

HRS/HIST 168: Images of America
Fall 2008

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Catalog Description: Interdisciplinary survey of the major events, trends and figures in American history viewed through the lenses of American literature, visual arts, architecture and music. The arts in America are studied in relation to major ideas, significant personalities, and important events from the period of the early republic to the present.

Section Description: Using literature (both fiction and non-fiction), elite and popular visual arts and artifacts, this course is meant to introduce students to American culture. Students are expected to read, write, and think about what it means to be an American, what values and assumptions Americans may hold in common, and whether American experiences reflect the existence of a distinct national character.

Learning Goals:

Successful students in HRS/HIST 168 will demonstrate:

- the ability to recognize, explain and analyze American cultural traditions
- an understanding and appreciation of the diversity of American experiences
- the ability to compare and contrast various artistic expressions
- the ability to think creatively and critically about the relationships of artistic expressions and their historical and cultural contexts
- the ability to use information from multiple disciplines analytically
- the ability to write clear, correct and informed prose

TEXTS:

Pearson Custom Library of American Literature (PCL)

Pohl. *Framing America* (FA)

Student's choice of two works from HRS/HIST 168 reading list (see attached)

EVALUATION:

- 3 tests/100 points apiece= 300 points
- writing assignments (totaling AT LEAST 5000 words):
 - paper 1 (4-6 pages): 50 points
 - paper 2 (4-6 pages): 25 points
 - paper 3 (4-6 pages): 100 points
 - paper 3 (4-6 pages): 100 points
- participation: 25 points---positive contributions to class discussion, homework, etc.

600-540 points/A

539-475 points/B

474-400 points/C

399-330 points/D

Below 330 points/F

PROFESSORIAL QUIRKS:

- The classroom door will be closed 5 minutes after the class period begins and NO ONE WILL BE ADMITTED ONCE THE DOOR IS "CLOSED."
- It is departmental policy that a maximum of one week of absences is allowable without penalty. You can not be successful in this class if you are unable to attend regularly.
- ALL assignments are due at the start of the class meeting. Any work offered after the first 5 minutes will be considered "late" and the penalty for late work is 10 points/day (even if turned in late on the due date).
- TESTS: two of the tests will have take-home essay sections due at the start of the in-class test period. No make-up tests will be offered without a verified excuse. All make-ups are administered by the Testing Center for a fee.

CALENDAR

WEEK 1/September 2 and 4: Opening remarks: art and culture

WEEK 2/September 9 and 11: FIRST ENCOUNTERS

Read: FA: pp. 15-16, 22-41

PCL: pp 1-2

Begin the book of your choice from READING LIST A

WEEK 3/September 16 and 18: FEELING COLONIAL

Read: FA: pp. 54-72

PCL: pp. 3-45

READING LIST A book

WEEK 4/September 23 and 25: THE EARLY REPUBLIC

READ: FA: pp. 74-98, 104-112 (recommended: pp. 98-104)

PCL: pp.54-64

READING LIST A book

WEEK 5/September 20 and October 2: 19TH CENTURY LANDSCAPES

READ: FA: pp. 129-171

READING LIST A book

****Paper 1 due at start of the class meeting on October 2****

WEEK 6/October 7 and 9: DEFINING OURSELVES: IMAGES OF DEMOCRACY

READ: PCL: pp. 46-53, 66-85, 86-90

FINISH first READING LIST BOOK

****Test 1: October 9****

WEEK 7/October 14 and 16: THE "DARK SIDE"

READ: FA: pp. 175-179, 181-184, 199-224, 280-282,

PCL: pp. 65, 91-94, 157-219

WEEK 8/October 21 and 23: THE IDEA OF THE "REALLY" REAL

READ: PCL: 95-155

****Paper 2 due at the start of the class meeting on October 23****

WEEK 9/October 28 and 30: THE GILDED AGE

READ: FA: pp. 240-245, 252-280, 286-300

PCL: pp. 220-233

Begin READING LIST B book

****Test 2 essay question handed out in class on October 28****

WEEK 10/November 4 and 6: THE RISE OF 'MODERN' AMERICA

READ: FA: pp. 302-312, 317-337

PCL: 156

READING LIST B book

****Test 2: November 4**/essay due at start of exam period**

WEEK 11/November 11 and 13: NO CLASS MEETING. DONATH IN RIVERSIDE

WEEK 12/November 18 and 20: WWI AND THE 'JAZZ AGE'

READ: FA: pp. 351-362

PCL: 234-235, 236-243
READING LIST B book
WEEK 13/November 25: THE '30S AND WWII
READ: FA: pp. 364-381, 388-408
FINISH READING LIST book
****Paper 3 due at the start of the class meeting on November 25****

WEEK 14/December 2 and 4: THE POST-WAR WORLD
READ: FA: pp. 430-454, 496-499
PCL: 244-260
Test 3 essay handed out in class on December 4*

