

**LIBA 216
Reflections on (the) American Dream(s)
Spring 2007**

Dr. JR Donath
Office: MND 2011
Phone: 278.5895 or 278.6444 (HRS office)
e-mail: donathjr@csus.edu
office hours: Monday 4:30-5:30pm and by appointment

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

Multicultural exploration of how our nation's history has been constructed, experienced, told and valued from varying ethno-cultural points of view, including each student's personal history.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The seminar focuses on the mythology of the American Dream and the ways in which this construct animates and guides both our culture and our lives as individuals. The aim of this class is to help you better understand the assumptions, methods, and techniques of cultural analysis utilized in American Studies scholarship. As a discipline, American Studies focuses on the analysis of historical and contemporary cultural texts (broadly construed).

In order to succeed in the class (and for the seminar format to succeed) you must be an active learner, keep to the assignment/reading schedule, prepare for each class meeting, and participate actively in our seminar sessions.

TEXTS:

Cullen. *The American Dream*
Davis. *Fashion, Culture and Identity*
Hurley. *Diners, Bowling Alleys and Trailer Parks*
Paredes. *George Washington Gomez*
Student's choice of text from Enrichment Reading List

EVALUATION/ASSIGNMENTS:

- Participation: 50%
At the minimum, seminar participation requires that you prepare one written question about some aspect of the assigned reading each week---and provide it to me by 9am of the Monday morning before the seminar meeting (e-mail is best)
- Enrichment List reading seminar presentation: 10%
- Enrichment List reading short paper: 10%
- Seminar term paper (including steps 1-3): 30%

CALENDAR

Week 1/Jan 29: Introduction to the seminar

Week 2/Feb 5: Dreams of Conquest and Independence

Read: Cullen: intro and chapters 1 and 2

Winthrop: final section of "A Model of Christian Charity"
<http://www.kosmicki.com/234/cityhill.htm>

Bradford: "Of Plymouth Plantation"
<http://spider.georgetowncollege.edu/english/coke/bradford.htm>

Declaration of Independence
http://www.archives.gov/national_archives_experience/declaration_transcript.html

de Crevecoeur: selection from "What is an American?"
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/hypertex.html#c_d

Equiano: chapter 2 of his account
<http://www.wsu.edu:8000/~dee/Equiano.html>

Week 3/February 12: the Dream's dialectic

Read: Berthoff: "Peasants and Artisans, Puritans and Republicans. . ."

The Journal of American History 69.3 (Dec.1982) 579-598

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0021-8723%28198212%2969%3A3%3C579%3APAAPAR%3E2.0.CO%3B2-9>

Selections to be distributed in class (Franklin, Jefferson, Paine, Edwards. . .)

Week 4/February 19: Dreaming of Upward Mobility

Read: Cullen: chapter 3

Hawthorne: "Young Goodman Brown"
<http://classiclit.about.com/library/bletexts/nhawthorne/bl-nhaw-goodman.htm>

Dreiser: selections from *Sister Carrie* (read ch. I-III)
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DREISER/toc.html>

2 ENRICHMENT REPORTS

Week 5/February 26: The Dream World of American Film

Film: *It's A Wonderful Life* or *Goldiggers of 1933* (or instructor's choice)

Week 6/March 5: Consuming the Dream

Read: Hurley: *Diners, Bowling Alleys and Trailer Parks*

DUE: Step 1 of term paper assignment

2 ENRICHMENT REPORTS

Week 7/March 12: NO CLASS MEETING: DONATH at Channel Island

Week 8/March 19: Wearing the Dream

Read: Davis. Fashion, Culture and Identity

DUE: Enrichment List reading paper

2 ENRICHMENT REPORTS

Week 9/ March 26: NO CLASS MEETING: SPRING BREAK

Week 10/April 2: Dreams of Equality

Read: Cullen: ch. 4

Ong: "Cultural Citizenship as Subject-Making. . ."

Current Anthropology 37.5 (Dec 1996): 737-762.

<http://links.jstor.org>

Truth: "Ain't I a Woman?"

