

HUM 152-101: Cultures of America (3 credit hours)

Course Description

Interdisciplinary study of the arts and humanities in contemporary American culture emphasizing the convergence of European, African, Hispanic, Asian, and indigenous cultures as well as the distinguishing characteristics of each culture as revealed in three of the following areas: fine arts, drama, literature, philosophy, religion, and popular entertainment.

Course Objectives

- To become well acquainted with some of the major cultural groups that make up the US
- To think critically about the ways race, culture, and nation are constructed
- To have a rich understanding of the cultural history of the US as a nation and how race and ethnicity are affected by various events and phenomena in the cultural history of the U.S.

Cultural Diversity Statement: This class fulfills a General Education requirement in Cultural Diversity (CD1) and will enable students to:

1. Recognize that social and cultural systems develop out of adaptation to environmental and historical circumstances.
2. Communicate an understanding of ways in which race, ethnicity, and/or gender are socially constructed.
3. Communicate an understanding that different cultures may hold different perspectives on the same issue.
4. Evaluate pertinent information and assertions for relevance, bias, stereotyping, manipulation, and completeness.

General Education: This course fulfills a General Education Requirement in Humanities and is thus designed to enable students to:

1. Communicate an understanding of vocabulary, concepts, materials, techniques, and methods of intellectual inquiry within the arts and/or Humanities.
2. Describe and evaluate texts using primary and secondary materials.
3. Analyze and synthesize texts, recognizing the diversity of cultures and historical contexts. This goal will be achieved through collaborative efforts in class and small group discussions.

Disabilities statement

Students who have a disability or condition which may impair their ability to complete assignments or otherwise satisfy course criteria are encouraged to meet with the instructor to identify, discuss and document any feasible instructional modifications or accommodations. Please inform instructor about circumstances no later than the second week of the semester or as soon as possible after a disability or condition is diagnosed, whichever occurs earliest. For information and auxiliary assistance, contact the Disabilities Resource Center.

Plagiarism statement

The University defines plagiarism as “representing the words or ideas of someone else as one’s own in any academic exercise.” Thus, all writing you do for this course must be your own and must be exclusively for this course, unless the instructor stipulates differently. Please pay special attention to the quotes, paraphrases, and documentation practices you use in your papers. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please ask your instructor. If you plagiarize, your instructor reserves the right to grant you a failure for the course and your case may be reported to the College of Arts and Sciences.

Texts and Materials

We will be using two textbooks for this course: Ronald Takaki’s *Debating Diversity* and a collection of primary sources called *Kaleidoscope*. You will need to purchase both of these books, as we will be using them heavily throughout the semester. We will also periodically watch movies or other related media.

Required Work and Assessment

Reading, participation in the discussion, and critical awareness are key. Especially in summer courses, the reading load is more demanding, and participation and active engagement on a daily basis are crucial for success. Your

overall grade will be comprised of 3 tests and daily participation in class discussions. We will be doing some group work, which will count toward your participation grade. Please note that participation is a VERY high percentage of your grade. You will not make a good grade in this course unless you participate in class discussions.

Grade Breakdown

Tests—75% (25% each)

Daily Participation (attendance and in-class discussion)—25%

This course is graded on the following plus/minus scale:

A+ 100-98 A 97-94 A- 93-91

B+ 90-88 B 87-84 B- 83-81

C+ 80-78 C 77-74 C- 73-71

D+ 70-68 D 67-64 D- 63-61

F 60 and below

Attendance Policy

This class will be discussion oriented and will be very intensive during this session, so attendance is important. For every class after 1 that you are absent, your grade will drop by a letter. More than 3 absences will result in failure for the course. You will miss participation points for every absence, unless excused. Regardless, if you're struggling with attendance, PLEASE come talk to me about it. Don't wait until the last few days to talk to me or simply stop coming to class because you think you can't recover from your absences. I am willing to *try* to work with you as long as you communicate with me.

In the case of an emergency (I will need some documentation) or other important concern, the absence will be considered as excused and will not count against you. Please make sure you contact another student to stay up-to-date on what you've missed, in the event of an absence. This will be a busy time for all of us, so staying on top of the reading assignments will make it much easier to manage, if you do miss class for any reason.

It's fine to email me if you will be absent, but do not expect me to update you on your missed classwork. Your classwork and reading is your responsibility. Contact another student to get updates on notes or announcements that you have missed. If you miss a class when we're watching a film, it's very important that you rent or borrow the film from the library, or otherwise access it, to ensure you don't get behind on the material. Films are an important component of our coursework.

