

**CAST 100:
Introduction to Comparative American Studies
Fall 2013
T&Th 9:30-10:50 // King 321**

Professor Wendy Kozol
Phone: 775-6679
Office: Rice 112
Office Hours: W: 9-11; Th: 1:30-4:30; and by appointment
e-mail: wendy.kozol@oberlin.edu

****This course serves as a gateway course in the Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies major****

“The great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do.”

James Baldwin 1965

The celebrated 2008 presidential election of Barack Obama sparked numerous debates about the nation’s relationship to historical and contemporary inequality. These debates continue today yet with a different inflection as inequalities of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability and citizenship status persist, a persistence made emblematic by the acquittal of George Zimmerman for killing Trayvon Martin. What defines the United States in this particular historical moment that enshrines individualism and democratic rights while normalizing violence against bodies marked as deviant, unproductive, or otherwise antinational? How do people “carry history within us,” as James Baldwin says, and how might that insight help us to understand the complexities of the nation?

This course takes up these questions and contradictions by introducing students to key questions and approaches in the interdisciplinary field of Comparative American Studies. We will develop the critical tools to examine U.S. cultural and social formations, paying particular attention to voices and groups that have been historically excluded from power. We will draw on scholarship in Ethnic Studies, Gender and Women’s Studies, and Queer Studies to examine intersections of key axes of identity and power. The texts we read are not meant to provide a comprehensive chronological survey of these topics, but rather to provide case studies to think through various theoretical and methodological approaches to the analysis of the United States. Assignments are designed to create opportunities for critical reading, writing, and thinking.

The objectives of this course are:

- to provide an introduction to the field of Comparative American Studies and its relationship to other politicized scholarly projects
- to introduce comparative approaches to methodologies, histories, and identities
- to situate the U.S. in a global perspective through analytical frameworks such as nationalism colonialism, imperialism, militarization, and globalization
- to understand and utilize a number of key terms in the field of American studies, including: intersectionality, agency and structure, and nation, nationalism, and transnationalism
- to explore the manifestation of power through historical and social formations such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability
- to develop visual, reading, writing and communications skills

REQUIRED TEXTS

Books are available at the Oberlin College Bookstore (or on reserve at Mudd Library):

Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press, 2010.

Clare, Eli. *Exile & Pride: Disability, Queerness and Liberation*. Boston: South End Press Classics, 2009 [1999].

Kauanui, J. Kēhaulani. *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Pellow, David Naguib and Lisa Sun-Hee Park. *The Silicon Valley of Dreams: Environmental Injustice, Immigrant Workers, and the High-Tech Global Economy*. New York: New York University Press, 2002.

Tan, Shaun. *The Arrival*. Melbourne, Arthur A. Levine Books, 2006.

Ward, Jesmyn. *Salvage the Bones*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2011.

Articles marked with (BB) in the schedule of readings are available through Blackboard under the “Course Readings” link.

This course will use Blackboard for announcements, handouts, articles, and assignments.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Learning Community

The academic study of privilege and inequality often raises issues that are controversial or evoke strong personal feelings. There are few right answers to the questions we are exploring. Therefore, I ask that everyone in this course commit to making this classroom a learning community – a space for people to explore new ideas, take intellectual risks, and engage in open and honest debate. Certainly, people will have different opinions and everyone begins the course with a different skill set and knowledge base. Our objective is decidedly not consensus but rather to consider a range of perspectives and to develop our own positions with greater insight. In order for this to occur, we need to hear from a range of perspectives and learn communally from each other.

Please be aware that some issues discussed in this course may present personal “triggers.” I cannot always anticipate those triggers, but will always respect any student’s need to take care of themselves in response to them.

Reading

This course requires significant reading. Do not try to read every word; focus on key arguments, methods, and sources. If you find you are having trouble finishing the reading, please see me so we can identify effective strategies for completing the assignments.

PARTICIPATION (10%)

Students are expected to participate in classroom discussions. It is thus crucial that you keep up with the course reading and come to class prepared to discuss the readings listed for each class session. Since an important component of the course is class discussions, **regular attendance is required**. Attendance in class, however, does not in itself constitute participation. If you are uncomfortable speaking in class, please come see me and we can discuss strategies for your participation.

