

HRS 162: American Space and Identity
W, 5:30 - 8:20 P.M.
Mendocino Hall, MND 2002

Fall, 2009
Professor Cassinelli

Area: C4

Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space. Kingdoms are clay. **William Shakespeare, Antony and Cleopatra, I,i,33**

Space, like time, engenders forgetfulness; but it does so by setting us bodily free from our surroundings and giving us back our primitive unattached state **Thomas Mann, The Magic Mountain**

Instead of boiling up individuals into the species, I would draw up a chalk circle round every individuality, and preach to it to keep within that, and preserve and cultivate its identity. **Jane Welsh Carlyle, To John Sterling, August 5, 1845**

*Adventure most unto itself
The Soul condemned to be –
Attended by a single Hound
Its own identity.* **Emily Dickinson, No. 822 (c. 1864), st. 4.**

Required Reading:

1. Texts available at bookstore (Copies of these will be on reserve as well):
 - a. Dorothy West, *The Living is Easy*
 - b. John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley in Search of America*
 - c. Ian Buruma & Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies*
 - d. Gus Lee, *China Boy*
 - e. Doreen Massey, *for space*
 - f. George Henderson, *California and the Fictions of Capital (Place, Culture and Politics)*
2. Packet available at University Copy and Press [Behind Tokyo Fro's in the Courtyard of University Village, 446 Howe Avenue, Telephone: (916) 929-6147].
3. Others texts have been placed on Reserve to be read as we transit the semester. Their availability is set at a two-hour checkout.

Other Materials Required:

8"X10" lined, spiral ring notebook to be used as a weekly journal; unless there is a compelling reason for doing so, do not buy a notebook smaller/larger than the requirement.

General Purpose of the Class:

Space and identity: Each of the above writers -- Shakespeare, the cynosure of English *belles lettres*; Thomas Mann, famed German novelist/essayist and anti-Fascist; Jane Welsh Carlyle, incomparable and inveterate letter writer, wife of the Scot and peer of John Stuart Mill, Thomas Carlyle; and Emily Dickinson, considered by many to be the American poet by whose work would be poets must be judged -- have opinions regarding space and identity. Can we connect these two? And what do they have to do with being an "American?" Further, why should the notions of "space and identity" be of concern in an age wherein "America" (here, read: United States) is seemingly overrun with new immigrant groups (You are aware of the attempts to change the immigration laws; right?)? Are we not a huge "melting pot?" Or are we something altogether different? How do "I," an individual, stake out my space; how do "I" acquire an identity? How do we "people" come to know we are "American?" Moreover, why should it be of con-

cern to the rest of us? This class will attempt to answer these and many other questions that occur as we try to make sense of the importance of “space” (Are you aware of the physical distance at which most Americans feel comfortable, even when in a crowd? Can you explain a rock concert “nosh pit” then?) and “identity” (How do you identify yourself? Do others see you that way? Are you sure?).

In order to understand space and identity as these have been acquired by Americans, it will be necessary to submerge (sometimes) the self. You are going to be expected to be objective in your initial examination of the issues and languages of space and identity as these apply to Americans and how we describe ourselves. This will be hard for the simple reason the most difficult task is to put aside our own perceptions and judgments about “others.” As we examine the interplay between space and identity as these manifest themselves in individual Americans (How do you feel when you come into the classroom and someone is sitting in the seat you chose the first day of class? What do your tattoos mean to you? Why do you have so many piercings?) and their interactions with each other, we will attempt to understand the roles of religion, technology, myths, other peoples’ perspectives, culture – West and East, gender, nature, urban versus suburban versus rural environments, and many others too numerous to name here, play in determining who we are. **Please note:** This is a discussion class which means we all must give due respect to the opinions, ideas and thoughts of others, regardless of how uncomfortable we may feel about the direction the discussion is taking. The information should be considered only in terms of its contribution to the discourse taking place. You will be given this courtesy as well! We will be looking at videos, a movie or two, art slides, listening to music, poetry, literature, and whatever else will help us to gain a modicum of understanding of what it means to be an “American” as we, individually and collectively, define ourselves by our spaces and identities.

Catalog Description: An examination of the ways in which physical spaces within America contribute to the formation of American identities and vice versa. Interdisciplinary and topically organized, analyzes both exterior and interior spaces: city, suburb, regions, body, mind, and the borderlands, to name a few. Also studies the interaction of ethnicity (race), class, gender, and sexuality within space and identity.

Course Description: Fundamental to this course is the way in which physical spaces within America contribute to the formation of American identities and vice versa. Most of the examination of these spaces and identities will take place within the context of the twentieth – twenty-first centuries, although we will also include discussions of historical spaces and identities. Topically, we will be exploring exterior spaces, including those of the city and suburb; interior spaces, including those of the body and mind; as well as those which cross interior/exterior boundaries, such as the borderlands. The ways in which popular culture and “race,” class, gender and sexuality impact upon the construction of particular spaces also will be a part of this examination. A variety of fields will be included in our assaying of the territory: cultural geography, landscape studies, gender studies, history, literature, sociology, and art in its various forms are only some of the fields with which we will connect.

