CAST 100: Introduction to Comparative American Studies  
Fall 2016  
MWF 9:00-9:50 // King 123

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

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“Black Lives Matter Protest, Baton Rouge”  
11 July 2016  
Jonathan Bachman/Reuters

“Native American protesters halt work on the Dakota Access Pipeline in North Dakota”  
16 August 2016/Associated Press

“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.” J. Baldwin 1965

In the summer of 2016, Black Lives Matter protests against police violence occurred in Baton Rouge, Dallas, Milwaukee and elsewhere across the nation. Meanwhile, news media have also been also reporting on protests by Native Americans against the construction of a pipeline in North Dakota. Why these protests? And why now? In other words, 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, both for those living within its borders and beyond?

This course introduces students to major questions, concerns, and approaches in the interdisciplinary field of Comparative American Studies, while also developing informed perspectives on some of the pressing national issues of the day. We will study U.S. political, cultural and social practices and formations, paying particular attention to voices and groups that have been historically marginalized and disenfranchised. Rather than providing a comprehensive survey of US history, course materials will explore case studies through which to gain an introduction to key theoretical and methodological approaches used in American Studies. In class meetings, lectures will contextualize topics while discussions will encourage students to work through and debate ideas together. Assignments are designed to create opportunities for critical thinking and analysis.
Course objectives:
• to provide an introduction to the field of Comparative American Studies;
• to introduce comparative approaches to the study of the histories and identities of American peoples;
• to situate the U.S. in a global perspective through analytical frameworks such as nationalism, colonialism, imperialism, militarization, and globalization;
• to understand and utilize key terms in the field of American studies;
• to explore the diversity of experiences across various social and identity groups;
• to develop visual, reading, writing and communications skills.

REQUIRED TEXTS
Books are available at the Oberlin College Bookstore and on reserve at Mudd Library:


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 POLICIES
I respect and uphold college guidelines that prohibit discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation, race, gender, or religious affiliation. I respect the decision of students to observe religious holidays, but please send me an email notifying me of your absence.

Educational Access:
I am committed to designing a course in which all students can learn, and I am working to create inclusive learning environments. Please let me know if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in dis/ability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact The Office of Disability Services in Peters G-27/G-28.

Classroom Etiquette
Please arrive a few minutes early so that we may start class on time. Turn off all cell phones. No texting. Electronic devices are not allowed in class unless you have prior approval from me.

Absences and Late Policy
Tardiness: 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.
Attendance: Students will be allowed three unexcused absences over the course of the semester without affecting the final grade for the course. The fourth absence will result in a loss of two points from the participation grade. Students missing five or more classes can receive no higher than a B+ for the course. Students who miss six or more classes may not receive credit for the course. Under special circumstances (prolonged illness, death in the family, etc), exceptions can be arranged through consultation with the instructor and the Dean of Students’ office.
**StudentAthletes:** If you are a student athlete whose athletic schedule will cause you to miss class at any point in the semester, please inform me immediately.

**LatePapersand ExtensionRequests**

*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.

Extensions must be requested at least 48 hours prior to the assignment due date and are available only for extraordinary circumstances. If you receive an extension, you must include a copy of my written approval 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**

Extensions on final exams and papers require an approved incomplete from the Dean of Studies. 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. For exams, you must do all work independently. 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. Lack of familiarity is not an excuse. If you have questions please consult me, a reference librarian or a writing tutor.


All work must include the statement: “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.”

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**LearningCommunity**

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 debate. I welcome the diversity of opinions that people in the class hold and ask that we recognize that everyone begins the course with a different skill set and knowledge base. Our objective is decidedly not consensus. Instead, we need to hear from a range of perspectives and learn communally from each other in order to develop our own positions with greater insight.

**Content Alert:** please be aware that some issues discussed in this course may provoke difficult reactions for some. I cannot always anticipate those reactions, 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.

**I - ATTENDANCE AND 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 see me to discuss strategies for your participation.

