American Studies 468: Research Methods in American Culture
Spring 2016
Instructor: Dr. Robert T. Hayashi
Office: Morgan 302
Office Hours: Tuesday 1-4pm and by appointment
Phone: 542-5346
Email: rhayashi@amherst.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to interdisciplinary research, a nuts-and-bolts class to prepare American Studies students, in particular, for independent research in the major. However, any student interested in developing research skills, especially in the humanities and social sciences, is encouraged to enroll. We will study a range of materials—visual, literary, print, digital, audio—that investigate a central theme, place in American culture. We will also read and discuss works that present the history, methods, and debates within American Studies to ground students in the tradition of American Studies praxis. Class sessions will entail seminar discussions, library training, archival research, museum visits and workshops. Students will select and pursue a semester-long research topic that they will present at a public conference on campus.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Dolores Hayden: Building Suburbia
Michael Lesy: Wisconsin Death Trip
Leo Marx: The Machine in the Garden
David Roderick: Blue Colonial
José David Saldivar: Border Matters
Leah Schmalzbauer, The Last Best Place
Julie Sze, Noxious New York

Also materials on ereserve, access via the library webpage @ https://www.amherst.edu/library

*All books available at Amherst Books, 8 Main Street. Please support this local and independent bookstore.

COURSEWORK

I will distribute handouts detailing the specific requirements and grading criteria for the assignments listed below. Please note that changes may be made to the reading schedule during the course of the semester.

Discussion leader (10%)
Short assignments (50%)
Attendance/participation (20%)
Final research presentation, including draft w/bibliography (20%)
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SCHEDULE

January 28  “This Land is Your Land” performed by Woodie Guthrie; Seeger, Rodriguez, and Springsteen; by Sharon Jones; and The Melodians
http://myweb.uiowa.edu/rhorwitz/asconcepts.htm
DUE: Analysis “This Land is Your Land” (3p)

February 4  INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH LIBRARIANS/RESEARCH
David Roderick, Blue Colonial
Leo Marx, “American Studies. A Defense of an Unscientific Method.”
DUE: Close historical reading of poem from Blue Colonial (3p)
Research narrative

February 11  USING NEWSPAPERS/PERIODICALS
Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden
DUE: List of three sources relevant to research question
Set of research questions via email, cc/librarian Missy Roser

February 18  LIBRARY SESSION
Benedict Anderson, “Census, Map, Museum” from Imagined Communities
Allen Guttmann, “American Studies at Amherst.”
DUE: 19th century newspaper article writeup (2p)
Research Proposal
February 25  
José David Saldivar: *Border Matters*


David Stephens, “Making Sense of Maps”  
[http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/maps/](http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/maps/)

**DUE: Map analysis (4p)**

March 3  
**MEAD MUSEUM SESSION**

Sylvan Barnett, “Analytic Thinking” from *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*


**DUE: Literature search revised in consultation w/librarian**

March 10  
Michael Lesy, *Wisconsin Death Trip*

Hayden White, “The History Text as Literary Artifact”

John Berger, “Uses of Photography” from *About Looking*

**DUE: Photograph analysis from *Wisconsin Death Trip* (3p)**

Material analysis from Mead (due 3/16)

March 17  
**SPRING BREAK**

**DUE: Review The Consecrated Eminence**  
[https://consecratedeminence.wordpress.com/](https://consecratedeminence.wordpress.com/)

March 31  
**ARCHIVES SESSION**


**DUE: annotated bibliography, cc/librarian**

Material analysis from Archives (4/1)

April 7  
**ORAL HISTORY/ETHNOGRAPHY**

Leah Schmalzbauer, *The Last Best Place*

[http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html](http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html)

**DUE: Revised proposal**

List of relevant archives

April 14  
**LEGAL RESEARCH**
Julie Sze, Noxious New York

DUE: Review essay (5p)

April 21 Dolores Hayden, Building Suburbia

Due: Oral interview writeup (3p)

April 28 WORKSHOP DRAFTS

DUE: Presentation Drafts

Week May 5 CLASS CONFERENCE