

**CULS 300:02 - Cultural Studies  
Diversity and the American Experience**

**SPRING 2012**

Dr. Jeannie Zeck  
Kathryn Hall #303  
Office: (217) 479-7019

Class time: W/F 10:50 AM - 12:05 PM  
Class location: Mac Hall 29  
Office hours in Center for Learning  
Excellence: W 3:30-5:00 PM,  
R 3:30-4:30 PM,  
F 9:30-10:30 AM  
& by appointment

Home: (217) 245-7016

Feel free to call between 9:00 AM -11:00 PM. Email: [jeannie.zeck@mac.edu](mailto:jeannie.zeck@mac.edu)  
The best ways to reach me are through email & my home phone number.  
I'm always glad to help.

**Course Description**

In this course we will study the foundational texts of American culture and examine issues and challenges that arise in the United States, both domestically and internationally, as our society becomes increasingly more diverse. This course introduces students to the way in which the many cultures of America have shaped and continue to shape American identity and culture.

**Course Objectives**

1. To develop an understanding of how culture shapes identity;
2. To develop an understanding of how cultures interact within American society;
3. To develop an understanding of the foundational texts and myths of American culture;
4. To develop an understanding of the history of diversity in America;
5. To introduce students to the contemporary issues related to diversity in American culture;
6. To develop appropriate-level critical thinking skills through the study of the ethical problems and dilemmas raised by issues of diversity in American culture;
7. to develop an awareness of America's presence in the global culture.

**Required Readings:**

**Textbooks:**

*The Myths America Lives By*, Richard T. Hughes

*The Laramie Project*, Moises Kaufman & Members of Tectonic Theatre Project

## **Required Readings (continued):**

Periodically, I will hand out reading material for this course. Also, you can access the required documents online. Bring the required readings to class each day.

## **Course Requirements and Expectations**

### *Participation:*

Students are expected to participate fully and actively in all of the classroom activities and to be prepared for each class discussion. To earn discussion points, a student must:

- \* Be prepared for discussion (read and think about the assignment in advance);
- \* Bring the required reading to class;
- \* Listen carefully and respectfully to other students and the professor;
- \* Respond productively to others' comments;
- \* Volunteer observations about the assigned readings frequently and regularly;
- \* Show serious interest in the issues raised by the readings;
- \* Offer direct quotations from the readings;
- \* Support personal opinions with appropriate evidence and references to the readings.

### *Written Assignments:*

During the course of the semester, I will give several written assignments and in-class exercises. All written homework assignments must be typed and double spaced. Please use the Modern Language Association (MLA) style of citation. In other words, use quotation marks and cite page numbers when you quote. (You learned these skills in Rhetoric 101 & 102). Use Diana Hacker's *A Pocket Style Manual* additional help.

### *Quizzes:*

Expect a quiz every time we have a reading assignment. Unless the student has been excused by the Registrar's Office from class, no make-up quizzes are given.

### *Class Presentations:*

Students will make group presentations to the class on issues and problems related to diversity in American society. A separate handout with a complete description of this assignment will be provided. Failure to participate in a group presentation by a student will result in automatic failure for this class.

*Midterm and Final Examination:*

The midterm examination and final examination are objective. The midterm exam covers the material presented in the first section of the course while the final examination is comprehensive. A student who does not take the final examination automatically fails the course.

**Evaluation of Students**

Throughout the term students will complete many quizzes, several in-class exercises, several typed homework assignments, an oral group presentation, a mid-term exam and a final exam. The grade for the course will be determined as follows:

|                                     |            |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| <i>Participation in class</i>       | 15%        |
| <i>Written homework Assignments</i> | 10%        |
| <i>Personal Essay</i>               | 10%        |
| <i>Quizzes</i>                      | 20%        |
| <i>Class Presentation</i>           | 15%        |
| <i>Midterm Examination</i>          | 10%        |
| <i>Final Examination</i>            | <u>20%</u> |
|                                     | 100%       |

**CLASSROOM POLICIES**

**ATTENDANCE:** Daily attendance is required. Points for missed quizzes cannot be made up. Each student is allowed two absences without penalty. Each additional absence will lower the final grade by one-third of a letter grade. Students must keep up with the work in the schedule.

**PRE-ARRANGED ABSENCES:** If you need to miss a class due to a doctor's appointment, a game, a wedding, etc, please give me a written explanation of the absence before you leave: list your name, the day of your absence, and the reason you will be absent. Of course, students must keep up with the work in the schedule. Homework assignments must be in before you leave.

**Student Athletes:** MacMurray College policy states that your assignments must be handed in before you leave for games. Student athletes will not be given extra time to complete assignments. Athletes are not excused from classes before the time designated by the coach.

**TARDINESS:** When a student arrives late, s/he misses important information. Also, the student disrupts the class. If you arrive late to class two times, those tardies will be treated as one absence. Please make a point of being on time.