**ONLINE LEARNING GROUPS (5%)**

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 a discussion question. You are required to post an analytical response to the questions to your online group forum by 9:00 p.m. on Thursday evening. You should read all of the responses posted to your learning group before coming to class on Friday. Postings will be checked each week and will be graded on a scale of 0-2. We will sometimes begin class on Friday with short learning group discussions.

**II - WRITTEN WORK:** Detailed information will be provided in handouts posted on BB

*** Visual Analysis Essay (15%), due to BB on September 23 by 9am.  
Write a 3-page paper that analyzes one image currently on display at the Allen Art Museum, considering how the image conveys specific meanings about identity and nation.

*** Take-Home Midterm (25%), Friday, October 14, no later than 10am.  
This 5-page take-home exam will work with key terms and concepts explored in class discussions and readings.

*** Team Presentation (15% total).  
Each student will be assigned to a 5-person team that will be given a 20-minute class presentation on a social justice movement (see schedule of classes for specific dates).

*** Final Take-Home Essay (30%), due to BB no later than Dec. 14 at 4pm.  
For this 6-8pg. assignment, you will write two short essays based on prompts provided in advance.

*** Extra Credit Assignment

Attend a CAST-sponsored event (or event approved by me) and write a 1-2 page reflection (only one essay allowed).

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

**REQUIREMENTS**

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ASSIGNMENT FORMAT

Written assignments should be 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 BB. 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.

CLASS SCHEDULE

WHAT IS AMERICAN STUDIES?

M Aug. 29  Course Overview

W Aug. 31  Initial Forays into American Studies
             Reading: Weinbaum, “Nation” (BB); Olson and Kelderman, “Ad Hoc American Studies” (BB)

M Sept. 2  Recent directions in American Studies
             Reading: Jacobson, “Where We Stand” (BB)

M Sept. 5  Labor Day – no class

AMERICAN EMPIRE: Settler Colonialism and State Formation

W Sept 7  Settler Colonialism
             Reading: Hixson, American Settler Colonialism (BB); Wilder, “Moving In” and “Indians in the House” (BB); Kauanui, “Indigenous” (BB)

F Sept 9  Republic virtue and race in the new nation
             Reading: O’Brien, Firsting and Lasting, xi-xxvi, and 1-54; and Streeby “Empire” (BB);

M Sept 12  Settler Colonialism and the Politics of Forgetting
             Reading: O’Brien, Firsting and Lasting, 55-144; and King, “Borders” (BB)

Sept. 13:  Extra Credit Option: Convocation Speaker: Michelle Norris, Race Card Project
             “Eavesdropping on America’s Conversation on Race”
             7:30pm, Finney

W Sept 14  Class Visit to Allen Art Museum – meet in the back courtyard
             No more than 20 students per visit – free day for other students
F Sept 16  Class Visit to Allen Art Museum – meet in the back courtyard  
No more than 20 students per visit – free day for other students

M Sept 19  Resisting Settler Colonialism  
Reading: O’Brien, Firsting and Lasting, 145-207; and Lipsitz, “Space” (BB)

W Sept 21  Militourism and Imperial Spectacles  
Reading, Gonzalez, Securing Paradise, 49-81 (BB)

F Sept 23  Militourism and Imperial Spectacles  
**Visual Analysis due to BB by 9am**

M Sept 26  Settler Colonialism Today - an Empire of Liberty?  
Reading: Trask, “The Color of Violence,” (BB); and Mikdashi, "What is Settler Colonialism?"  

