

AMST_OX 201: Introduction to American Studies*
Our Americas

Location: Johnson Hall 202

Instructor: Lilika Ioki Kukiela (she/they)

Contact: lilika.ioki.kukiela@emory.edu

Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30-3:45PM

Office hours: Humanities Hall 105, Tuesdays,
1-2PM

Enrollment requirements: ENG 185 or ENG 186 or equivalent transfer/test credit as a prerequisite.

*This course has a Race & Ethnicity designation.

Course description

This course introduces students to the interdisciplinary field of American Studies and aims to problematize and assemble a notion of *our* Americas. We begin by interrogating the question: *where* is America? By turning to a hemispheric understanding of the Americas to include Canada, the United States, its unincorporated territories, Mexico, and Latin America, we will further explore what happens when we decenter the United States from our understanding of American history, culture, and identity. We will then turn to the question: *what* is America? In this unit, students will broaden their thinking about the Americas through a transnational perspective. Lastly, our class will home in on the question: *who* is America? We will explore this question through contemporary texts of critical ethnic studies and its subfields: Black studies, Latinx studies, and Asian American studies. By working through these questions and engaging with novels, poetry, nonfiction, theory, film, and more, students will not only be introduced to the central concerns of American studies, but we will aim to build a collective sense of *our* Americas.

Learning goals

1. Students will analyze primary and secondary texts using interdisciplinary methods.
2. Students will be encouraged to analyze the world around them through the politics and methods of American studies.
3. Students will incorporate personal reflections in their writing and presentations.
4. Students will learn collaboratively through in-class group activities and discussions.

Required course texts available at the Oxford College Bookstore:

Craig Santos Perez's *Call This Mutiny: [uncollected Poems]*

Tommy Orange's *There There*

Henry James's *Daisy Miller, A Study*

Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric*

Karla Cornejo Villavicencio's *The Undocumented Americans*

Cathy Park Hong's *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*

Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*

All other readings will be available on Canvas

Assessments:

All assessments will be submitted to Canvas as either a word doc or pdf. Citation and formatting styles must follow MLA guidelines.

- A. Participation (15%)

Students must attend *all* classes and participate through active listening, discussion, and in-class activities throughout the semester. Students will be given a one-time no-questions-asked absence.

B. Educational Reflection (5%)

Deadline: Friday, September 12, 11:59PM

In 500 words, write a critical reflection on how your education and personal experiences have so far reflected and shaped how you see the world and how you see yourself.

C. Show and Tell Presentation (20%)

A sign-up sheet will be circulated in the second week of classes

Students will present for 10 minutes on an object (either digital or physical) that comes to represent America from a global, transnational, or otherwise multitudinous perspective. Students will have to describe their object, their attachments to it, and how it comes to represent a kaleidoscopic understanding of American culture by engaging with at least one text on the syllabus from the day of their presentation. In other words, students are presenting on their object and on the assigned material from that day. These presentations must conclude with a discussion question where the student will facilitate discussion for another ~5 minutes and then submit a short write-up (500-750 words) glossing their object with citations and examples from the texts that they mentioned during their Show and Tell by the end of the day. These objects can be *anything*: from songs, to food, to a film or TV show, toys, trinkets, memes, and more!

D. Three Response Projects (60% total; 20% each)

Deadline for Response Project One: Friday, September 26, 11:59PM

Deadline for Response Project Two: Friday, October 31, 11:59PM

Deadline for Response Project Three: Friday, December 12, 11:59PM

At the end of each unit, students will work on a response project, either an essay, 1000-1250 words, or a creative work, that simply answer the questions of the units: Where is America? (Response Project 1), What is America? (Response Project 2) and Who is America? (Response Project 3). To answer these questions, students must engage with at least two texts from the unit, as well as engage with a personal reflection on the where, the what, and the who. Students who choose to do a creative project must include a short write-up (~250 words) on how their creative project comes to answer (via thesis statement) the where/what/who. The goals of these projects are to reflect on each unit, home in on close reading and critical analysis, engage with scholarly work, and deeply consider the intersections across these units.

Responsibilities and Care Contract:

This is a dense course, and we are dealing with material created out of difficult histories as it relates to racial, colonial, and gendered violences in the Americas. Students will have the responsibility to come prepared to each class—bringing assigned texts of the week to class and being ready to discuss the texts and listen actively and attentively to each other. Students are also responsible to make space and take space; be aware of how much space you are taking up in the classroom. Be brave and take space in disagreeing, questioning, and building on what is said or not said in the class.