**DISABILITY SERVICES:** Students who need note takers, interpreters, un-timed tests, or other services for learning disabilities should contact Pamela Harrison, Coordinator of Disability Support Services, at (217) 479-7123 or e-mail [pamela.harrison@mac.edu](mailto:pamela.harrison@mac.edu)

**CAPS AND HATS:** Wearing a baseball cap or hat during class is prohibited. A college classroom is a formal learning environment. It is not appropriate to wear a cap or hat indoors (yarmulkes are acceptable). Being without caps allows everyone to see each other clearly; it also allows me to take roll accurately.

**LATE PAPERS:** Typed homework is due at the beginning of class. I do not accept late homework. Handwritten homework is not acceptable.

Assignments are due as stated in the syllabus. The final grade on a late assignment will decrease by one letter grade every fifteen minutes it is late. A late assignment will not be accepted after one hour.

If you must miss a class, send your work to me via a trustworthy classmate. Please do NOT email assignments to me.

## CARDINAL RULES

**CELL PHONES & TEXT MESSAGING:** Turn your cell phones all the way off before class starts.

If a student's cell phone rings during class or the student is otherwise using a phone, s/he will lose five participation points for the day. If the problem recurs, I may ask the student to leave the classroom, and s/he may not be readmitted until after going through a formal appeal process.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** Submitting a paper as your own work that you partially or completely copied or paraphrased from another person without giving appropriate credit (citation of author, use of quotation marks, etc.) is a serious act of academic dishonesty. Lending your own work to another person for this purpose is also a serious offense. This includes using papers from the Internet and from previous semesters.

If you plagiarize any work in this course, you will flunk the assignment and be reported to the Academic Standards Committee. The report will remain in your permanent file. See the student handbook, The Maggie, online at the MacMurray College website for further details.

## \* SCHEDULE OF READING & WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

### Required Reading:

All reading assignments appear below. Each assignment must be completed before class on the day it is listed.

A copy of our textbook by Richard T. Hughes, *The Myths America Lives By*, is on reserve for our class at Pfeiffer Library. You may read it in the library.

If you do not get a handout (ex. The Declaration of Independence), you will need to print a copy of it from an online source.

Always bring the required reading to class.

## I. DEFINING AMERICAN CULTURE & THE AMERICAN CREED

### JANUARY

W 1/11 Introduction to class & exercise: American Identity: individual & national  
Students present to class: Characteristics of Americans & American culture.  
In class: handout for next class's reading assignment: preambles & Declaration.

F 1/13 Reading assignment: Hughes' Introduction to *Myths America Lives By* pp. 1-15. For the quiz know:

- How Hughes defines *myth*.
- Why myths are important for a nation.
- The two dangerous reactions to myths.
- Know the American Creed.
- Know the first three of the five myths and the fifth one.

Quiz & discussion.

In class: discussion of presentation assignment.

#### **Presentation Preparation:**

**Student groups need to locate their 5 expert sources (articles, books) & meet with me before mid-term grades are due: Friday, March 2. Use valid reliable news sources and historical sources. Do NOT use Wikipedia, Fox News, or blogs.**

**During our next class, choose your topic and group members. Minimum: 2 members; maximum: 5 members/group.**

**See your presentation assignment sheet for details.**

W 1/18 Reading: preamble to the *Declaration of Independence* and *The Declaration of Independence* itself. Also, read the preamble to the *Constitution of the United States*.

In discussion, I will call on students to answer the questions below & other questions. Be prepared:

- In your own words, as accurately as possible, state the ideas presented in the lines beginning “We hold these truths . . .” and ending with the “Pursuit of Happiness.”
- Also, be able explain the complaints against the King of England as stated by those who signed the Declaration. Be able to give details.

Also, read the class policies in this syllabus.

**In class: Choose topics for presentations and group members.**

For group meeting with me, bring: your expert sources, your outline for the presentation including the thesis statement, and whatever else you have reading: a PowerPoint presentation, videos, your log, etc.

R 1/19 “The evolution of blues into jazz” Rob Killam Trio in Thoresen Recital Hall,  
7:00 pm Springer/Putnam Center 10 points extra credit. Speaker Series

## II. THE MYTH OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

F 1/20 Read Hughes’ *Myths America Lives By* pp. 19-30

PowerPoint presentation on the Myth of the Chosen People/Nation  
Introduce John Winthrop’s sermon for next class.

W 1/25 Reading: Handout of John Winthrop’s “A Model of Christian Charity.”  
Preparing for the quiz:

- Know approximately where & when Winthrop delivered this sermon.
- Know how Winthrop expected individuals to behave in a Christian community. (Be able to give specific examples). Described in Part I.
- Know who is in Winthrop’s group, what their work is, what their purpose is, and their methods of achieving their purpose. Described in Part II.
- Be able to explain what Winthrop means when he says, near the end of his sermon, “we shall be as a city upon a hill.”

