

Anthropology of American Culture
(ANTH 4047)
Department of Anthropology, University of Minnesota
Fall 2008

Syllabus: <http://www.geocities.com/davidvalentine2002/syllabi/amcult2008.pdf>

E-Reserve: <http://eres.lib.umn.edu/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=1326>

Password: Sm88dE2

Instructor: David Valentine

Class Times: M/W/F, 1:25pm - 2:15pm

Office: 364 HHH Center

Office Hours: W 2:30-4:30pm, F 2:30-3:30pm

Class Location: Blegen 5

Class Dates: 09/02/2008 - 12/10/2008

Phone: 612.626.8692

email: valen076@umn.edu

Course Description:

What is “American Culture”? Given the diversity of the histories, values, and identities of American people, what, if anything, can be said to draw us together as one culture? This course will seek to answer this question through an exploration of cultural politics in the United States in the 21st century, focusing particularly on conflicts and politics around race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class, and on a variety of issues, including the workplace, family, poverty, consumption, and militarization. Readings will address contemporary issues such as battles over civil rights and gay and lesbian rights, the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, gated communities, military towns, corporations, religious expression, and racial politics. We will ask questions such as: How do differences and similarities among Americans shape and get shaped by complex and often contradictory forces? How is inequality produced and maintained? How have ideas about what constitutes America shifted over time? At the top of the list of questions will be: what makes America America?

The course is interdisciplinary in that it draws on research and debates in sociology, history, cultural studies, American studies, and ethnic studies, in addition to those in anthropology. The course takes an ethnographic approach, asking what empirical research can add to our understanding of questions of belonging and exclusion in the United States.

The course will be run as an undergraduate seminar, based predominantly upon student-driven discussion of readings, complemented by occasional lectures and videos. The course is meant for premajors, majors, and other interested students; it is suitable for intermediate and upper-level students from all fields.

Course Requirements:

Writing requirements for the course are a midterm and final paper, and two short research projects, one involving your family and the other focused on the Presidential election in November. Paper topics will be given well in advance of the due date.

Please note: *because this will be chiefly a seminar, classroom participation counts for a large amount and you are urged to come to class prepared so that you can participate fully.* In addition, students will be divided into groups and required to post discussion points prior to class to facilitate discussion.

Mid term paper:	30%
Final paper	35%
Projects (2)	20% (10% each)
Classroom Participation	15%

Extensions

I do not grant extensions other than for exceptional circumstances. If you believe you are embroiled in such a circumstance, I expect you to request an extension at least a day before the paper is due; DO NOT come to class without completed work unless I have granted you an extension. We will not accept emailed versions of your papers or assignments.

Policy on Lateness and Attendance

Please pay particular attention to the following: you are, naturally, expected to attend all classes. It is expected that if you have to miss a class for a valid reason (such as illness or family emergency), you will inform me prior to the class, or as soon thereafter as is possible. I will take attendance in the first ten minutes of class. If you arrive late for class, you will not have the opportunity to sign the attendance sheet, and this will be noted as an absence. **Please note the attendance policy: every three unexcused absences will result in a reduction of your grade by one grade point (e.g. from A- to B+).** I will take a particularly dim view of absences in the Wednesday class before the Thanksgiving break.

Plagiarism and Grading

Plagiarism will not be tolerated, will result in a failing grade, and will be reported to the Student Conduct Committee. The university policy on plagiarism is available at:

http://writing.umn.edu/tww/plagiarism/definitions_sara.htm

The university grading policies can be found at:

<http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/policies/gradingpolicy.html>

Assigned Texts:

The following books are required for the course and are available at the university bookstore.

Chesluk, Benjamin

2007 Money Jungle: Imagining the New Times Square. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Goldschmidt, Henry

2006 Race and Religion Among the Chosen Peoples of Crown Heights. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Lutz, Catherine

2002 Homefront: a military city and the American 20th century. Boston: Beacon.

Stein, Arlene

2002 The Stranger Next Door: The Story of a Small Community's Battle over Sex, Faith, and Civil Rights. Boston: Beacon.

Assigned books will be on reserve. The other course readings listed below will be available via E-reserve at the link at the head of this syllabus.

