

**American Studies Methods**  
AMS 201 Spring 2017  
**Class Location:** CLCC158  
**Course Schedule:** TuesThurs 12:00-1:15pm  
**Course Section#:** 26154

**Instructor Information**

***Anthony Pratcher II***

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**Contact Information**

Office Location: FAB N240  
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**Course Catalog Description**

This course provides an intellectual foundation for the interdisciplinary study of American culture, history, and society. Students will be introduced to ideas, methods, tools, and theories in the vibrant field of American studies. American Studies is an interdisciplinary field that examines American history, society, and culture and what they mean contextually. In this class, you will be introduced to interdisciplinary methods of analysis to investigate American culture and you will learn how to contextualize cultural forms within the time period in which they were produced in order to answer questions similar to the ones listed below. In other words, we will look at them as the product of specific social and historical circumstances with particular attention given to the relationship between American culture and identity.

We will think about broad theoretical issues, such as how each example of popular culture is part of broader systems of human relationships and patterns of social change or continuity. We will think about how the practical intimacy of intra and intercultural relationships facilitate or impede the establishment of community. Finally, through our analysis of popular culture you will become a critical analyst of the popular culture you encounter every day.

To this end, students will be expected to apply interdisciplinary research methods to the study of local life. We will use metropolitan Phoenix as a case study to help determine how local conditions might shape a given work of art, film, music, or other cultural artifact and how the issues, events, and how mood affects the reception of different cultural forms.

Some guiding questions for our approach to this class are: What does it mean to be American? Who decides, and who is included or excluded? Are there uniquely American characteristics, experiences, identities, art forms, places, politics, or stories? How do race, gender, sexuality, and class inflect and inform American identity and shape American culture?

This course meets general studies requirements for C and L.

## Course Overview

1. Critically analyze the history of American popular culture
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the economic, social, and cultural aspects of American Culture
3. Understand political and ideological dimensions of popular culture
4. Comprehend concepts of race, class, ethnicity, and gender as they relate to popular culture both historically and in contemporary society
5. Apply course components to critically think about the popular culture personally experienced daily.

## Learning Objectives

At the completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Identify where various ethnic and cultural groups converge and diverge in their distinctly American identities.
2. Discuss the cultural, ethnic, political, social, and economic forces that shape cultural practices and interethnic relationships in the U.S.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of how the history of race, gender, and sexuality have contributed to American culture and a national identity.
4. Compose thoughtful reader responses that demonstrate an understanding of the texts.
5. Interpret scholarly and cultural artifacts

## Course Textbook and Materials

### Required

1. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, Eds. *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*. (New York: NYU Press, 2014)
2. Janice Radway, et al. Eds. *American Studies: An Anthology*, (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).
3. Matthew Delmont, *The Nicest Kids in Town: American Bandstand, Rock 'n' Roll, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in 1950s Philadelphia*, (Berkeley: UC Press, 2012).
4. All other readings will be posted on Blackboard or circulated in class.

## Course Assignments and Grading

Summary of Assignments		
Item	Points	Date
Book Review	250	February 21
Op-Ed	250	March 2
Prospectus	300	April 25
Final Project	100	May 2
Participation	100	

## **Assignment Policy:**

The assignments for this course are paced so that coursework prepares students for the development of their final projects. To fulfill the spirit of this structure, students are expected to engage with course material and platforms before, during, and after class.

### **Book Review:**

- We will write five-page reviews of *The Nicest Kids in Town* which focus on the relationship between identity formation and cultural production. Please visit the writing center—I have provided them with special instructions on how to help.

### **Op-Ed**

- We will write a two-page opinion editorial on “Who is an American?”

### **Digital History Project:**

- We will all complete a digital history project on a site of cultural production in Phoenix. Students are expected to conduct a brief literature review, primary source research, and a final presentation on their assigned topic.
- **Graded Components**
  - *Prospectus*
    - Each student is expected to submit a 7-8 page prospectus for their digital history project. This prospectus will include a brief overview on topics in American Studies, a brief overview on their assigned site of cultural production, and a proposed set of research questions based on preliminary archival research at local libraries.
  - *Final Project*
    - Students are expected to create an 8-10 minute digital presentation on their assigned site of cultural production (churches; schools; parks; shopping centers; etc). In this presentation, students will discuss the local history of their assigned site as uncovered through archival research and explain how local identities have helped shape the cultural production which occurs at these sites.