Course Objectives:

- Understanding of:
 - the ways in which multiple disciplines come together to create meaning;
 - how particular disciplines construct meaning;
 - the ways in which the construction of space within America constructs us as individuals and vice versa;
 - the ways in which the both internal and external spaces are represented

- Demonstrating visual literacy;
- Ability to compare and contrast the experiences of diverse populations within the United States in relationship to space and place and how these impact our identification of ourselves;
- Applying the techniques of formal analysis to a variety of texts;
- Communicating effectively in both oral and written formats.

Grades will be based on the following criteria:

- **Participation:** Being in class (see “Attendance Policy,” below) is the first requirement; paying attention; and as this is shown in the catalogue as a “Discussion” section, actively engaging in any discussions, whether in a group or the class; answering questions asked by the instructor or others; asking your own questions; offering your insights, concerns and experiences; are all part of this criterion. It shall be **one-fourth of your grade**. BE INVOLVED! **Note:** Miss any two (2) class sessions and you will be considered a drop - which **you** then must ensure is recorded properly with those who monitor such details. Appear on the final grade form after being dropped and you will receive a less than stellar mark. **P.S.** Being habitually late for class is not only rude and tacky, but also shall result in deductions from your participation grade. Excused absences from class, while enabling you to continue attending, shall have a NEGATIVE impact upon your participation grade.

A journal entry about the class discussion is to be completed during the last 10 minutes of the class. Journals entries are NOT to be begun until so informed by the instructor. You shall place the journal in the box for that purpose before leaving the classroom after having your entry initialed by the instructor. Failure to follow the explicit, verbal instructions for the format of your journal entries will negatively affect this portion of your grade. Your entry for each class session shall include the following:

1. A one sentence summary of the principal topic(s) of discussion, as you understood it (them); this is not optional!;
2. A well-developed one - two paragraph reaction to the topic(s) and the direction the class took with it (them). Would you have liked to have seen the discussion go another way? Did you agree or disagree with the consensus of the class? Why? Why not?
3. Be prepared to discuss (support and defend) your position in a subsequent class.

Group/Oral Presentations: Group presentations will be done by all members of the class. Due to space and time limitations, you are expected to meet as a group outside the classroom (this can be done via the internet chat room process if you wish). All group members are required to contribute orally to the class presentation. Time limit for group presentations: 15 – 20 minutes. All groups must be ready to present in that same week. To ensure this is so, a single page synopsis of the topic and the group’s analysis shall be given **by each member of the group in their own words** to the instructor at the beginning of the class.

- **Papers:** Topics for the two required essays will be provided one – two weeks prior to the due dates shown herein. Please do not bother with plastic or cardboard covers/folders. Papers are to be formatted as described in “Grading Policy and Standards” in the Reading Packet. Any variation from these will be described in the paper topic handout. Continually ignoring the requirements regarding formatting shall result in major grade deductions beginning with one-half grade the first time. **A minimum number of research/textual citations shall be required for each essay and will be outlined in the writing prompt.** Essays are due at the beginning of the class date required. These shall be **one-half of your grade**. Rewrites are always a possibility; but they shall be due the next class period after being re-

turned to you. Late papers shall not be accepted, no exceptions; have someone deliver it for you; that is why NO LATER THAN dates are shown. **Plagiarism will not be tolerated.** ***E-mail submission of papers is NOT acceptable.***

- **Mid-Term/Final Examinations:** Will be comprehensive and will be inclusive of text, lecture and discussion material. These shall constitute **one-fourth of your grade**. The format of the final examination is to be determined.

You are encouraged to contact me regarding absences/lateness/questions via telephone: **(916) 486-3566**; and/or e-mail: **rjcas@infostations.com**, or leave a message at **(916) 278-6261, Ext. 2**. With prior arrangement, a one-on-one conference outside my normal office hours can be held at a mutually agreed location.

Attendance Policy (Humanities Department): A maximum of one (1) week of absences from class is allowable without penalty: Three (3) absences for a MWF class; two (2) for a MW or TTh class; and one (1) for a once a week class. The normal departmental policy is to reduce the grade one-half step for every absence beyond the allowable maximum of one (1) week absence. Exceptions may be granted in rare instances and for compelling reasons at the discretion of the instructor.

Special note for Fall 09: The information in this syllabi is subject to change as issues related to furlough planning are updated and resolved.

Office Hours: Wednesday: 3:30 – 4:30 PM, Room, MND 2030.

Turn off ALL electronic devices while in the classroom. Laptop and cell phone use for photographing, recording or text messaging is not allowed without permission of the instructor.

If you have a disability and require accommodations, you need to provide disability documentation to SSWD, Lassen Hall 1008, 278-6955. Discuss this with me as soon as possible.