ONLINE LEARNING GROUPS (10%)

In order to extend our discussions beyond the classroom, students will be required to participate in an online learning group. (These groups will be assigned during the second week of class). Each week, I will post one or two discussion questions. You are required to post an analytical response to the questions to your online group forum by 9:00 p.m. on Wednesday evening. You should read all of the responses posted to your learning group forum before coming to class on Thursday. Postings will be checked each week and will be graded on a scale of 0-2. We will sometimes begin class on Thursday with short learning group discussions.

Coffeehouse: In addition, students can participate in the class by posting responses to course readings, themes, discussions, etc. to the Coffeehouse site of the blackboard. The Coffeehouse provides a place for you to reflect on course materials, to connect what we are learning to your own lives or the contemporary world, to raise discussions of current political or cultural events, and to post outside materials that you think your classmates might find interesting. Postings at the Coffeehouse will count as much as in-class participation.

PRIVILEGE ESSAY (15%), due to BB on September 23 by 4pm.

This assignment asks you to write a 3-4 page paper that grapples with the ways you experience privilege based on race, class, gender, ability, citizenship, religion or other relevant factors. The challenge is to connect your personal circumstances to structural conditions and historical processes, using analytical concepts from course readings and class discussions.

MIDTERM (20%), due to BB on October 18 by 4pm.

This 4-6 page essay will work with key terms and concepts explored in class discussions and readings.

TEAM PRESENTATION (15% total).

Each student will be assigned to a 4-to-5 person team that will be responsible for one class presentation of roughly 20 minutes during the semester. The purpose of these team presentations is to connect theoretical and scholarly approaches to everyday social situations and problems. Teams must submit their proposed topic by email and receive written approval at least one week before your presentation date. The presentation format is relatively flexible and could include PowerPoint displays, handouts, audio sources, etc. Teams will be evaluated both on content and on organization, effective use of time, and ability to engage their audience. Teams must also submit to BB a complete bibliography of their research sources in MLA style prior to class on the day of the presentation. Teams will receive a shared grade for the presentation.

FINAL PROJECT (30%), due to BB no later than Dec. 19 at 11am.

This cumulative project will utilize a comparative approach to a select topic in American culture.

EXTRA CREDIT ASSIGNMENT.

Attend a CAST-sponsored event and write a 1-2 page reflection. See assignment on BB.

NOTE: ALL ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES ARE FIRM DEADLINES**ASSIGNMENT FORMAT**

Written assignments should be word-processed, double-spaced, and use a standard font type and size (12 point Times New Roman or the equivalent). Include your name, the date, a title, and page numbers. Please be sure to proofread carefully for style and grammar and comply with the page

limits. Use MLA Style for formatting in-text citations, endnotes or footnotes, and Works Cited. This style guide is available on Mudd Library’s website. An abbreviated version can be found in the “Resources” on our course site. Papers that do not follow proper formatting instructions may receive a 1/3-grade deduction.

All written assignments must be submitted via Blackboard. You must upload your essays as .doc or .docx files (no Pages, .rtf or .pdf). If your paper is not a .doc or .docx file, it will be counted as late. It is your responsibility to make sure your essay posts correctly to Blackboard. After you attach the file, double-check to be sure you are able to download and open it in Word. After I make comments and post grades, I will inform you via email so you may retrieve your essay annotated with my comments and your grade.

Summary of Grading Policy:

Participation	10%
Online Learning Group	10%
Privilege Essay	15%
Midterm	20%
Team Presentation	15%
Final Project	30%

COURSE POLICIES

Classroom Etiquette

Please arrive a few minutes early so that we may start class on time. Turn off all cell phones. No texting. Laptops are great for consulting readings and note taking, but I take great exception to people who use class time to check email, surf the web, or engage in social networking.