### **Class Participation:**

- Students will be graded on oral participation in class discussion. Students may miss up to two (2) classes without an adverse effect on their grade. Students can expect to lose a letter grade for each unexcused absence beyond the first two.

### **Lateness & Extensions:**

Extensions will only be granted in exceptional cases. Students must submit a request for an extension by email at least 24 hours *before* the assignment is due. One full letter grade will be deducted for each day an assignment is late. Make-up exams are only considered after verification of a documented personal or family emergency (e.g., a signed physician’s note).

**Citations:**

All external attributions must be appropriately cited using Chicago style citations.

**Grades and Grading Scale**

Assignment of letter grades is based on a percentage of points earned. The letter grade will correspond with the following percentages achieved. All course requirements must be completed before a grade is assigned.

A+ 97%+  
A 93-97%  
A- 90-93%  
B+ 87-90%  
B 83-87%  
B- 80-83%  
C+ 77-80%  
C 70-77%  
D 60-70%  
E (Fail) Below 60%

**Grade Complaints:**

Please email requests to regrade no sooner than 24 hours after receipt of assignment. An assignment grade may rise or fall if the instructor formally reassesses graded work.

**Communicating with the Instructor**

Students are encouraged to attend office to discuss course-related questions or concerns. Please email particularly substantive questions to the Professor prior to meeting to ensure a productive discussion. Also, pertinent course material will be sent to your ASU email address through Blackboard. Please make sure that your account is open and active. All electronic communication should be responded to within 24 hours.

**Weekly Course Schedule****Week 1 – Introduction to Popular Culture**

1/10 Introduction to the course

1/12 Read “Rethinking Race and Nation” and “Removal” from *American Studies: An Anthology*;  
Keywords for the day: Citizenship, Community, Nation

**Week 2 – Introduction to Cultural Theory**

1/17 Read “Nuestra America’s Borders: Remapping American Cultural Studies,” “and “The Origins of Culture” from *American Studies: An Anthology*; Keywords for the day: America, Border, Colonial

1/19 Read “Liberty’s Empire” and “Manifest Domesticity” from *American Studies: An Anthology*;  
Keywords for the day: Capitalism, Economy, Freedom

### **Week 3 – Collective Historical Memory**

1/24 Read “Not only the Footprints but the Water Down there” and “Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History” from *American Studies Anthology*

1/26 Selections from *The Nicest Kids in Town*

### **Week 4 – American Ethnicities**

1/31 Read “The Imperative of Integration,” 1-7; “Work, Immigration, Gender: New Subjects of Cultural Politics” and “Domestic life in the Diggings” from *American Studies: An Anthology*; Keywords for the day: Diaspora, Diversity, Ethnicity, Migration

2/2 Read “The Imperative of Integration,” 8-22; “Turning People into Products” and “Race, Gender and the Privileges of Property” from *American Studies: An Anthology*; Keywords for the day: Body, Labor, Indigenous, Law

### **Week 5 – Race, Racism, and Representation**

2/7 Read Laura Tabili, “Race Is a Relationship, and Not a Thing,” *Journal of Social History* 37.1; Keywords for the day: Race, immigration, Indian, Asian, Black

2/9 Class Discussion: Selections from *The Nicest Kids in Town*

### **Week 6 – Gender Across Cultures**

2/14 Meet in Writing Center

2/16 Read Joan Scott, “Gender as a Category of Historical Analysis,”; Keywords: Gender, Subject

### **Week 7 – The Role of Religious Belief**

2/21 Read Cheryl Harris “Whiteness as Property,” 1710-1721 and “Getting Religion” from *American Studies: An Anthology*; Keywords for the day: Religion, Secularism,

2/23 Meet in Writing Center

### **Week 8 – Civic Bodies**

2/28 Read Cheryl Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” 1721-1745 and “Between ‘“Oriental Depravity” and Natural Degenerates’: Spatial Borderlands and the Making of Ordinary Americans” from *American Studies Anthology*; Keywords for the day: Queer, Normal, Disability, Identity