Course Outline

1. Introduction to the Course, or: Why is This English Guy Teaching American Culture And Did You Go to the RNC Convention? (Week of 9/3/08)

Wednesday: Introductions

No Readings

Friday: *Red, Purple, and Blue*

Abramowitz, Alan and Kyle Saunders

2005 Why Can't We All Just Get Along? The Reality of a Polarized America. *The Forum* 3(2): article 1.

Klinkner, Philip A. and Ann Hapanowicz

2005 Red and Blue Déjà Vu: Measuring Political Polarization in the 2004 Election. *The Forum* 3(2): article 2.

2. Terms, Themes, Histories (Week of 9/8/08)

Monday: *Self and Other*

di Leonardo, Micaela

1998 Hidden in Plain Site. In *Exotics at Home: Anthropologists, Others, American Modernity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wednesday: *Balance and Objectivity as American Ideals*

Schudson, Michael

2001 The objectivity norm in American journalism. *Journalism* 2(2):149–170.

Friday: *Starting Over?*

Fitzgerald, Frances

1986 Starting over. In *Cities on a hill*. pp.383-414. Simon and Schuster.

3. America in the World: Civilization, Militarization, and Culture (Week of 9/15/08)

Monday: *Clash of Civilizations*

Huntington, Samuel

1993 The Clash of Civilizations? *Foreign Affairs* 72(3):22-49.

Wednesday: *Clash of Civilizations?*

Gusterson, Hugh

2005 The Seven Deadly Sins of Samuel Huntington. In *Why America's Top Pundits are Wrong: Anthropologists Talk Back*. Catherine Besteman and Hugh Gusterson (eds.) pp.24-42

Friday: *Homefront*

Lutz, Catherine

2002 Homefront: a military city and the American 20th century. Boston: Beacon (*chapters to be assigned*)

4. Militarization, War, and Urban Space (Week of 9/22/08)

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: *Homefront*

Lutz, Catherine

2002 *Homefront: a military city and the American 20th century.* Boston: Beacon (*chapters to be assigned*)

5. Connectedness: Kinship, Community, Identity (Week of 9/29/08)

Monday: *American Kinship*

Schneider, David M.

1968 *American Kinship: a Cultural Account.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall (*selections*).

Wednesday: *Adoption, Kinship, and the State*

Briggs, Laura

2006 Making "American" Families: Transnational Adoptions and U.S. Latin America Policy. *In* Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History. Ann Laura Stoler (ed.) pp. 344-365.

Friday: *Other kinds of Connectedness* [ABSENT]

McClard, Anne and Ken Anderson

2008 Focus on Facebook: Who Are We Anyway? *Anthropology News* 49(3):10-12.

Dumas, Firoozeh

2003 It's all Relatives. *In* Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing up Iranian in America. New York: Random House.

FILM: KINSHIP

6. Connectedness: Kinship, Community, Identity (Week of 10/6/08)

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: *The Stranger Next Door*

Ethnographic Project due

Stein, Arlene

2002 *The Stranger Next Door: The Story of a Small Community's Battle over Sex, Faith, and Civil Rights.* Boston: Beacon (*chapters to be assigned*).

Friday: [ABSENT]

Film KINSHIP or COMMUNITY*;

7. Connectedness: Kinship, Community, Identity (Week of 10/13/08)

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: *The Stranger Next Door*

Stein, Arlene

2002 *The Stranger Next Door: The Story of a Small Community's Battle over Sex, Faith, and Civil Rights.* Boston: Beacon (*chapters to be assigned*).

8. Religion and Faith (Week of 10/20/08)

****Paper 1 Due in Class****

Monday: *Conversion and Faith*

Harding, Susan

- 1987 Convicted by the Holy Spirit: the rhetoric of fundamental Baptist conversion. *American Ethnologist* 14(1):171-186.

