusion Act (3 pp.)


**March 21-April 5, Spring Break**

Monday, April 6

*Keywords for American Cultural Studies*: “White”


WATCH: *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, v. 3 *The House We Live In* (Excerpt, on Glow, 20 min)

LISTEN: “House Rules”:

C. NEOLIBERAL SPACES, NEOLIBERAL SUBJECTS: WORK AND DESIRE

Thursday, April 9


LISTEN: Killer Mike, “Reagan”:
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6llqNjC1RKU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6llqNjC1RKU)

Monday, April 13


Thursday, April 16


LISTEN: Kanye West, “We Don’t Care”:

WATCH: Dave Chappell, “WacArnolds” Skit:

Monday, April 20

Wednesday, April 22
Screening: Office Space, 7:00 p.m., Schapiro 129.

Thursday, April 23

UNIT 4: CARCERAL EMPIRE, OR: THE MILITARY-PRISON-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

Monday, April 28
Keywords for American Cultural Studies: “Internment”
Time magazine piece (1941) and Executive Order 9066 (1942) (2 pp.)
Watch: Excerpt from Denise Uyehara, Big Head, http://vimeo.com/8755970

**Wednesday April 30: Essay #3 due by 12 noon on Glow**

Thursday, May 1
Anne McClintock, “Paranoid Empire: Specters from Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib,” pp. 50-74.
Mahmood Mamdani, “Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism,” 766-775.
Manu Vimalassery “Antecedents of Imperial Incarceration: Fort Marion to Guantánamo.”
Please also take at least 15 minutes to review some of the Abu Ghraib photos: http://www.salon.com/news/abu_ghraib/2006/03/14/introduction/

Sunday, May 3
Screening: Zero Dark Thirty, 7:00 p.m., Schapiro 129.

Monday, May 4
Discuss film.

Tuesday, May 5
Artist’s Talk, Matika Wilbur, “Not Your Mascot: Photographing Contemporary Native America” (Required)

Thursday, May 7
Michelle Alexander, The New Jim Crow, pp. 1-139
Monday, May 11
Loïc Wacquant, “Class, race & hyperincarceration in revanchist America,” pp. 74-90.

Thursday, May 14
Material TBA

**Friday, May 22:** Essay #4 due by 5 p.m.
Bibliography For Course Reader


Columbus, Christopher, *Journal*, excerpted in Fordham University *Medieval Sourcebook* @ http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/source/columbus1.asp


