

American Studies 263

#ungrading guide

We want you to determine your own grade for this course, according to the standards set out below. If you decide to continue in this course, we will take your presence as an agreement to make a sincere effort to engage in this process with your teaching assistant and with the course instructors. There will be many short assignments over the term—reading, viewing, and listening assignments, and so on: we will try to offer at least 22 or so, and you will be required to do a minimum of 14. Of those 20, a handful will have to do with guests coming to visit with us and you must do a clear majority of these.

There will also be four more substantial “unit” assignments. You have to do all of these, and you have to redo them if we determine that your work does not meet basic standards of college work: we will spell out what is required for each assignment as we move along through the course. You have to attend class consistently and be a good citizen in our shared space—try to participate in class and be in touch with your instructors regularly. Twice during the term we will ask you to review the work you have done up until that point and submit a self-assessment. If you fail to participate in the self-assessment protocol we are laying out in this document, then we will just grade you in the more conventional way.

You will be assigned to a teaching assistant—either Emily or Derek—both of whom have lots of classroom experience. All written work will be submitted to them through Blackboard and should be on time and all your own work. We will put regular due dates on the syllabus and you should strive to meet them. If you need extra time you should *always* discuss this with your TA or with Akrobatik or Jeff. We will never require doctor’s notes or any other “evidence” that you need more time. Nor do you have to reveal anything private. We trust you. But PLEASE note that there is a cut-off date for each batch of assignments: in other words, once these deadlines pass you will not be able to hand in the homework from previous weeks.

We also need to keep in mind that our teaching assistants can only be expected (by contract) to work a certain number of hours per week. So while we will try to remain supportive and understanding, we will post clear “last chance” dates on the syllabus for submission of homework and larger assignments.

This class requires you to take some control of your own education. (Maybe it is more accurate to say that we think this class “allows” you to steer your own learning.) This means you have to schedule your work, do readings, listening, and viewing in a timely way, even as we strive to be flexible with due dates. We won’t try to catch you if we think you are *not* doing the work, because it will be obvious from what you hand in or don’t hand in. You simply cannot do the work of this class successfully if you don’t commit to doing the assigned work outside of class.

Remember that Akrobatik and Jeff are *always* available for any kind of discussion you need to have.

Here is our sense of the basic breakdown. We'll talk about all of this in class and will revise anything that seems unfair, incomplete, or vague.

There is a set of “bare minimum” requirements, regardless of what letter grade you are aiming for, that you must complete in order to pass the class:

- Attend class regularly and be a good citizen (be attentive, participate, etc.)
- Complete all four of the unit assignments. The work you submit must be on time, must be your own work, and must respond to the assignment prompts in a clear way.
- Complete a majority of the visitor-related assignments and at least 14 of the study guide assignments
- Offer plenty of evidence in your work that you have done a majority of the reading, listening, and viewing required.
- Submit work that is well-organized, clear, and professionally presented
- Do both of the self-assessment reviews.

To earn a grade in the B range you must

- Complete at least 16 of the small assignments related to readings, listening, and viewing we will do
- Redo any work that your instructors consider to be incomplete or falling below the minimum standards for the course
- Complete all four unit assignments with evidence that you have taken the work seriously, thought about how to best complete it, and submit it in a timely way
- Establish yourself as a real presence in class
- Show evidence of independent thought in your own larger projects
- Offer plenty of evidence in your work that you have done a substantial proportion of the reading, listening, and viewing required and thought about it and written about it in a personal, individualized way.
- Submit work that is well-organized, clear, and professionally presented
- Do both of the self-assessment reviews.

To earn a grade in the A range you must do

- 20 of the small assignments related to readings, listening, and viewing we will do
- Redo any work that your instructors consider to be incomplete or falling below the minimum standards for the course
- Complete all four unit assignments with evidence that you have taken the work seriously, thought about how to best complete it, and submit it on or around the original due date
- Establish yourself as a real, thoughtful presence in class
- Show evidence of independent thought in your own larger projects and in your smaller homework assignments

- Offer plenty of evidence in your work that you have done most of the reading, listening, and viewing required and synthesized in meaningful, reflective ways. Submit work that is well-organized, clear, and professionally presented
- Do both of the self-assessment reviews.