Wednesday: *Alternative Faiths*

Jindra, Michael

- 1994 Star Trek Fandom as a Religious Phenomenon. *Sociology of religion* 55(1):27-
Foster, Lawrence
1995 Sexuality and Relationships in Shaker, Oneida, and Mormon Communities. *Communities* 87:52-56.

Friday: *Race and Religion*

Goldschmidt, Henry

- 2006 Race and Religion Among the Chosen Peoples of Crown Heights. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press (*chapters to be assigned*).

9. Race and Religion (Week of 10/27/08)

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: *Race and Religion*

Goldschmidt, Henry

- 2006 Race and Religion Among the Chosen Peoples of Crown Heights. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press (*chapters to be assigned*).

10. Race, Gender, Consumption (Week of 11/3/08)

Monday: *Race, Gender, History*

di Leonardo, Micaela

- 1997 White Lies, Black Myths: Rape, Race, and the Black "Underclass." *in the Gender Sexuality Reader*. Roger Lancaster and Micaela di Leonardo (eds). NY: Routledge.

Be an American! Remember to Vote on Tuesday!

Wednesday: *Gender and Consumption*

Brown, Elspeth H.

- 2008 Marlboro Men: Outsider Masculinities and Commercial Modeling in Postwar America. *In Producing Fashion: Commerce, Culture, and Consumers*. Regina Lee Blaszczyk (ed). pp.187-206. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Friday: *Consumption and Corporate Practices*

Crawford, Margaret

- 1992 the World in a Shopping Mall. *In Variations on a Theme Park : the New American City and the End of Public Space*. Michael Sorkin (ed.) pp. 3-30. New York: Noonday Press.

11. Corporations, Capitalism, and Consumption (Week of 11/10/08)

Monday: *Corporations and Capitalisms*

Election Project Due in class

Trachtenberg, Alan

1982 Preface. *In The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*. New York: Hill and Wang.

Doukas, Dimitra

1997 Corporate Capitalism on Trial: the Hearings of the Anthracite Coal Strike Commission, 1902-1903. *Identities* 3(3):367-398.

Wednesday: *Corporations and Globalization*

Ho, Karen

2005 Situating Global Capitalisms: A View from Wall Street Investment Banks. *Cultural Anthropology* 20(1):68-96.

Friday: *Money Jungle*

Chesluk, Benjamin

2007 *Money Jungle: Imagining the New Times Square*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. (*chapters to be assigned*).

12. Corporations, Capitalism, and Consumption (Week of 11/17/08)

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: *Money Jungle*

Chesluk, Benjamin

2007 *Money Jungle: Imagining the New Times Square*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. (*chapters to be assigned*).

Friday: *Affluenza* (Film) [ABSENT]

13. Immigration and Race, Self and Other (Week of 11/24/08)

Monday: *Language and American Identity*

Wiley, Terrence G.

1998 The imposition of World War I Era English-Only Policies and the Fate of German in North America. *In Language and Politics in the United States and Canada: Myths and Realities*. B. Burnaby (Ed.). 211-241. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Wednesday: *Ritual and American Identity*

Siskind, Janet

1992 The Invention of Thanksgiving: A Ritual of American Nationality. *Critique of Anthropology* 12(2):167-191

Friday: Thanksgiving Break

14. Immigration and Race, Self and Other (Week of 12/1/08)

Monday: *Becoming White I*

Sacks, Karen Brodtkin

1994 How did Jews become white folks? *In Race*. Steven Gregory and Roger Sanjek (eds). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Wednesday: *Becoming White II*

Alisse Waterston

2006 Are Latinos Becoming "White" Folk? And What That Still Says about Race in America. *Transforming Anthropology* 14(2):133–150.

Friday: *Immigration, Race, and U.S. State Policy*

Coutin, Susan Bibler

2003 Cultural Logics of Belonging and Movement Transnationalism, Naturalization, and U.S. Immigration Politics. *American Ethnologist* 30(4):508-526.

15. Looking Back (Week of 12/8/08)

Monday: *Conversations I*

Wednesday: *Conversations II*

****Final Paper Due in Class****