3/2 Circulate and discuss op-ed pieces

### **SPRING BREAK**

### **Week 9 – Popular Culture, Capitalism, and Mass Society**

3/14 – Meet at the Writing Center for Annotated Bibliography Tutorial

3/16 Meet at the Library for a Research tutorial

### **Week 10 – American Sites, Space and Land**

3/21 Read: “Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California”; Keyword; Environment, Region, Space

and read selections from Joel Salcido

3/23 Class discussion with Joel Salcido

### **Week 11 – American Music and Musicians**

3/28 Read “African Americans: ‘I don’t sing other people’s voices’” from *American Cultural Studies* and listen to selections from James Mulhern

3/30 Class discussion with James Mulhern

### **Week 12 – American Film**

4/4 Film Readings: TBD – Check Blackboard; Keywords for the day: Media—Annotated Bibliographies and Prospectus Research Questions are Due

4/6 Reading: Watch & discuss films

### **Week 13 – American Television and Cyber Space**

4/11 Television Readings: “Television and the Politics of Difference” from *American Studies Anthology*; View “American Denial” (PBS documentary)

<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/films/american-denial/>

4/13 “I Want to Ride in Geronimo’s Cadillac” and “Queer Cyborgs and New Mutants: Race, Sexuality, and Prosthetic Sociality in Digital Space” from *American Studies: An Anthology*

### **Week 14 –**

4/18 Meet at the writing center with draft of finished prospectus (include lit review)

4/20 Work on digital history project

### **Week 15 –**

4/25 Work on digital history project

4/27 Work on digital history project

## **How to Succeed in this Course**

- Participate in class discussion and complete
- Read written assignments and become familiar with key terms
- Explore the broader digital media landscape for course-related content
- Communicate with your instructor if you have an emergency
- Create a study schedule so that you don’t fall behind on assignments

## **Student Conduct Statement**

Students are required to adhere to the behavior standards listed in Arizona Board of Regents Policy Manual Chapter V – Campus and Student Affairs: Code of Conduct

(<http://students.asu.edu/files/StudentCodeofConduct.pdf>), ACD 125: Computer, Internet, and Electronic Communications (<http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/acd/acd125.html>), and the ASU Student Academic Integrity Policy (<http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/studentlife/srr/index.htm>).

Students are entitled to receive instruction free from interference by other members of the class. If a student is disruptive, an instructor may ask the student to stop the disruptive behavior and warn the student that such disruptive behavior can result in withdrawal from the course. An instructor may withdraw a student from a course when the student's behavior disrupts the educational process under USI 201-10 (<http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/ssm/ssm201-10.html>).

Appropriate classroom behavior is defined by the instructor. This includes the number and length of individual messages online. Course discussion messages should remain focused on the assigned discussion topics. Students must maintain a cordial atmosphere and use tact in expressing differences of opinion. Inappropriate discussion board messages may be deleted if an instructor feels it is necessary. Students will be notified privately that their posting was inappropriate.

Student access to the course Email feature may be limited or removed if an instructor feels that students are sending inappropriate electronic messages to other students in the course.

ASU expects and requires all its students to act with honesty and integrity, and respect the rights of others in carrying out all academic assignments. For more information on academic integrity, including the policy and appeal procedures, please visit <http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>.

## **Syllabus Disclaimer**

The instructor views the course syllabus as an educational contract between the instructor and students. Every effort will be made to avoid changing the course schedule but the possibility exists that unforeseen events will make syllabus changes necessary. The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus as deemed necessary. Students will be notified in a timely manner of any syllabus changes through the course site Announcements. Please remember to check your ASU email and the course site Announcements often.

## **Technical Support Contact Information**

For ASURITE User ID, password or activation assistance, contact the ASU Help Desk using the following information:

Email: [helpdesk@asu.edu](mailto:helpdesk@asu.edu)

Phone: 480-965-6500, option 1

For information on systems outages see the ASU systems status calendar, please visit <http://syshealth.asu.edu/>.

## **Accessibility Statement**

In compliance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, professional disability specialists and support staff at the Disability Resource Centers (DRC) facilitate a comprehensive range of academic support services and accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. DRC staff coordinate transition from high schools and community colleges, in-service training for faculty and staff, resolution of accessibility issues, community outreach, and collaboration between all ASU campuses regarding disability policies, procedures, and accommodations.

Students who wish to request an accommodation for a disability should contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) for their campus.

### **Tempe Campus**

<http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc/>

480-965-1234 (Voice)

480-965-9000 (TTY)

### **West Campus**

<http://www.west.asu.edu/drc/>

University Center Building Room 130

602-543-8145 (Voice)