Culture and Identity in Modern America: The Twentieth Century  
History 3451 (also American Studies 3451), Fall 2016
MW, 10:10-11:00, in McGraw 165, plus discussion section Fri. at 10:10, in McGraw 365.

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Office Hours: McGraw 350, Mon. 2-4pm and by appointment.

This course examines the development of cultural and intellectual identities in the United States, in the context of a rapidly unfolding modernity. Though the overall focus is on the 20th century, we’ll begin with the aftermath of the Civil War and dwell for a fairly long time on the turn of the century, when the United States went through what I think of as its greatest transformations. Key topics and themes include: selfhood (most importantly); individualism; race, ethnicity, and civil rights; gender, sexuality, and feminism; equality and inequality; philosophy and ethics; industrialism, capitalism, and class; the culture of war; and the arts (especially visual).

We’ll focus on both ideas and individuals, using mostly primary documents but contextualizing and cross-examining them as we go. Perhaps the overarching theme is the contestation of culture: we’ll explore the ways in which individuals both shape and are shaped by their society—the ways in which they both reinforce and resist its pressures.

What could we possibly mean by an American identity? What did modernization look and feel like to Americans? What cultural legacies of modernization are still shaping our lives? Is there a specifically American way of thinking, and, in particular, of conceptualizing selfhood?

Requirements: All readings listed on the syllabus; Active participation in section discussions; Attendance at all lectures; All papers listed on the syllabus. Please contact me immediately (in advance, whenever possible) about any section you have to miss. You can make up the work from a missed section by turning in a two-page response paper to the appropriate readings within one week of your absence. These should be analytical essays and NOT simple summaries. You cannot make up a missed lecture, but you are responsible for the material covered in it, so please ask a classmate for notes (you are also welcome to come talk to me about what you missed). Paper assignments will incorporate material from both lectures and readings.

PLEASE NOTE: I have a no-electronic-devices policy in the classroom.

Grading: This is a reading- and writing-intensive course. They key to its success is your active engagement and participation, and your grades will be assigned accordingly. Overall participation will determine 25% of your final grade. Paper #1 is worth 10% of your grade; paper #2 is worth 15%; and paper #3 is worth 20%. The final paper is worth
30%. The outline for your final paper will be ungraded, but you will receive comments on it, and it will factor into the grade for your final paper. Please understand: regardless of these percentages, it is impossible to pass this course without turning in all the required assignments. In other words, it is not acceptable to skip a paper and simply take a “zero” on it. Out of fairness to everyone in the class, you must complete all the papers (even if they’re late), or you will receive a failing grade for the semester. Also, any case of plagiarism will automatically receive a failing grade and may result in a failing grade for the entire semester.

The requirements explained further:
*Papers:* Each will have its own assignment sheet and be discussed in class. Again, in fairness to the class as a whole, I ask that you don’t request extensions except under extreme circumstances. Late papers will be marked down by half a grade for every day they’re late.

Paper #3: 5 pages. Comparison of primary sources.

*Final Paper (10 pp.)*: The topic for this paper should be generated from the class readings, but you also have the option to do some outside reading and research. Make a conscious effort to grapple with the central themes of the course. I will provide a list of suggestions, but it will ultimately be up to you to decide on an appropriate topic. Have a meeting with me to discuss your possible topics within two weeks of receiving the assignment sheet (these conferences are built into the course schedule). You’ll also be asked to turn in an outline (ungraded) on Monday, November 21st.

A few paper guidelines (to be supplemented later in the semester):
-- The most common academic problem at Cornell is plagiarism. Please make sure that you are well informed on this issue. Use citations whenever necessary; follow an established citation format; and be consistent in the format you choose. Always leave yourself plenty of time to complete assignments. And don’t rely uncritically on the internet. Wikipedia is generally not an acceptable resource for the purposes of this class. If you ever have any questions about citations, talk to me or a librarian, or visit the library’s webpage and check out the link to “citation management,” which will also give you the university’s full academic integrity policy.
--Always number your pages.
--On the first page, include your name, my name, the name and number of the course, the name and number of the assignment, the date, and the title of your paper. Use a title that actually means something.
--Always double-space your papers and leave at least one-inch margins.
--Make sure your paper is not too long or too short.
--PROOFREAD. Leave yourself plenty of time to read and revise your work. Even better, trade papers with a classmate and get his/her comments and corrections. DO NOT RELY ON A COMPUTER’S SPELLING/GRAMMAR CHECK. Your paper grades WILL be affected by stylistic problems such as spelling and grammar errors.
--I prefer two-sided printing/copying, if possible.
WEEKLY TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS:
Note: Readings are listed under the sessions when they will be discussed—but you’ll want to start them several days in advance whenever possible.

Week One.
Wednesday, August 24th. Introduction.
—Assignment for Paper #1 handed out in class.
--Order your books right away (or visit Buffalo Street Books).

SECTION, Friday, August 26th. McGraw 365.
—Paper #1 due in class. (No reading assignment.) PLEASE BRING TWO COPIES OF YOUR PAPER.
BOOK DELIVERY.

Week Two.

Wednesday, August 31st. Race and Racism.

SECTION, Friday, September 2nd.
--The Memphis Diary of Ida B. Wells (selections)

Week Three.
Monday, September 5th. NO CLASS: LABOR DAY.

Wednesday, September 7th. Gilded-Age Culture, American Modernity, and Success.
--Assignment for Paper #2 handed out in class.

SECTION.
--Michael Lesy, Wisconsin Death Trip (entire)

Week Four.
Monday, September 12th. Gilded-Age Radicals/Progressivism.