W Sept 28  Reversing the Colonial Gaze  
Reading: Clare, Exile and Pride (BB)

F Sept 30  Conducting Interdisciplinary Research in American Studies  
Guest Speaker, Eboni Johnson, Reference & Instruction Librarian

**CITIZENSHIP AND THE CARCERAL STATE**

M Oct 3  The Violence of Citizenship  

W Oct 5  Criminality, Racialization and the U.S. Political Economy  
Guest Lecture, Renee Romano, Professor of History, CAS, and Africana Studies  
Reading: Alexander, The New Jim Crow (BB); Romano, Racial Reckoning (BB)

Oct. 6:  **Extra Credit Option: Campus Speaker: Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Sociologist, Duke University, Racial grammar and the Challenges of Diversity on College Campuses**  
*Location and time tba*

F Oct 7  From Reform to Reparative Justice  
Instead of class, WATCH: “Concrete, Steel & Paint: A Film about Crime, Restoration and Healing,” by Cindy Burstein and Tony Heriza, 2009, Kanopy Streaming (find through Obis)

M Oct 10  From Reform to Reparative Justice  
Reading: Meiners, “Ending the School-to-Prison Pipeline/Building Abolitionist Futures,” 547-565, (BB)  
Review for Midterm
W Oct 12  No Class – Yom Kippur

F Oct 14  Take-home Midterm Due NO LATER THAN 10am

M Oct 17 – F Oct 21  **** NO CLASSES FALL BREAK *****

IV. AMERICAN IDENTITIES

M Oct 24  Personal/Political Visibilities
Reading: Kaplan, “Identity” (BB); Shaun Tan, *The Arrival* (all)

W Oct 26  Immigration and Racial Scripts
Reading: Molina, *How Race is Made in America* (BB)

F Oct 28  Asian American Immigration and the Politics of Resettlement
Guest Speaker: Shelley Lee, Associate Professor of CAS and History
Reading: Tang, *Unsettled*, 1-76

M Oct 31  Immigrant Spaces and Urban Struggles
Reading: Tang, *Unsettled*, 77-113
**Presentation 1**

W Nov 2  Immigrant Spaces and Urban Struggles
Reading: Tang, *Unsettled*, 114-181

Nov. 3  Extra Credit Option: Fred Wilson discusses his exhibition
      5:30 Allen Art Museum

ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLENCE: NO “NATURAL” DISASTERS

F Nov 4  Neoliberalism and the debt regime
Reading: Duggan, “Neoliberalism” (BB); Heintz and Balakrishnan, “Debt, Power and Crisis” (BB)
**Presentation 2**

M Nov 7  Biopolitics and Environmental Disasters
Reading: Giroux, “Reading Hurricane Katrina,” 171 – 196 (BB)

W Nov 9  Biopolitics and Environmental Disasters
Reading: Lipsitz, “Learning from New Orleans” (BB)
**Presentation 3**

F Nov 11 Living in a Disaster Zone
Reading: Ward, *Salvage the Bones*, first half
**Presentation 4**

M Nov 14 Living in a Disaster Zone
Reading: Ward, *Salvage the Bones*, second half

**W Nov 16**
Labor, Globalization, and Environmental Hazards  
Reading: Pellow, *Resisting Global Toxics* (BB)  
**Presentation 5**

**F Nov 18**
No Class

**M Nov 21**
Defining Environmental Justice  
**Presentation 6**

**W Nov 23**
Alternative Strategies for Environmental Justice  
Reading: Houston, “Environmental Justice Storytelling” (BB)

**F Nov 25**
No Class – Thanksgiving Break

**ACTIVISM, CITIZENSHIP AND AMERICAN STUDIES**

**M Nov 28**
Activism and Citizenship: Troubling Categories  

**W Nov 30**
Making Change Work  
Reading: Cohen, Cathy, “Death and Rebirth of Movement” (BB)  
**Presentation 7**

**F Dec 2**
Making Change Work  
Guest lecture by Evangeline Heiliger, Visiting Asst. Prof. of CAS  
Reading: Heiliger, “Queer Economies,” (BB)

**M Dec 5**
Transnational Activism and Rights Discourse  
Reading: Das Gupta, “Rights in a Transnational Era,” 402-423 (BB)

**W Dec 7**
Social Justice and the Legacies of Civil Rights Activism  
**Presentation 8**

**F Dec 9**
Envisioning the Future

**W Dec 14**
Final Essay due to BB by 4pm

***REMINDER: No late essays will be accepted without an Incomplete from the Dean of Studies***
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ARTICLES


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