

**AMST 303—JUNIOR AMERICAN STUDIES SEMINAR
(INTRODUCTION TO HEMISPHERIC AMERICAN STUDIES)**

Fall 2011

Section 1

Tues/Thurs: 2:00-3:15, Combs 324

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Office Hours (Combs Hall 324)
Tues/Thurs: 12:30-2:00 pm; 5:00-6:00 pm

SEMINAR DESCRIPTION

This Junior American Studies Seminar expands from a U.S. national framework to a transnational domain by focusing on the Western Hemisphere within a comparative context. We explore the full meaning of American history and culture across North America, South America, Central America, and the Caribbean. Our remapping of traditional understandings of America begins in the field of history through an analysis of a key historiographic dialogue during the “Good Neighbor” era. We then turn to the inter-American development of modern art in New York City. An emphasis on the early talking horror cinema of Hollywood and Mexico highlights another example of cultural border-crossing. We end with a sustained study of a literary masterpiece that highlights a distinctive New World consciousness.

SEMINAR GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- * To explore a theme across disciplines related to the U.S.
- * To think critically about the limits of disciplinary knowledge.
- * To deepen student understanding of technology and multimedia.
- * To further develop students’ speaking, writing, and analytical skills.

REQUIRED TEXTS ** (Available at the University Bookstore) ******

Adams, James Truslow. *The Epic of America* (Simon)
Browning, Tod et al. *Dracula* (The Legacy Collection DVD)
Cullen, Deborah, ed. *Nexus New York: Latin/American Artists in the Modern Metropolis* (Yale UP)
Freund, Karl et al. *The Mummy* (The Legacy Collection DVD)
Portillo, Rafael et al. *The Aztec Mummy Collection* (Bci/Eclipse DVD)
Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Almanac of the Dead* (Penguin)

SEMINAR REQUIREMENTS

This seminar has a constant and sometimes demanding work load. Active participation during daily class discussion is essential to doing well. At a minimum, I expect you to 1) have excellent attendance, 2) to arrive and leave on time, 3) to have done assigned readings/viewings carefully before class, 4) to turn in your work on time, 5) to bring the necessary materials and texts to class, 6) to listen respectfully to me and to your classmates, and 6) to contribute to class discussion and activities on a regular basis. It is your own responsibility to find out what you miss when you are not in class. ***I suggest that you exchange email information with at least one other classmate in order to ensure that you are always prepared.*** Note that you will receive an *unsatisfactory* mark on your mid-semester report if you fail to comply with these requirements and/or have a working course grade lower than a C.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

I want students to learn and to receive the good grades they deserve, so please make an appointment with me should you have undue difficulty with your work in the seminar. Written assignments include: 1) a 3-page midterm consisting of essays centered on class topics and 2) a 10-page essay on an American literary masterpiece (developed in consultation with the instructor) that constructs a thesis, engages secondary sources, and provides close readings. Oral assignments include a 20-minute class presentation meant to contextualize our reading of literature. The following is the course grade distribution:

Pop Quizzes: 10%

Attendance and Participation: 20%

Midterm: 20%

Presentation: 20%

Final Essay: 30%

GRADING CRITERIA

Students often complain that they do not understand “what professors want” when it comes time to complete required assignments. I have designed the following criteria guidelines to help you grasp how I conduct a large part of the grading. I divide formal written assignments in the following ways:

Papers: Content and Analysis (70%)

An average paper (C) demonstrates a superficial understanding of the topic; it is usually based almost exclusively on class notes. It generally relies too much on summary rather than explicit analysis of textual points, and uses quotations ineffectively.

A better paper (B) incorporates readings that have been assigned in other contexts, including in-class assignments, analyzes literary and film devices as they are employed in a text, and uses specific quotations from texts in order to illustrate the grounding of its analysis.

A superior paper (A) demonstrates all the qualities of a “B” paper, and includes a more sophisticated understanding of the chosen topic. That is, an “A” paper uses the tools of textual analysis, apt use of quotation, concise and explicit remarks justifying that analysis, while drawing on all the available resources of the course.

Papers: Form, Style, Mechanics and Usage (30%)

An average paper (C) demonstrates a reasonable control of basic English syntax, verb and subject (including pronoun) agreement, tense consistency, proofreading, paragraph organization, etc.

