

Prof. Kari Winter
Class time: T & Th 12:30-1:50 p.m.
Classroom: NSC 220
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Office: Clemens 1010
Office Hours, fall 2013:
T & Th 2:15-3:45 & by apmt.
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AMS 107: Introduction to American Studies
UGC 211: American Pluralism and the Search for Equality

In 1776 the American Declaration of Independence articulated the founding ideal of the United States: "All men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Through examining American history, literature, and film, this course will investigate tensions between revolutionary ideals and historical realities. The American Dream of justice often collides with the American Dream of wealth; oftentimes the pursuit of happiness appears inextricably linked to the infliction of misery. We will explore the relationships between humans and places; philosophies and realities of education; dreams of money and success; climate change and sustainability; slavery and prisons; myths of the model family; immigration and Americans abroad; the roles of free speech and journalism in democracy. The histories and politics of race, class, gender, sexuality, and religion are intertwined with all of these issues.

This course is discussion-based. We will read, discuss, and write about texts produced by intellectuals and artists from many disciplines, including literature, visual arts, film, political science, history, economics, sociology and mainstream media. You are required to read carefully, listen attentively to others, and contribute thoughtful analysis through your own speaking and writing.

Class discussions and written work will be guided by the notion that reasonable people can disagree. This may seem like an obvious statement, but both history and daily life provide ample evidence that most people have enormous difficulty tolerating difference. While we analyze the sorts of differences (racial, gendered, sexual, political, and economic) and competitions for resources to which human beings often respond with hatred and violence, you will be required to exercise your capacity to be a reasonable, tolerant scholar who is capable of considering difficult issues with a mind open to multiple perspectives.

Required books

Gary Colombo et al, *Rereading America*. 9th Edition.
Jennifer Steil, *The Woman Who Fell from the Sky: An American Journalist in Yemen*. 2010.

Required Films

Paul Robeson: Here I Stand. 1999. Dir. St. Claire Bourne. Will be screened in class.
Mann v. Ford. 2011. Directors Maro Chermayeff & Micah Fink. Will be screened in class.
Makers: Women Who Make America. 2013. Dir: a large team. View online at <http://www.makers.com/>
Thelma & Louise. 1991. Writer Callie Khouri. Dir. Ridley Scott.

Course Requirements and Method of Evaluation:

Attendance and Participation: You are required to attend class and to participate in discussions in an *informed* manner. "Informed" means that you need to complete each day's reading or viewing assignment before class and come to class prepared to discuss it. **You must bring your textbook or other reading material to class with you. If you have been assigned to read a text online or to watch a film, you must bring notes about it to class.** You should come to class every session prepared to discuss the material, take a quiz and/or complete an inclass writing assignment. Unexcused absences, arriving late, and/or leaving early will negatively affect your grade. (20% of final grade)

Essays:

Essay #1: Observing the World through Walking. Due on Sept. 10. 2 double-spaced pages (approx. 500 words) describing what you see on a 30-minute walk. (If you are physically unable to walk for 30 minutes, see me to discuss an alternative assignment.) (10% of final grade)

Essay #2: Reflections on an assigned topic related to *The Woman Who Fell from the Sky*. Due on assigned dates in Nov. 2-3 double-spaced pages (approx. 500-750 words). (10% of final grade)

Midterm: Objective questions & analytical essays. (30% of final grade)

Final exam: Objective questions & analytical essays. (30% of final grade)

Schedule

- T 8/27 Introductions. Alice Walker, "The Flowers"
Excerpts from Kathryn Schulz, *Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margin of Error*
- Th 8/29 Henry David Thoreau, *Walking*, Part I: <http://thoreau.eserver.org/walking1.html>
Richard Louv, "Restoring Peace: Six Ways Nature in Our Lives Can Reduce the Violence in Our World" <http://blog.childrenandnature.org/2013/>
Carefully observe the world as you walk through it.
- T 9/3 Jamaica Kincaid, "Girl," pp. 384-86
Gary Soto, "Looking for Work," pp. 22-26
Listen to the world around you. What do you hear? How are you impacted or shaped by soundscapes (the sounds of nature and technology; the voices of people, television, movies, music, and other media)?
- Th 9/5 No class. (Rosh Hashana)
- T 9/10 Due: Essay #1: Observing the World through Walking
Declaration of Independence & other founding U.S. documents, pp. 624-30
Naomi Wolf, "Freedom is Intended as a Challenge," pp. 631-37
- Th 9/12 Horace Mann, from "Report to the Massachusetts Board of Education" pp. 110-120
Michael Moore, "Idiot Nation," pp. 121-140
Mike Rose, "I Just Wanna Be Average," pp. 151-62
- T 9/17 Jean Anyon, from *Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work*, pp. 162-79
Visual Portfolio, pp. 180-88
Malcolm X, "Learning to Read," pp. 189-97
- Th 9/19 Ines Hernandez-Avila, "Para Teresa," pp. 198-200
Jonathan Kozol, "Still Separate, Still Unequal," pp. 201-218
Andrew Delbanco, "College at Risk," pp. 219-229
From *Underground Undergrads*, pp. 229-37
- T 9/24 Horatio Alger, from *Ragged Dick*, pp. 246-52
Toni Cade Bambara, "The Lesson," pp. 253-259
Begin watching *Paul Robeson: Here I Stand* (in class)
- Th 9/26 Harlon L. Dalton, "Horatio Alger," pp. 260-66
Continue watching *Paul Robeson* (in class)
- T 10/1 Barbara Ehrenreich, "Serving in Florida," pp. 267-80
Gregory Mantsios, "Class in America—2006," pp. 281-98
- Th 10/3 Diana Kendall, "Framing Class, Vicarious Living, & Conspicuous Consumption," pp. 314-32
Adam Davidson, "Making It in America," pp. 333-40
Timothy Noah, from *The Great Divergence*, pp. 356-70
- T 10/8 Thomas Jefferson, from *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 497-503
George M. Frederickson, "Models of American Ethnic Relations," pp. 565-77
Joyin C. Shih, "Chyna and Me," pp. 517-523