<http://www.womenwriters.net/domesticgoddess/truth.htm>

Hughes: "Let America Be America Again," "I, Too, Sing America," "Harlem (A Dream Deferred)"

<http://www.poets.org>

2 ENRICHMENT REPORTS

Week 11/April 9: A novel approach to the Dream

Read: Paredes: *George Washington Gomez*

DUE: Step 2 of term paper assignment

2 ENRICHMENT REPORTS

Week 12/April 16: Opposing the Dream

Read: Mukherjee: "American Dreamer"

<http://motherjones.com/commentary/columns/1997/01/mukherjee.html>

Zangrando: "Protest: A Rejection of the American Dream"

Journal of Black Studies 1.2 (December 1970): 141-159

<http://links.jstor.org>

Vasilopoulos: "Prevailing Upon the American Dream: Thurgood Marshall. . ."

Journal of Negro Education 63.3 (Summer 1994): 289-296.

<http://links.jstor.org>

2 ENRICHMENT REPORTS

Week 13/April 23: The Dream of Possession

READ: Cullen: ch. 5

Sandeen: "The Design of Public Housing in the New Deal: Oscar Stonorov and the Carl Mackley Houses." *American Quarterly* 37.5 (Winter, 1985): 645-667

DUE: Step 3 of term paper assignment

Bring 2 copies of your draft to class

2 ENRICHMENT REPORTS

Week 14/April 30: Dreams of Paradise

READ: Cullen: ch. 6, 7 and conclusion

Return and discuss drafts

**Week 15/May 7: NO CLASS MEETING
INDIVIDUAL APPOINTMENTS**

Week 16/May 14: PAPER DUE by 5:30pm in MND 2011.

(suggestive) ENRICHMENT READING LIST

- Anderson, David. *The American Dream in 20th century California Fiction*
- Bella, Robert. *Habits of the Heart*
- Burbick, Joan. *Rodeo Queens and the American Dream*
- Calder, Lendol. *Financing the American Dream: A Cultural History of Consumer Credit*
- DuBois, WEB. *The Souls of Black Folks*
- Ehrenreich, Barbara. *Bait and Switch: The (futile) Pursuit of the American Dream*
- Elias, Robert, ed. *Baseball and the American Dream*
- FitzGerald, Frances. *Cities on a Hill: A Journey Through Contemporary American Cultures*
- Guimond, James. *American Photography and the American Dream*
- Harvey, Sally. *Redefining the American Dream: The Novels of Willa Cather*
- Hayden, Dolores. *Redesigning the American Dream*
- Kirchberg and Hendrickx. *Elvis Presley, Richard Nixon and the American Dream*
- Kunstler, James. *The Geography of Nowhere*
- Lainsbury, Andrew. *Once Upon an American Dream: The Story of EuroDisneyland*
- Marchand, Roland. *Advertising The American Dream*
- Tyson, Lois. *Psychological Politics of the American Dream: Commodification...*

ENRICHMENT LIST READING/SEMINAR PRESENTATION ASSIGNMENT

Each student will present a reading from the enrichment list and lead discussion. Presentation should go 10-15 minutes and discussion about 15-20 minutes.

1. Prepare a précis: a short summary of the work that includes:

- Information about the author's thesis
- The type/body of evidence the author presents
- Research Methods employed by author
- Main Arguments /The work's structure
- Conclusions

*****Don't make the mistake of "simply" reviewing or summarizing the reading*****

2. Add 2-4 discussion questions at the end of your précis
3. Make copies of your presentation materials for each seminar participant

ENRICHMENT LIST READING/ ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

Using your enrichment list reading write a short (10 pages or less) essay

Focus your essay by identifying and analyzing **ONE** component/dimension of the American Dream that you find of interest.

This essay is intended to act as a "meditation," not a summative monograph.

Remember--- your essay needs to focus only ONE cultural insight. You needn't identify all the possible insights, nor decide on the central or most significant insight. Find an idea or point that is interesting to you and ANALYZE IT TO DEATH. Use both primary and secondary sources (at least 3).

SEMINAR TERM PAPER

ASSIGNMENT: Write a 15-20 page paper that identifies and defends/analyzes your sense of a primary characteristic of the American Dream.