WEEK 15/December 9 and 11: POST-MODERN LIFE
READ: FA: pp. 464-496, 512-520
PCL: pp. 261-273
****Paper 4 due at the start of the class meeting on December 9****
****Test 3: December 11/essay due at beginning of exam period****

HRS/HIST 168

Images of America

Reading Lists A + B

Students must choose one work from LIST A and one work from LIST B as additional required texts for the course. Begin reading your choices as soon as possible. PAPER 3 WILL DEFINITELY INVOLVE ONE OF THE BOOKS YOU CHOSE. You may also want to use the books you choose in paper 4 and as part of your final exam essay. **YOU MAY CHOOSE A BOOK THAT IS NOT ON EITHER OF THE LISTS---JUST CHECK WITH ME FIRST.**

LIST A/Books published before 1918

ADAMS. The Education of Henry Adams

ALCOTT. Little Women

BROWN. Wieland

CHOPIN. The Awakening

COOPER. Last of the Mohicans

CRANE. The Red Badge of Courage

DOUGLASS. The Autobiography of Frederick Douglass

DREISER. Sister Carrie

FRANKLIN. Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin

GILMAN. Herland

HAWTHORNE. The House of Seven Gables or Scarlet Letter

JACOBS. Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

JACKSON. Ramona

JEWETT. The Country of Pointed Firs

MELVILLE. Moby Dick

STOWE. Uncle Tom's Cabin

THOREAU. Walden

TWAIN. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn OR Roughing It OR The Innocents Abroad

WHARTON. House of Mirth

LIST B/Books published after WWI

ACKER. Empire of the Senseless

ALEXIE. The Lone Ranger and Tonto. .

ANAYA. Bless Me, Ultima

ANDERSON. Winesberg, Ohio

BALDWIN. Tell Me how Long the Train's Been Gone

BARTHELME. Snow White

BELLOW. Herzog

BULOSAN. America is in the Heart (non fiction)

CATHER. Death Comes for the Archbishop

CHANDLER. Farewell My Lovely

CLEAVER. Soul on Ice (non fiction)

DIDION. Run River

DOCTOROW. Ragtime OR The Book of Daniel

DUBOIS. The Souls of Black Folks (non-fiction)

ELLISON. Invisible Man

FITZGERALD. The Great Gatsby

HELLER. Catch 22

HEMINGWAY. For Whom the Bell Tolls

HESS. Dispatches

KEROUAC. On the Road OR Dharma Bums

KINGSTON. Woman Warrior (non fiction)

LESEUR. The Girl

MAILER. The Executioner's Song OR The Naked and the Dead OR Marilyn

O'CONNOR. Wise Blood

OKADA. NoNo Boy

RODRIGUEZ. Hunger for Memory

STEGNER. Angle of Repose

MORRISON. The Bluest Eye

STEINBECK. Grapes of Wrath

TAN. Joy Luck Club

UPDIKE. Couples

YEZIERSKA. The Bread Givers

HRS/HIST 168: Images of America
Paper 1/worth 50 points
DUE: beginning of class meeting on Thursday, October 2

Let's exercise your visual literacy:

Write this essay on any work of visual art you find in Francis Pohl's *Framing America* (you don't have to choose a work we've discussed in class).

Begin your essay with a section titled "OBSERVATION." An observation is a statement that can be verified by consideration of specific evidence in the work of art under consideration. In this portion of your essay begin by asking yourself, "what do I see?" What details attract your attention? You should begin this section with sentences that begin, "I notice that. . . ."
Include information about:

- Your first impression of the work. What is memorable or convincing about the work?
- Additional details you notice—in particular, you might describe the textures, colors, shapes that stand out the most to you. Why did you notice them, why/how did they capture your attention? Where does your eye linger as you view the image?
- What is the work's subject or function?
- Is there an organizing motif or theme in the work? What has been included/what has been left out?

The second section of your essay should be titled "REFLECTIONS," "INFERENCES," or "INTERPRETATIONS". In this part of your essay, ask yourself, "what can I reasonably infer from what I noticed about the work of art?" Remember to restrict your inferences/reflective ideas to what you observed. Write about:

- What response do you have to the work, and what elements cause that response?
- What do you think the maker/artist intended?
- What messages about class, gender, society, race, history, etc. does the work seem to send? Choose one as your focus.
- For whom was this work of art intended (who made up the potential/intended audience?)
- Anything else you think of that helps you explain the "power" and meaningfulness of the work of art you chose.

The final section of your essay should be entitled "CONCLUSIONS." In the conclusion of your essay, explain why you think the work of art you chose is important to understanding (something about) American history and culture.