- Th 10/10 David Treuer, from *Rez Life*, pp. 578-92
 Ruben Martinez, "The Crossing," pp. 604-13
 Begin watching *Mann v. Ford* (in class)
- T 10/15 Michelle Alexander, "The New Jim Crow," pp. 738-49
 Nydia M. Velazquez, "In Search of Justice." <http://www.dces.wisc.edu/documents/>
 Continue watching *Mann v. Ford* (in class)
- Th 10/17 Kevin Bales and Ron Soodalter, "Slavery in the Land of the Free," pp. 721-37
 Erin Aubry Kaplan, "Barack Obama: Miles Traveled, Miles to Go," pp. 540-53
- T 10/22 Midterm Exam
- Th 10/24 Watch online before class: *Makers: Women Who Make America*, Part I <http://www.makers.com/>
 Stephanie Coontz, "What We Really Miss About the 1950s," pp. 27-43
- T 10/29 Watch online before class: *Makers: Women Who Make America*, Part II
 Jean Kilbourne, "'Two Ways a Woman Can Get Hurt:' Advertising & Violence," pp. 420-45
- Th 10/31 Watch online before class: *Makers: Women Who Make America*, Part III
- T 11/5 Jennifer Steil, *The Woman Who Fell from the Sky*, Chapters 1-3
 Maysan Haydar, "Veiled Intentions: Don't Judge a Muslim Girl by Her Covering" :e
- Th 11/7 Steil, Chapters 4-6
 Anne Applebaum, "The Decline of American Press Freedom," pp. 638-47
- T 11/12 Steil, Chapters 7-9
 Juan Williams, "Defying the PC Police," pp. 648-57
- Th 11/14 Steil, Chapters 10-12
 Susan N. Herman, from *Taking Liberties*, 685-97
- T 11/19 Steil, Chapters 13-16
- Th 11/21 Steil, Chapters 17-20
- T 11/26 Finish Steil, Chapter 21 through Afterword
- Th 11/28 No class. Thanksgiving.
- T 12/3 Discuss *Thelma & Louise*. (You must watch the film on your own before this class.)
- Th 12/5 Eric Liu & Nick Hanauer, "Great Citizenship," pp. 750-62
 Preparation for final exam
- Th 12/12 Final exam (in our classroom, NSC 220)

UGC 211 Course Goals / “Student Learning Outcomes” (as established by College of Arts & Sciences)

Preamble

Focusing on contemporary and historical issues of race, ethnicity, gender, social class, and religious sectarianism in American life, the purpose of this course is to examine the multicultural, multiethnic nature of American society from the viewpoints of both men and women and of people of diverse ethnicities, social classes, and religious creeds. Conceived to serve as a basis for informed discourse, the intention behind the course is to provide undergraduate students with an intellectual awareness of the causes and effects of structured inequalities and prejudicial exclusion in the United States and of processes leading to a more equitable society.

Goals for Students

1. The course should build on the understanding of world cultures developed in the *World Civilizations* course.
2. A goal of the course is to develop within students a sense of informed, active citizenship as they enter an American society of increasing diversity by focusing on contemporary and historical issues of race, ethnicity, gender, social class, and religious sectarianism in American life.
3. A goal of the course is to provide students with an intellectual awareness of the causes and effects of structured inequalities and prejudicial exclusion in American society.
4. A goal of the course is to provide students with increased self-awareness of what it means in our culture to be a person of their own gender, race, class, ethnicity, and religion as well as an understanding of how these categories affect those who are different from themselves.
5. The issues introduced by the course need to be understood not in isolation but in the context of American institutions, history, culture, and values.
6. The five categories of race, ethnicity, gender, social class, and religion need to be understood not in isolation but as these categories overlap.
7. A goal of the course is to introduce students to the diversity of significant scholarship focusing on issues of race, gender, ethnicity, class, and religious differences.
8. A goal of the course is to expand students' ability to think critically, and with an open mind, about controversial contemporary issues that stem from the gender, race, class, ethnic, and religious differences that pervade American society.
9. A curriculum on diversity must bring about an awareness of the enriching aspects of cultural pluralism as well as mutual respect for the integrity of other people's life experiences.
10. A goal of the course is to provide students with an intellectual awareness of diverse visions of the future as well as processes leading to a more equitable society.
11. The course should provide a common intellectual experience for undergraduate students.

Additional Rules and Resources

I do not allow use of laptops or other electronic devices during class time. Please turn off your cell phones. If you have a demonstrable need for a special device, such as an electronic dictionary (for ESL students), please talk to me.

Please familiarize yourself with UB's policies regarding academic integrity, obstruction or disruption in the classroom, and other course-related issues at: <http://undergrad-catalog.buffalo.edu/policies/course/index.shtml>

UB's Accessibility Resources (AR) coordinates reasonable accommodations so that individuals with disabilities can access and benefit from all programs, services, and activities of the university. Please contact AR to discuss your specific needs, should you have any. You can find more information at: <http://www.buffalo.edu/accessibility/accommodations.php>