This paper should incorporate discussion at least your enrichment reading and two other secondary readings of your choice—which can be seminar readings). **Your paper must include an annotated bibliography.**

Step 1: Due March 5

*Come up with an idea for your seminar paper and think up a working title.

*Using only **one** side of a piece of paper:

- Place your name and working title at the top of the page
- Describe the American characteristic with which your paper will deal
- Identify a couple of potential primary sources/artifacts (and where you located/will locate them) which reveal or illustrate this characteristic
- Identify a couple of secondary sources that you think might be helpful
Include a source of information about a method or theory that might help you in explaining and/analyzing the characteristic and artifact you have chosen
- Write down any questions or problems you see/have encountered/need to think about

*Bring a copy of your page for each member of the seminar

Step 2: Due April 9

*Using only one side of a piece of paper:

- Write an introduction to your paper
Include a thesis statement that you have highlighted or underlined
Outline your argument or the main ideas of your position
- At the bottom of the page, prepare an annotated bibliography of three of the resources you have consulted thus far

*Bring a copy of your page for each member of the seminar

Step 3: Due April 23

*Complete a working draft of your paper.

- The draft should be at least 10-15 pages long
- The draft should include endnotes or footnotes and a bibliography
- Bring 2 copies of your draft to the seminar meeting

*Each student will be assigned a "reading partner" and that person will provide a short, but detailed written evaluation/critique of their partner's paper on **April 30**.

ENRICHMENT READINGS LIST

Each student will need to pay special attention to 2 books—one chosen from List A (theoretical/methodological) and one chosen from List B (imaginative). In addition, these lists are meant to suggest potential resources for the final seminar paper. These lists are intended to be suggestive---please check with me if you prefer to work with a reading not listed here:

List A/non-fiction

- Barber, Benjamin. *Jihad vs. McWorld*
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*
- Berkovitch. *The American Jeremiad*
- Berger, Peter. *The Social Construction of Reality*
- Berry. *The Unsettling of America*
- Cawelti, John. *Adventure, Mystery and Romance*
- deTocqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America*
- Delbanco, Andrew. *The Real American Dream*
- Fischer, David. *Albion's Seed*
- Fiske, John. *Reading Television*
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*
- Hsu, Francis K. *Americans and Chinese*
- Kim, Choung Soon. *An Asian Anthropologist in the South*
- Jewet, Robert. *The Captain America Complex or American Monomyth*
- Katsuzumi, Sotokichi. *A Japanese Sees the U.S*
- Levine, Lawrence. *Black Culture, Black Consciousness*
- Marchand, Roland. *Advertising the American Dream*
- Mason, Peter. *Deconstructing America*
- Menand, Louis. *The Metaphysical Club*
- O'Gorman, Edmund. *The Invention of America*
- Purdy, J. J. *Being America*
- Radway, Janice. *Reading the Romance*
- Schlereth, Thomas. *Artifacts and the American Past*
- Slotkin, Richard. *Regeneration Through Violence*
- Smith, Henry Nash. *The Virgin Land*
- Trollope, Frances. *Domestic Manners of the Americans*
- A text from T.V. Reed's annotated bibliography in the packet

List B/imaginative literature

- Auster, Paul. *Leviathan*
- Brecht, Bertold. *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*
- Cooper, James Fenimore. *The Pioneers*
- Dickens, Charles. *Martin Chuzzlewit*
- Foer, Jonathan. *Everything is Illuminated*
- Green, Julian. *Maira*
- James, Henry. *The Ambassadors*
- Johnson, Diane. *Le Divorce*
- Kafka, Franz. *Amerika*
- Lee, Don. *Yellow*
- Mayakovsky, Valdimir. *My Discovery of America*
- Mukherjee, Bharati. *The Tiger's Daughter or The Holder of the World*
- Ozeki, Ruth. *My Year of Meats*
- Perse, St.-John. *Wind*
- Seth, Vikram. *The Golden Gate: A Novel in Verse*
- Soldati, Mario. *America, My First Love*
- Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*