Relatedly, care is an important feature of this course: self-care, care for each other in the class, and care in our engagement with the texts and its histories. Your wellbeing is important to your success in the class. If there is any way I can further nurture care and your wellbeing in this course, I am

here to help. If you start to feel behind in readings, work, or are generally struggling, please contact me as soon as you can to come up with a plan on how to get you back on track.

Further Notes:

- **Emails:** Many questions are better answered in person, rather than over email. In these cases, I will write back asking you to set up a meeting with me. I will not respond to requests for information that can be found on the syllabus. Please give me 24 hours to respond to emails. I do not respond to emails on the weekend.
- **Grading Policies:** I am more than happy to discuss any grade you have received but ask that you wait 48 hours after receiving your assignment back before approaching me.
- **Late Submissions:** There will be no late penalties. All assessments will be due on a Friday. There will be a buffer zone for submitting assignments by the following Monday no questions asked. If you need more time beyond the Monday, you must get in touch with me at least 1 week in advance of the due date.
- **Technology in class:** The use of phones in class is not allowed. Laptops and tablets may be used to access readings and for notetaking but must be put on airplane mode. At no time is it appropriate to browse the web in class unless at my direct request. I encourage you to go old school and use pen and paper!
- **Use of AI:** The use of generative artificial intelligence tools and apps is strictly prohibited in all course assignments. This includes ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Microsoft Copilot and other AI writing and coding assistants. Use of generative AI in this course may be considered use of an unauthorized aid, which is a form of cheating.

Grading Scales:

Grade Meanings	Letter Grade	Percentage
Excellent	A	94-100
	A-	90-93
Good	B+	87-89
	B	83-86
	B-	80-82
Adequate	C+	77-79
	C	73-76
	C-	70-72
Marginal	D+	67-69
	D	60-66
Inadequate	F	Below 60

Grading Appeals:

To appeal a grade, please wait 48 hours after the items are first returned to the class, in person or electronically. Within the timeframe noted below, please submit via email the reasons explaining why you believe your grade is incorrect along with the original work in dispute so that the request may be reviewed carefully. Upon review, your grade may remain the same, may increase, *or* may decrease.

Appeals submitted within the following time frame will be considered: no sooner than 48 hours after the items are returned to the class, and no later than one week after the items are returned. After the

timeframe elapses, all grades are final and will not be adjusted. If you do not pick up or review graded work before the timeframe elapses, your eligibility to contest the grade expires.

Writing Resources:

As your instructor, I aim to guide you through the brainstorming, writing, and editing process. Oxford College provides further writing resources for anyone who would like additional support through the Oxford Writing & Communication Center (OWCC). The OWCC mission is to help students grow as flexible communicators and thinkers. The OWCC supports students working on all forms of communication – whether for academic, professional, public, or personal purposes – through individual consultations, college-wide workshops, and an on-site library of resources. The OWCC's peer consultants are trained to support writing, presentations, or multimodal assignments for any class; they are available at any point in the process, from brainstorming to argument development to polishing. The OWCC is located in Pierce Hall 117, and appointments are recommended but not required. For more information, please visit the website at <https://inside.oxford.emory.edu/academics/writing-center/index.html>. Please consider visiting the Writing and Communication Center!

Accommodations:

If you have an accommodation letter, please send it to me as soon as possible so we can come up with an accommodation plan for this course. Accommodations cannot be implemented retroactively. If you are a student currently registered with the Department of Accessibility Services (DAS) and have not requested or received a copy of your accommodation notification letter, please notify DAS immediately at accessibility@emory.edu. If you have a documented disability and have anticipated barriers related to format or requirements of this course, or presume having a disability (e.g. mental health, attention, learning, vision, hearing, physical or systemic), and are in need of accommodations for this semester, we encourage you to contact DAS to learn more about the registration process and steps for requesting accommodations at accessibility@emory.edu. For additional information regarding DAS, please visit the website: <https://accessibility.emory.edu/students/index.html>

Academic Integrity and Honor Code:

Academic integrity is important to not only the fairness of grades (the relationship between course instructor and student) and learning (the respect you give yourself), but also a serious misconduct with major consequences. Simply put: do not submit any work that is not authored by you unless there are clear citations given to the author you reference from. Citations in essays are important and necessary, but make sure they follow MLA citation practices.

To reiterate: the use of generative artificial intelligence tools and apps is **strictly prohibited** in all course assignments. This includes ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Microsoft Copilot and other AI writing and coding assistants. Use of generative AI in this course may be considered use of an unauthorized aid, which is a form of cheating.