Absences and Late Policy

- More than two unexcused absences will result in a lower grade by 1/3. A note from a dean or a doctor is required for an excused absence.
- It is your commitment to this class and your classmates that you will be present and ready to begin work at the start of class. Repeated lateness (after three late arrivals) may result in significant deductions to your final grade in this course. If lateness is a significant problem, course members will be invited to develop a collective policy about late arrivals (and may choose to prohibit them).

Late Papers and Extension Requests

- Papers not turned in by the due date and time will be penalized and will not receive written comments. I will deduct 1/3 of a grade for each 24 hours an assignment is late (i.e., from B+ to B). Assignments submitted later than 1 week past the original deadline without a written extension will be given credit only at the instructor’s discretion and will generally earn no greater than a minimum-passing grade.
- Requests for extensions must be submitted by email at least 48 hours prior to the assignment due date and are generally available only for extraordinary circumstances. If you receive an extension, you must include a copy of my approval (including revised due date) with your assignment in order to receive on-time credit.

P/NP

If you are taking this course P/NP, you must fulfill all course obligations and complete all assignments in order to receive credit for the course.

Academic Incompletes at the end of the semester

Please note that no late assignments will be accepted past the end of reading period without an approved incomplete from the Dean of Studies. Extensions on final projects require an approved incomplete from the Dean of Studies. There are no exceptions to this policy.

Honor Code

This course adheres to the policies of the Oberlin College Honor Code and Honor System, which applies to all work submitted for academic credit, whether it is a creative project, a quiz, an exam or a paper. *Please include the statement "I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment" in all written work.*

- For quizzes and exams, this means you must complete the assignment independently of other students. For papers, you must cite all written sources that you use, whether you quote directly or paraphrase. This is true whether you are using electronic or printed materials.
- Incomplete or improper citations are a form of plagiarism. If you are unfamiliar with proper citation formats, or have questions please consult me, a reference librarian, a writing tutor and/or a style manual. Lack of familiarity with proper procedures is not a defense.

See Oberlin Honor Code, http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code2.html, for more information.

Students with Disabilities

If you need disability-related accommodations for your work in this class, please let me know. Support is available through Student Academic Services. Please contact Jane Boomer, Director of the Office of Disability Services, for assistance in developing a plan to address your academic needs.

Accommodations for student athletes

If you are a student athlete and member of an Oberlin college sports team and your athletic schedule will cause you miss class at any point in the semester, please inform me immediately.

CLASS SCHEDULE

COLONIALISM, IMPERIALISM, AND STATE FORMATION

T Sept. 3	Introductions
Th Sept. 5	Settler Colonialism <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trask, "The Color of Violence," 8-16 (BB)• Goldstein, "Where the Nation Takes Place," 834-861 (BB)• Wilder, "Moving In" and "Indians in the House," 71-79; 132-146 (BB)• King, "Borders" (BB)
T Sept. 10	The Politics of Racialization <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mikdashi, "What is Settler Colonialism?" http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/6453/what-is-settler-colonialism• Kauanui, Hawaiian Blood, 1-97
Th Sept. 12	Legislating Belonging <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kauanui, Hawaiian Blood, 98-196• Kazanjian, "Colonial" (BB)• Streeby, "Empire" (BB)

T Sept. 17 Engaging with Privilege

- Andrea Smith, “The Problem with Privilege,” <http://andrea366.wordpress.com/2013/08/14/the-problem-with-privilege-by-andrea-smith/>

Th Sept. 19 Persisting Colonial Spectacles

- O’Dwyer, “Tropic Nights and Hula Belles,” 33-50 (BB)

Discussion on conducting research in American Studies

M Sept. 23 Privilege Essay due to BB by 4 p.m.