Wednesday, September 14th. DISCUSSION: PLEASE COMPLETE THIS WEEK'S READING IN TIME FOR TODAY'S CLASS.
--Douglas Sackman, Wild Men (entire).
NO SECTION THIS WEEK.

Week Five.
Monday, September 19th. Pragmatism.
PAPER #2 DUE IN CLASS.

Wednesday, September 21st. Modernism: Snapshot, 1913

SECTION.
--Wieland Schmied, Edward Hopper: Portraits of America (entire)

**Week Six.**
Monday, September 26\(^{th}\). The Great War and Its Aftermath.

Wednesday, September 28\(^{th}\). Harlem Renaissance.

**SECTION.**
--Nella Larsen, Quicksand (entire).

**Week Seven.**
Monday, October 3\(^{rd}\). DISCUSSION: THE CULTURE OF DEPRESSION. PLEASE PREPARE THE FOLLOWING READING FOR TODAY'S CLASS:
--Judith Keller, In Focus: Dorothea Lange (entire)

--Assignment for Paper #3 handed out in class.

Wednesday, October 5\(^{th}\). The Realist Ethics of the New Deal.

**SECTION.**

**Week Eight.**
Monday, October 10\(^{th}\). NO CLASS: FALL BREAK.

Wednesday, October 12\(^{th}\). NO CLASS: YOM KIPPUR.

**SECTION ALSO CANCELLED THIS WEEK.**

**Week Nine.**
Monday, October 17\(^{th}\). The Good War.  
**PAPER #3 DUE IN CLASS.**

Wednesday, October 19\(^{th}\). The Bad War.

**SECTION.**
--John Hersey, Hiroshima (entire).

**Week Ten.**
Monday, October 24\(^{th}\). The Cold War.

**Wednesday, October 26\(^{th}\). The Beat Generation and the Culture of Spontaneity.**
--Assignment for Final Paper handed out in class.

**SECTION.**
Week Eleven.
Monday, October 31st. Civil Rights.

Wednesday, November 2nd. DISCUSSION: PLEASE COMPLETE THIS WEEK’S READING IN TIME FOR TODAY’S CLASS.

NO SECTION THIS WEEK. Work on your final paper topics.

Week Twelve.
Monday, November 7th. Existentialism.

Wednesday, November 9th. Feminism, Individualism, Violence.

SECTION: CONFERENCES ON YOUR FINAL PAPERS.

Week Thirteen.
Monday, November 14th. Multiculturalism.

Wednesday, November 16th. Late Capitalism.

SECTION.
--Gloria Anzaldua, Borderlands/La Frontera (Please read the following selections: Preface to the FIRST edition; The Homeland, Aztlan; Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan; How to Tame a Wild Tongue; La conciencia de la mestizo/Towards a New Consciousness; and Cihuatlyotl, Woman Alone.)

Week Fourteen.
Monday, November 21st. Postmodernism.
--Final Paper Outlines (ungraded) due in class.

Wednesday, November 23rd. NO CLASS. (HAPPY THANKSGIVING!)

ALSO NO SECTION THIS WEEK.

Week Fifteen.
Monday, November 28th. This Is Your Life.

Wednesday, November 30th. Wrap-up: Don't Drink the Kool-Aid.

SECTION.
--Jaron Lanier, You Are Not a Gadget (entire).
**FINAL PAPERS ARE DUE BY THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8\textsuperscript{TH}, AT NOON!**

**PURCHASING BOOKS**

I've ordered all (except one) of the books at Ithaca's only independent (and cooperatively owned) bookstore, Buffalo Street Books. Store details:


The books are already in stock at the store, and you are welcome to shop there whenever you'd like. **But also please note that you can have the books delivered to you at the first discussion section of this class, on Friday, August 26\textsuperscript{th}, at 10:10am, in McGraw 365.** To have the books delivered in class, all you have to do is go to the store's website and place your order. There is no delivery charge, and NO TAX. Here's the appropriate link: http://www.buffalostreetbooks.com/#!students/cuiy

It's fine to pursue used copies, but please try to get the right edition of each book, since we'll be referring to the text frequently in class, and I'd like everyone to have the same pagination if possible. **NOTE: These books have NOT been ordered at the Cornell Store. But they will be available on the Cornell library system as “networked resources” or on 2-hour reserve at Uris Library; for the most part, I was able to put the correct edition on reserve, though in some cases it was not available. Please bring the actual book to class when we are scheduled to discuss it. If you read a book on reserve, then please bring precise notes with you to class.**

The complete list of books for the course is below. Again, the course number is History 3451, and you can order any or all of these titles for delivery.

Michael Lesy, *Wisconsin Death Trip* (U. New Mexico) 978-0826321930
Wieland Schmied, *Edward Hopper: Portraits of America* (Prestel) 978-3791346137
Judith Keller, *In Focus: Dorothea Lange* (Getty) 978-0892366750
Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* (Dover) 978-0486451404
Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (Westminster John Knox, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed.) 978-0664235390
John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (Vintage) 978-0679721031
Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound* (Basic, 20\textsuperscript{th} anniv.) 978-0465010202
James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (Vintage) 978-0679744726
Jaron Lanier, *You Are Not a Gadget* (Vintage) 978-0307389978

**NOTE: THE FOLLOWING BOOK WAS NOT AVAILABLE VIA BUFFALO STREET BOOKS. PLEASE FIND YOUR OWN COPY—THERE ARE PLENTY AVAILABLE THROUGH ONLINE BOOKSELLERS. OR READ IT ON RESERVE.**
--Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (Aunt Lute Books, 3rd or 4th ed.)