Late Work Policy

If you miss a test because of an unexcused absence, you will not be allowed to make it up. If you **do** have a valid excuse and do not make arrangements to make up the assignment within 1 day (including weekend days), you will forfeit your opportunity to take the missed test. I am always available and usually respond very quickly to emails, so there should be no hindrance to you in arranging for make-up work.

Classroom Behavior

Leaving class early is disruptive. Please arrive on time, and please make a point to stay until class ends. If you need to leave early for some reason, please do so as quietly as possible. If you arrive late, be sure you see me after class to ensure you aren't counted as absent. If you consistently arrive late and/or leave early, your final participation grade will suffer.

No cell phone usage (text, voicemail, etc) during class sessions. Because we will spend a lot of time involved in class discussions, it's important for you to avoid excessive side conversations with other classmates during our class time. Please pay attention to discussions and participate. You will find classes much more enjoyable if you do. A discussion-based class requires maturity and respect from all students toward each other and toward the instructor.

If any student shows a disregard for the expectations of proper college classroom behavior, I will dismiss him or her from this class.

Assignments

Tests:

We will take 3 tests in this class, each one scheduled for the end of the unit of study for that portion of the semester. The tests will cover the material discussed in class for that unit and will assess your knowledge of the material as well as your ability to critically integrate it into larger discourse about the United States and cultural identity. You will also be expected to synthesize and connect concepts and to give examples to support your answers. Your critical thinking ability and interpretive skills will be challenged and assessed through these tests. Tests comprise 75% of your overall grade (Each test is worth 25 points).

Daily participation:

I will be looking for you to bring your knowledge and insight into class discussions, which I hope will be academically rigorous and enjoyable for all of us. Don't be afraid to talk. I will make note of those who contribute to discussions and those who do not. You MUST speak in class, or you will not get full credit for this portion of your overall grade. I will assess and post participation grades on a regular basis, so you will be able to monitor your participation grade as you proceed through the course (as you participate more or as your participation decreases, likewise, your grade will be subject to fluctuation. Having a high participation grade for one day will not result in a high overall participation grade. You must consistently participate). This portion of your grade is worth 25%. We will also do group work on occasion, which will be included in your participation grade.

Schedule

July

M 30 Syllabus, introductions, in-class reading: *Kaleidoscope* pp. 3-15 (introduction: "The American Multicultural Experience"), introduction to cultural diversity (powerpoint),

T 31 *Debating Diversity*: pp 37-54 (Part II intro, and "The Significance of the Frontier in American History"), Intro to Native American culture (powerpoint), *Debating Diversity*: pp 55-74 ("The Significance of the Frontier in Native American History"), *Kaleidoscope*: pp. 57-65 (excerpts from the narrative of John Smith), *Kaleidoscope*: pp. 76-89, pp. 280-287 (excerpts from the narrative of Mary Rowlandson, and excerpts from "Life Among the Paiutes")

August

W 1 *Kaleidoscope*: pp. 643-647, 670-678 (from, "The Man to Send Rainclouds," and "The Red Convertible") film, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* **Exam #1 distributed (take home test. Due Thursday 08/02 at start of class)**

Th 2 **Exam #1 due** Intro to African-American culture (powerpoint) *Debating Diversity*: pp. 87-88 (Part III intro) *Debating Diversity*: pp. 100-108 ("Why the Switch to Slavery"), *Debating Diversity*: pp.109-117 ("The Paradoxical Tragedy of White and Black Laborers in the South")

F 3 *Kaleidoscope*: pp. 107-118 (excerpts from *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*) *Kaleidoscope*: pp. 201-217 (excerpts from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*)

M 6 *Kaleidoscope*: pp. 363-373, 445-452 (from *Dust Tracks on the Road* and *Black Boy*) *Kaleidoscope*: pp. 293-306, 636-642 ("The Sheriff's Children" and "Exchange Value")

T 7 film, *In the Heat of the Night*

Exam #2 distributed (take home test. Due Wednesday 08/07 at the start of class)

W 8 **Exam #2 due** Intro to immigration (powerpoint), Reading assignment: *Debating Diversity*: pp. 75-80, 81-86 ("The Clash of Civilizations" and "Reinventing 'America'") *Debating Diversity*: pp. 217-218, 219-223 ("The Limits of Immigration" and "Fear of Foreigners")

Th 9 *Kaleidoscope*, pp. 474-483 (excerpt from *America is in the Heart*) *Kaleidoscope*, pp. 348-362 (excerpt from *The Promised Land*) *Kaleidoscope*, pp. 390-399 (excerpt from *Jews Without Money*)

F 10 film, *House of Sand and Fog*, *Kaleidoscope*, pp. 537-548, pp. 658-669 (excerpts from *No-No Boy* and "Half and Half")

Exam #3 distributed (due Monday 08/13 by 5pm via email)