T Sept. 24 Reversing the Colonial Gaze

- Fleetwood, “Black Women Performing Hypervisibility,” 105-145 (BB)
- Clare, *Exile and Pride*, 78-118

CITIZENSHIP AND THE CARCERAL STATE

Th Sept. 26 The Violence of Citizenship

- Berlant, “Citizenship,” 37-52 (BB)
- Schweik, “Disability and the Normal Body of the (Native) Citizen,” 417-442 (BB)
- Sunaina Maira, “Citizenship and Dissent,” 31-45 (BB)

T Oct. 1 The U.S. Carceral System

- Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 1-96

****Presentation 1****

Th Oct. 3 Prisons, Racialization and the U.S. Political Economy

- Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 97-177

****Presentation 2****

T Oct. 8 After Incarceration? Social Justice and Civil Rights Advocacy

- Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 178-262

Th Oct. 10 U.S. Militarism, the War on Terror and the Prison Industrial Complex

- A. Kaplan, “Where is Guantánamo?” 831-858 (BB)
- Rodriguez, “(Non)Scenes of Captivity,” 9-32 (BB)

****Presentation 3****

T Oct. 15 Midterm Review
Writing Workshop

****Presentation 4****

Th Oct. 17 From Reform to Reparative Justice

- Kelly, “Philly Stands Up,” 44-57 (BB)
- Meiners, “Ending the School-to-Prison Pipeline/Building Abolitionist Futures,” 547-565, (BB)
- Cohen, “Death and Rebirth of a Movement,” 126-132 (BB)

F Oct. 18 **Midterm Essay Due to BB by 4pm**

T Oct. 22 Fall Break – No Class

Th Oct. 24 Fall Break – No Class

ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLENCE: NO “NATURAL” DISASTERS

T Oct. 29 Biopolitics, Disasters, and Environmental Justice

- Alston, “Environment,” 101 – 103 (BB)
- Giroux, “Reading Hurricane Katrina,” 171 – 196 (BB)
- Lipsitz, “Learning from New Orleans” (BB)

Th Oct. 31 Bordered Lives

- Ward, *Salvage the Bones*, first half

****Presentation 5****

T Nov. 5 Bordered Lives

- Ward, *Salvage the Bones*, second half

Th Nov. 7 Environmental Justice and the Politics of Difference

- Pellow and Park, *The Silicon Valley of Dreams*, 1 – 84

****Presentation 6****

T Nov.12 Labor, Globalization, and Environmental Hazards

- Pellow and Park, *The Silicon Valley of Dreams*, 85 - 168

IV. IDENTITY, REPRESENTATION, RESISTANCE

Th Nov. 14 Personal/Political Visibilities

- Shaun Tan, *The Arrival* (all)
- C. Kaplan, “Identity” (BB)

****Presentation 7****

T Nov. 19 Personal/Political Visibilities

****Presentation 8****

Th Nov. 21 No Class

T Nov. 26 Border Crossings and Being Between

- Clare, *Exile and Pride*, ix-xiv, 1-76

Th Nov. 28 **Thanksgiving**
No Class

T Dec. 3 Gender, Sexuality and Selfhood

- Clare, *Exile and Pride*, 119-171
- Final Project Workshop

- Th Dec. 5 Making Change Work
- Pellow and Park, *The Silicon Valley of Dreams*, 168 – 222
 - Ishiyama, “Environmental Justice and American Indian Tribal Sovereignty,” 119–139 (BB)
 - Sze, *Noxious New York*, 176-205 (BB)
- F Dec. 6 Final Project Proposal Due
- T Dec. 10 Transnational Activism and Rights Discourse
- Das Gupta, “Rights in a Transnational Era,” 402-423 (BB)
 - Cacho, “The Rights of Respectability,” 190-206 (BB)
 - Buff, “The Undergraduate Railroad,” 301-314 (BB)
- Th Dec 12 Social Justice and the Legacies of Multiculturalism
- Th Dec 19 Final Exam Essay due to BB by 11am**
*****REMINDER: No late projects will be accepted without an incomplete form the Dean of Studies*****

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ARTICLES

Alston, Vermonja. "Environment." In *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, ed. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Handler, 101-103. New York: New York University Press, 2007.

Berlant, Lauren. "Citizenship." In *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, ed. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Handler, 37-42. NY: New York University Press, 2007.

Buff, Rachel Ida. "The Undergraduate Railroad: Undocumented Immigrant Students and Public Universities." In R. Buff, ed., *Immigrant Rights in the Shadow of Citizenship*, 301-314. NY: New York University Press, 2008.