A better paper (B) demonstrates an ability to vary sentence structure, has few if any proofreading errors, employs careful transitions and organization in a more sophisticated way, and controls grammar.

A superior paper (A) demonstrates all the qualities of a “B” paper, and in addition demonstrates an ability to control complex sentence structure, vary verbs effectively, and contains no proofreading errors.

Presentations

You will be graded on the outside research as evidenced in your bibliography, the effort exhibited by your performance, and the effectiveness with which you answer questions from me and from your peers.

Quizzes

I will grade these: √+ (excellent), √ (satisfactory), √- (has weaknesses), or 0 (insufficient/not completed). At the end of the term, I will total these for a numerical grade worth 15% of your final grade.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The Office of Disability Services has been designated by the University as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you already receive services through the Office of Disabilities Services and require accommodations for this class, make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodation needs. Please bring your accommodation letter with you to the appointment. I will hold any information you share with me in the strictest confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise. If you have not contacted the Office of Disability Services and need accommodations, (note taking assistance, extended time for tests, etc.), I will be happy to refer you. The office will require appropriate documentation of disability. Their phone number is 540-654-1266.

AMST303: Junior American Studies Seminar
(Introduction to Hemispheric American Studies)
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Section 1

Week #1

8/30 Tues
9/1 Thurs

NEW WORLD HISTORIOGRAPHY

Introduction: The nomenclature of America
James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America* (preface-chapter V)

Week #2

9/6 Tues
9/8 Thurs

James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America* (chapter VI-X)
James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America* (chapter XI-epilogue)

Week #3

9/13 Tues
9/15 Thurs

Herbert E. Bolton, "The Epic of Greater America" (section I-III)
Herbert E. Bolton, "The Epic of Greater America" (section IV-VIII)

Week #4

9/20 Tues
9/22 Thurs

HEMISPHERIC MOVIE MONSTERS

Tod Browning, *Dracula* (1931)
George Melford, *Drácula* (1931)

Week #5

9/27 Tues
9/29 Thurs

Karl Freund, *The Mummy* (1932)
Rafael Portillo, *Attack of the Aztec Mummy* (1957)

Week #6

10/4 Tues
10/6 Thurs

ART AND THE INTERAMERICAN CITY

Deborah Cullen, *Nexus New York: Latin/American Artists in the Modern Metropolis* (pg. 10-63)
Live Webcast: "Encuentros: Artistic Exchange between the U.S. and Latin America" (Smithsonian American Art Museum)

Week #7

10/11 Tues
10/13 Thurs

Deborah Cullen, *Nexus New York: Latin/American Artists in the Modern Metropolis* (pg. 64-125)
Deborah Cullen, *Nexus New York: Latin/American Artists in the Modern Metropolis* (pg. 126-195)

Week #8

10/18 Tues
10/20 Thurs

Fall Break
Midterm Due

Week #9

10/25 Tues
10/27 Thurs

THE GREAT PAN-AMERICAN NOVEL

Edward Mendelson, "Encyclopedic Narrative: From Dante to Pynchon"
Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) [front cover-pg. 72]

Week #10

11/1 Tues
11/3 Thurs

Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) [pg. 73-160]
Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) [pg. 160-223]

Week #11

11/8 Tues
11/10 Thurs

Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) [pg. 224-309]
Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) [pg. 309-373]
*Student Presentation: *Ceremony* (1977)

Week #12

11/15 Tues
11/17 Thurs

Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) [pg. 373-463]
Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) [pg. 467-535]
*Student Presentation: *Storyteller* (1981)

Week #13

11/22 Tues

11/24 Thurs

Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) [pg. 535-627]
*Student Presentation: *The Delicacy and Strength of Lace* (1985)
Thanksgiving Break

Week #14

11/29 Tues

Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) [pg. 628-705]
*Rare Books: Native Americans in Blaeu's atlas *Le theatre du monde*
Meet at UMW Libraries' Special Collections, Simpson Library 217

12/1 Thurs

Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) [pg. 708-763]
*Student Presentation: *The Turquoise Ledge* (2010)

Week #15

12/6 Tues
12/8 Thurs

Individual Conferencing with Instructor
Individual Conferencing with Instructor

Week #16

10-Page Final Essay Due