As important as reading critically and writing clearly are to the successful student, listening and hearing carefully carry equal weight. The time to ask questions regarding what you read or hear is when you know you have not understood what is required. Do not offer that old sobriquet, “I didn’t know,” when you are held accountable for those requirements which are contained herein or are otherwise described to you. Many of your peers will get it the first time; this will be the proof of what was required of all.

DATE **TOPIC (May Change at the Discretion of the Instructor)**

I. INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS (Two weeks)

02 Sep 09 Introduction, Discussion of the syllabus; grading standards/rubric; From the Reading Packet, discussion of “Explorers of America” timeline; what were these people seeking? “The E(u)topians,” “1491;” Jared Diamond’s *Collapse*, Ch. 1: “Under Montana’s Big Sky.” Begin reading John Steinbeck’s, “Part I,” *Travels with Charley in Search of America*; **video:** *People Like Us: Social Class in America*.

09 Sep 09 “Pictorial Space as Identity in *The Deerslayer*” from the Reading Packet; Chapters 1 – 5, Dorothy Massey, *for space*; discussion of Turner’s Frontier Thesis and the idea of “manifest destiny.”

II. SPACE (Five weeks)

- 16 Sep 09 From the Reading Packet, Jared Diamond's *Collapse*, Ch. 4, "The Ancient Ones: The Anasazi and Their Neighbors;" and "Claiming Open Space: Youth Identity and Challenge of Meaningful Participation" from the Reading Packet; "Part II," *Travels with Charley*; Chapter 6 – 12, Dorothy Massey, *for space*.
- 23 Sep 09 Chapter 13 – 15, Dorothy Massey, *for space*; "Part III," *Travels with Charley*; "Identity Production in a Networked Culture: Why Youth Heart MySpace" from Reading Packet; "Part IV," *Travels with Charley*; Begin reading Dorothy West's *The Living is Easy*; "Part One," Chs. 1 – 12;
- 30 Sep 09 *The Living is Easy*, Chs. 13 – 27; *The Living is Easy*, "Part 2," Chs. 28 - 35 and the "Afterword."
- 07 Oct 09 Discussion: Issues of class and how they create "space;" **video:** John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. **Paper #1 prompt provided.**
- 14 Oct 09 Reading: Buruma/Margalit's *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies*, **video:** John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*; 1st paper topic provided. **video** concluded (if necessary); **Mid-Term prompt provided.**

III. IDENTITY (Five weeks)

- 21 Oct 09 Paper #1 due.**
- 21 Oct 09 Gus Lee, *China Boy*; and from the Reading Packet: selections from David Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American: Historical Crossing of a Racial Frontier*, **Video:** *Tough Guise*.
- 28 Oct 09 **Mid-Term Group Presentations begin.**
- 04 Nov 09 Reading Packet, selections from *Asian/American: Historical Crossing of a Racial Frontier* Readings: "Part V and Appendix," *Asian/American: Historical Crossing of a Racial Frontier*; "V. Renaissance Woman;" "The good wife's guide;" and *The Sacramento Bee* article, "Fertile finding: women dress up while ovulating," dated 10/11/06.
- 11 Nov 09 Veteran's Day – Campus Closed – No Class**
- 18 Nov 09 Readings: On Reserve under HRS 161/162, Cassinelli: Dorothy Sayers, *Are Women Human?*; entire text; Cassinelli: Sharon Lamb, *The Secret Lives of Girls; What Good Girls Really Do – Sex Play, Aggression, and Their Guilt*, Chs. 1 – 4 and 15 – 18; **videos:** *I Am a Man: Black Masculinity in America* or *Wrestling with Manhood*; **Paper #2 prompt provided.**
- 25 Nov 09 Videos concluded, discussion to follow; Reading: On Reserve under HRS 161/162, Cassinelli: Sally R. Munt, *Heroic Desire: Lesbian Identity and Cultural Space*, Required: Chs. 1 and 6, such other of the chapter(s) you deem important to your understanding of homosexual identity.

IV. ETHNICITY, GENDER, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, AND THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE AS THESE DEFINE SPACE AND IDENTITY (FINAL WEEKS)

- 02 Dec 09 Paper #2 due**

- 02 Dec 09 Readings: "Case Studies in Comparison; The Contested American Identity" from the Reading Packet; Reading: *California and the Fictions of Capital (Place, Culture and Politics)*, "Introduction," Pt I, Chs.1 – 3; **video:** *The Celluloid Closet*.
- 09 Dec 09 Reading: *California and the Fictions of Capital*, Part II, "Introduction," Chs. 4 – 7, "Conclusion;" **video:** *Ethnic Notions*.The "Generation Gap" and what it tells us about Americans; Reading Packet: *The Sacramento Bee* article, "BIG PARTY MARKS FOR BOOMERS," dated 3/1/07; Junaid Alam, "The Illness is the Cure: Purchasing Individuality in America," *Counterpunch* and "Educational Institutionalization: Teachers as Nurse Ratcheds?" and the Suggested Reading List; discussion of the Final Exam; **Final Exam prompt provided.**
- 16 Dec 09 **Final Examination, Time: 5:15 – 7:15 PM.**