HOUSEKEEPING:

- Use the name and maker of your work of art as the title of your essay
- Write 4-6 pages, double space your text with sufficient margins to allow me to write comments
- Highlight or underline your paper's topic sentence
- End your paper with a word count
- Staple the pages of your paper---no spines or covers, please

HRS/HIST 168
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PAPER 2/worth 25 points
DUE: Thursday, October 23

Do you agree or disagree with the idea that things made in the same time and place will "look" the same/reveal the same assumptions and values?

Write a short---2-3 pages---essay in which you support your position by comparing two American works of different genres and discussing their similarities or differences in terms of the relationship of how they look and a single specific social/cultural value or behavior.

"HOUSEKEEPING" DETAILS:

- Underline or highlight your topic sentence
- Give your essay a title
- Staple the pages of your essay together
- Put a word count at the end of your essay
- Cite any resources you consult

HRS/HIST 168: Images of America
Paper 3/100 points
DUE: Tuesday, November 25

You are disturbed to read in *The Sacramento Bee* that a local branch of the THOUGHT POLICE has targeted your HRS/HIST 168 reading list book as a "subversive, dangerous pieces of filth," and plans to toss all the copies they have confiscated from local school libraries into a bonfire on August 28th to celebrate the anniversary of the "Patriot Act" [a small political comment on my part].

You become so upset that you decide to join a lawsuit to stop the bonfire and file a "friend of the court" brief defending **ONE** of the books you've read for this class. Your brief should be a 4-6 page essay that builds an organized, focused and logical argument for your book's value to understanding something(—you decide what) about American arts, ideas or cultural behaviors.

BE SURE YOU WRITE ABOUT:

*Place and Time: Discuss the physical setting and historical time period of the action in your book. There probably should be some important relationships between time, place, theme, plot and characters that will be relevant to your "save-the book" argument.

*Plot: What happens in your narrative (don't just list events, search for a pattern of selected, causally related events that contain some sort of identifiable conflict). For example, what is the major conflict in the story; what values/qualities does the author associate with each side of the conflict; how is the conflict organized? How is it resolved?

*Characters: Who are the main and subsidiary characters in your narrative? What are they like? Do they represent any American stereotypes or ideals?

*Theme: be sure you understand the difference between subject (topic) and theme. Subject is what the work of art is about--it can be stated in a phrase or word. Theme is what your book "says" about the subject--the theme should apply to the world of people's lives outside of the book. Usually the theme deals with one of four areas of human experience: what human beings are like; the nature of society and social life; the nature of our ethical responsibilities; what humankind's relationship is/should be to the world. NB: As you work on this, you need to keep in mind that there may be more than one theme in your book---just focus on the one(s) you think are most important to your "American" argument and remember that there is NO single "right" way to do this part of the assignment (and that, of course, drives the THOUGHT POLICE crazy. . .)

You can add additional topics that you think might strengthen your argument.

If you like, you can consult 2-3 "outside experts" and quote them in your piece as long as you acknowledge them correctly.

THE USUAL HOUSEKEEPING DETAILS:

- Underline or highlight your topic sentence
- End your paper with a word count
- Staple the pages of your essay

HRS/HIST 168: Images of America
Paper 4/100 points
DUE: Thursday, December 9

Choose two works of art, one from column A and one from column B. Write an essay in which you compare (how are they alike?) OR contrast (how are they different?) your choices.

COLUMN A/

- *Howl*
- *The New Colossus*
- *The Raven*
- *The Song of Myself*
- *Susie Asado*
- *We Wear the Mask*
- *The Yellow Wallpaper*
- your choice from the HRS/HIST 168 reading list
- your choice of a work of American literary art

COLUMN B/

- Allston. *Moonlight Landscape*
- Bartholdi. *The Statue of Liberty*
- deKooning. *Woman and Bicycle*
- Jenny. *Home Insurance Building, Chicago*
- Lin. *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*
- Rockwell. *Freedom From Want*
- Wright. *Guggenheim Museum, New York City*
- Your choice of a work of American visual art (architecture, sculpture, painting, film)

Include the following in your essay:

- **Identification:** maker, date, genre, taste culture, description/synopsis, history. . .etc. You may certainly consult "outside" experts (just be sure to cite them)
- **Evaluation:** What ideas do these works of art represent? What is important/meaningful/moving to YOU about these works? How do your choices reveal the value of art as an agent and index to American culture?
- **Analysis:** What, exactly do your materials reveal about American values, stereotypes, social behaviors, attitudes? What is American about these works? If you write about the works' similarities, what (if any) consistencies in American culture or experiences do they reveal? If you contrast the two works, what do their differences suggest about changes or variations in American culture or experiences? What can we learn about the world in which we live today by have a deeper/"educated" understanding of your choices.

THE USUAL HOUSEKEEPING DETAILS:

Underline or highlight your topic sentence
End your paper with a word count
Staple the pages of your essay