Quiz & Discussion

F 2/27

Reading assignment in Hughes pp. 30-43. Begin with "The 'Chosen People' and Native Americans."

Preparing for the quiz:

- How did some Americans in powerful positions absolutize (or distort) the original myth of the chosen people? What actions did they encourage?
- How did African Americans react to the myth of the chosen people/nation?

PowerPoint Presentation:

Shift from Winthrop's interpretation of chosen people to Beveridge's.

**Handout of Terms:** Dominant culture, the Other, marginalized groups, and institutionalized racism: Slavery and Imperialism

Quiz & exercises on Beveridge's quotation.

Introduce reading assignment for next week: *The Laramie Project*  
Who was Matthew Shepard?

## FEBRUARY

W 2/1

Read Acts I & II of *The Laramie Project*  
Quiz and discussion. Terminology continued.

In class: Scenes from *The Laramie Project*

### Heads Up: **Typed assignment due Fri. 3/2 by 3:30 PM in my office:**

Write 3-4 typed double-spaced pages (750 to 1000 words, 12-point font) discussing the play *The Laramie Project* and either our readings from *Our Time: Breaking the Silence of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"* or the documentary *Stonewall Uprising*.

- Write a thesis statement for your explanation of Matthew Shepard and another for the situation/s you discuss from *Our Time* or from *Stonewall Uprising*. Underline each thesis.
- In your paper use the terminology we've developed in class: identify the dominant culture in each case and the marginalized group or individual (the Other). Use terms appropriately such as oppression, silencing, etc.
- Clearly explain how each person/s (Matthew Shepard et al, and military personnel or people in *Stonewall Uprising*, relate to the myth of the chosen people or the distortion of the myth. (clearly state whether you are referring to the pure myth or the distortion of it).

**Your assignment must have two underlined thesis statements.**

**Do NOT plagiarize this or any assignment. Think for yourself.**

F 2/3 Read Act III of *The Laramie Project*  
Quiz and discussion

In class: Scenes from *The Laramie Project*

T 2/7 "A Hearing-Deaf Connection" Kitty Aubrey. Thoresen Recital Hall,  
7:00 PM Springer/Putnam Center. Speaker Series 10 pts. extra credit.

W 2/8 In class: documentary: *Stonewall Uprising*.  
Discussion: institutionalized homophobia, the Other, oppression, silencing,  
marginalized people.

In class: handout of *Our Time: Breaking the Silence of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"*  
Reading for R 2/16.

**Reminder: Presentation groups:**

**Student groups need to locate their expert source materials (not Wikipedia or Fox News) & meet with me before mid-term grades are due: Friday, 3/2. Bring your sources and the work you've accomplished so far: your outline, a PowerPoint presentation, your log, etc.**

F 2/10 Finish watching *Stonewall Uprising*.  
Discussion: using terminology.

In class: handout of *Our Time: Breaking the Silence of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"*  
Reading for R 2/16.  
Meeting time for presentation groups

W 2/15 Read handout from *Our time: Breaking the Silence of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."* Quiz & discussion.  
Terminology: dominant culture, Institutionalized homophobia, silencing,  
etc.

**Typed essay due Fri. 3/2 by 3:30 PM in my office:**

Write 3-4 typed double-spaced pages (750 to 1000 words, 12-point font) discussing the play *The Laramie Project* and either our readings from *Our Time: Breaking the Silence of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"* or *Stonewall Uprising*. See more details above under W 2/1.

Handout of The Bill of Rights for next class & James Madison's essay.

### III. THE MYTH OF NATURE'S NATION

#### FEBRUARY IS NATIONAL BLACK HISTORY MONTH

F 2/17

Read Hughes' *Myths America Lives By*, pp. 45-top of 56.

Read The Bill of Rights (handout or get it online) & intro to Madison.

Quiz. Why did the founders of America think the separation of church and state was so important? Which amendment suggests the separation? Be able to explain what this amendment states.

In class: PowerPoint on The Enlightenment & Deism. U.S. history of separation of church and state. The Bill of Rights. First Amendment.

Presentation Preparation in class.

W 2/22

Read Hughes *The Myths America Lives By* pp. 56-64 "Elaborating the Myth of Nature's Nation" to "Conclusion."

Quiz: How is the myth of Nature's Nation rooted in the American Creed?

How is the myth absolutized (distorted)?

Who was David Walker? Why is he important?

In class: Discussion: Read passages from Walker & Jefferson aloud. Compare & contrast Walker & Jefferson.

How is Jefferson's assessment of African Americans similar to the Miss America documentary?

Terminology: Matrix of domination, institutionalized Racism, Institutionalized sexism.