Cacho, Lisa Marie. "The Rights of Respectability: Ambivalent Allies, Reluctant Rivals, and Disavowed Deviants." In R. Buff, ed., *Immigrant Rights in the Shadow of Citizenship*, 190-206. NY: New York University Press, 2008.

Cohen, Cathy. "Death and Rebirth of Movement: Queering Critical Ethnic Studies." *Social Justice* 37, no. 4 (2010): 126-132.

Das Gupta, Monisha. "Rights in a Transnational Age." In R. Buff, ed., *Immigrant Rights in the Shadow of Citizenship*, 402-423. NY: New York University Press, 2008.

Fleetwood, Nicole. "Excess Flesh: Black Women Performing Hypervisibility." In *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness*, 105-146. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Giroux, Henry. "Reading Hurricane Katrina: Race, Class, and the Biopolitics of Disposability." *College Literature* 33, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 171-196.

Goldstein, Alyosha. "Where the Nation Takes Place: Proprietary Regimes, Antistatism, and U.S. Settler Colonialism." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 834-861.

Ishiyama, Noriko. "Environmental Justice and American Indian Tribal Sovereignty." *Antipode* 35, 1 (January 2003): 119-139.

Kaplan, Amy. "Where is Guantánamo?" *American Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (September 2005): 831-858.

Kaplan, Carla. "Identity." In *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, ed. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Handler, 123-127. New York: New York University Press, 2007.

Kazanjian, David. "Colonial." In *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, ed. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Handler, 52-56. New York: New York University Press, 2007.

Kelly, Esteban Lance. "Philly Stands Up: Inside the Politics and Poetics of Transformative Justice and Community Accountability in Sexual Assault Situations." *Social Justice* 37, 4 (2010): 44-57.

King, Thomas. "Borders." *One Good Story, That One*. 2nd ed. Toronto: HarperCollins, 1993. 131-47. <http://faculty.law.ubc.ca/myoung/constitution/images/Thomas%20King%20Borders.pdf>

- Lipsitz, George. "Learning from New Orleans: The Social Warrant of Hostile Privatism and Competitive Consumer Citizenship." *Cultural Anthropology* 21, 3 (2006): 451-468.
- Maira, Sunaina. "Citizenship and Dissent: South Asian Muslim Youth in the US after 9/11." *South Asian Popular Culture* 8, no. 1 (April 2010): 31-45.
- Mikdash, Maya. "What is Settler Colonialism? Jadaliyya, 17 July 2012. At <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/6453/what-is-settler-colonialism>. Accessed 20 August 2013.
- Meiners, Erica. "Ending the School-to-Prison Pipeline/Building Abolition Futures." *Urban Review* 43, 4 (November 2011): 547-565.
- O'Dwyer, Carolyn. "Tropic Knights and Hula Belles: War and Tourism in the South Pacific." *Journal of Cultural Research* 8, 1 (January 2004): 33-50.
- Rodriguez, Dylan. "(Non)Scenes of Captivity: The Common Sense of Punishment and Death." *Radical History Review* 96 (Fall 2006): 9-32.
- Schweik, Susan. "Disability and the Normal Body of the (Native) Citizen." *Social Research* 78, 2 (Summer 2011): 417-442.
- Smith, Andrea. "The Problem with Privilege." *Andrea* 366, August 14, 2013. <http://andrea366.wordpress.com/2013/08/14/the-problem-with-privilege-by-andrea-smith/>. Accessed 23 August 2013.
- Streeby, Shelby. "Empire." In *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, ed. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Handler, 95-101. New York: New York University Press, 2007.
- Sze, Julie. "The Promise and the Peril or, Can Community-Based Environmental Justice Initiatives Reintegrate Planning and Public Health in the Urban Environment?" *Noxious New York: The Racial Politics of Urban Health and Environmental Justice*, 177-206. Boston: MIT Press, 2007.
- Trask, Haunani Kay. "The Color of Violence." *Social Justice* 31, 4 (2004): 8-16.
- Wilder, Laura Ingalls. "Moving In" and "Indians in the House." In *Little House on the Prairie*. New York: Harper Trophy, 1971 [1935]. 71 – 79, 132 – 146.