The Honor Code applies to all assignments, in and out of the classroom. All work in this course must be entirely your own and entirely original to the requirements of this course in this semester. For more info, visit: <https://oxford.emory.edu/catalog/regulations/honor-code.html>.

This course may employ plagiarism-detection software, including Turnitin, for any required assignments. Turnitin compares submitted work to sources available on the internet, archived databases of essays, journals, books, and other publications, and its database of assignments submitted in the past at Emory and other universities. Work that generates concerns about originality or citation methods will be reviewed and submitted to the Honor Council as appropriate. This software does not substitute for the judgment of the instructor and other authorities in the detection of plagiarism, and other methods may be employed in this course to determine that all work abides by the standards set forth in the Honor Code.

Religious Holidays Arrangements:

Students seeking academic accommodations for religious observance should submit their requests to me by email as early as possible in advance. If you have questions or concerns about your request, you may contact the university's Office of Spiritual and Religious Life (OSRL), the Ombuds Office, or the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC). Academic accommodations for religious observance do not relieve students of responsibility for the completion of any part of the coursework they may miss as the result of a religious observance.

Title IX Reporting:

Title IX Reporting: Every Emory employee who is informed about an allegation of sexual misconduct involving any student is required to notify a Title IX Coordinator either directly or through their relevant reporting structure. However, employees who serve in a professional role in which communications are afforded confidential status under the law (e.g., medical providers, therapists, and professional and pastoral counselors) are not bound by this requirement but may, consistent with their ethical and legal obligations, be required to report limited information about incidents without revealing the identities of the individuals involved, to a Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. All members of the Emory community are encouraged to promptly report incidents of sexual harassment and discrimination. For more information, visit: <http://sexualmisconductresources.emory.edu/policies/index.html>.

Reading Schedule

UNIT 1: WHERE IS AMERICA? A HEMISPHERIC APPROACH

Week One: Introductions

8/29 Introductions and syllabus review

*Get your course books!

Week Two: Our Americas?

9/2 José Martí's essay "Our America" (on Canvas)

9/4 Austin Clarke's short story "Canadian Experience" (on Canvas)

Week Three: Through Pacific Islander Studies

9/9 Craig Santos Perez's poetry collection *Call This Mutiny: [uncollected Poems]*

9/11 Perez cont'd

9/12 Educational Reflection Due

Week Four: Through Settler Colonial Studies

9/16 Sylvia Wynter's essay "1492 A New World view" (on Canvas)

9/18 Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña's short film, *The Couple in a Cage: Two Amerindians Visit the West* (on Canvas)

Week Five: Through Indigenous Studies

9/23 Tommy Orange's novel, *There There*

9/25 Orange cont'd

9/26 **Response Project 1 Due**

UNIT 2: WHAT IS AMERICA? A TRANSNATIONAL APPROACH

Week Six: America in the World

9/30 Henry James's novella *Daisy Miller, A Study*

10/2 James Baldwin's essay "Equal in Paris" (on Canvas)

Week Seven: The World in America

10/7 Amy Kaplan's essay "'Left Alone with America': The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture" (on Canvas)

10/9 Andrew McKevitt's essay "Anime and the Globalizing of America" (on Canvas)

NO CLASS OCTOBER 14 and OCTOBER 16!

Week Eight: Between America and Elsewhere

10/21 *Crazy Rich Asians*, dir. John M. Chu (on Canvas; I'll organize a film screening TBA)

10/23 *Crazy Rich Asians* cont'd

Week Nine: Nowhere America

10/28 Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street"

10/30 Angela Davis's "Introduction-Prison Reform or Prison Abolition?" and "The Prison Industrial Complex"

10/31 **Response Project 2 Due**

UNIT 3: WHO IS AMERICA? A MULTIETHNIC APPROACH

Week Ten: Through Black Studies

11/4 Claudia Rankine's poetry book, *Citizen: An American Lyric*

11/6 Rankine cont'd

Week Eleven: Through Latinx Studies

11/11 Karla Cornejo Villavicencio's book, *The Undocumented Americans*

11/13 Villavicencio cont'd

Week Twelve: Through Asian American Studies

11/18 (**NO CLASS THURSDAY**) Cathy Park Hong's *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*

Week Thirteen: Through Asian American Studies, cont'd

11/25 (**NO CLASS THURSDAY**) *Minor Feelings*, cont'd

Week Fourteen: Through Interracial Connections

12/2 [*Aoki*](#), dir. Ben Wang and Mike Cheng (I'll organize a film screening TBD)

12/4 *Aoki* cont'd

Week Fifteen: Our Americas

12/9 Tony Kushner's play, *Angels in America*

12/12 **Response Project 3 Due**