Watch a scene from *Rocky IV* as an example of the Myth of Nature's Nation in mainstream American culture.

**Hand out Francisco Jimenez's biography and stories from *The Circuit* for the class period after mid-term exam.**

F 2/24

#### Midterm examination

**In class: Hand out personal essay assignment sheet.**

**Last chance to pick up for Jimenez handouts for next class.**

**Reminder:** Essay due next Friday by 3:30 on *The Laramie Project* etc.

**Last reminder: Presentation Preparation:**

**Student groups need to locate their source materials & meet with me before mid-term grades are due: Friday, 3/2.**

For group meeting with me, bring: your expert sources, your outline for the presentation including the thesis statement, and whatever else you have reading: a PowerPoint presentation, videos, your log, etc.

## **Chicanos**

W 2/29 Read handout of Francisco Jimenez's biography and stories from *The Circuit*. Quiz & discussion using terminology: dominant culture, etc.

**In class:** personal essay assignment explanation. Due Fri. 3/23 by 4:00 PM

## **MARCH**

F 3/2 Watch documentary: *Chicanos: The Struggle in the Fields*  
Discussion: connect with the Francisco Jimenez's stories.  
Terminology: dominant culture, oppression, institutionalized racism, etc.

**In class: Students pick up hand out on personal essay assignment.**

**Essay due today by 3:30 on *The Laramie Project* etc.**

## **Spring Break: Saturday, 3/3 to Monday, 3/12**

### **IV. THE MYTH OF THE CHRISTIAN NATION**

W 3/14 Read Hughes *The Myths America Lives By* pp. 66-76 through "The Legacy . . ."  
Quiz: What is Deism? What is the Book of Nature? What is a secular state? What is the significance of the first amendment in terms of religion? What is the American Experiment? Why did the Second Great Awakening occur?

In class: Time for presentation group preparation.

**Note: Personal essays on your place in the dominant culture are due Fri. 3/23.**

F 3/16 Read Hughes pp. 76-89.  
Quiz: What is social reform? Give examples of reforms during the second Great Awakening. What do you think of these reforms?  
What did the Anabaptists believe and why were they persecuted?

Discussion: Christian nation vs. Christian culture. Reform movements.  
Terminology: The Standard, the Norm, Dominant Culture.

### **March is National Women's History Month**

W 3/21 PowerPoint Lecture: The Two Women's Movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries  
Documentary: *MisRepresentation*  
Use terminology: dominant culture, marginalized, etc.  
**Reminder: Personal essays due on Friday 3/23.**

R 3/22 7:00 PM " Bodies, Populations, Race: thinking through global health with biopolitics" Ari Samski, cultural anthropologist. Thoresen Recital Hall. Speaker Series. 10 pts extra credit.

F 3/23 Domestic Violence & *Transforming a Rape Culture*

**Personal essays on your place in the dominant culture are due by 4:00 PM In my office. Students must turn in paper copies (not digital).**

W 3/28 Read Hughes' *Myth of the Innocent Nation* pp. 153-63 (up to "America: The Innocent Nation.") Quiz.

F 3/30 Read *Myth of the Innocent Nation* pp. 163-86. Quiz.

## **VI: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**

### **APRIL**

W 4/4 Homelessness in U.S. (veterans or GLBT or mentally ill)  
The Catholic Church and the sexual abuse of children

**Heads Up: Each student must write one Group Presentation Report on any group presentation except her/his own.**

**See the separate handout explaining the details.**

**Due date: Group presentation Reports are due at the beginning of class one week after the presentation.**

Easter Break: Friday 4/6-Monday 4/9

### **STUDENT PRESENTATIONS continue:**

W 4/11 Jerry Sandusky & Penn State child sexual abuse case  
Occupy Wall Street movement: free speech & economic oppression

F 4/13 Reverend Fred Phelps & Westboro Baptist Church  
Rights and treatment of the elderly or the developmentally handicapped in institutionalized settings.

- W 4/18 Human trafficking in the U.S. (prostitution, restaurant workers, etc.)  
Arizona's crackdown on illegal immigrants
- F 4/20 Presidential race of 2012 & separation of church & state  
Dating violence or rape on college campuses
- W 4/25 Last day of class: concluding thoughts & class evaluation.  
Review of American Creed & Myths. Did America live up to the founders'  
expectations? Are certain myths still significant? Do we need new myths?  
What would they be?

Friday, 4/27: Final Exam: 3:00- 5:00 PM

If you miss a class, make sure you ask me immediately for any handouts from the day you missed. Get class notes from a diligent student who attended class.

\* If changes to the schedule are necessary, I will notify students in class as soon as possible. If you miss a class, make sure you contact me or a dependable student regarding any changes in assignments.

Have a safe and rewarding summer.

Keep reading, thinking, discussing . . .