American Studies 1B (Seminar) - San José State University – Spring 2017

Prof. Valerie Lo

Days: Mondays & Wednesdays 3:00-4:15 PM Room: DMH 354
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Seminars are where we will discuss the complexities of the American cultural experience as we study it through course lecture and assigned readings, and as we connect it to our present day lives. Our primary activity will be discussing assigned readings. We will also do close readings of selected passages from our texts, conduct in-class writing exercises, small group activities, critical thinking exercises, workshops on writing assignments, oral presentations, video screenings, and exam reviews. In seminar we can also review some of the lecture material. You will receive your paper topics and passages to analyze for your journal responses in seminar.

Come to seminar with comments and questions about the day’s reading assignments. Use the time to ask questions and explore ideas. Participation is crucial for a successful seminar. To succeed in this course, attend each lecture, take notes, complete all reading ON TIME, and attend each seminar meeting.

Seminar activities:

- Discussion of the assigned readings & review of lecture material
- Occasional films & video clips
- In-class writing and small group exercises
- Close readings
- Discussion of writing and research assignments
- Possible review for midterms and final exam

Evaluation and Student Responsibilities:

Your seminar grade will be 15% of your final course grade for AMS 1B (see the AMS 1B syllabus). It will be based on the quality of your seminar discussion responses, quizzes, and group activities. It will also be affected by the following criteria:

- Students must complete all course requirements in order to pass this class.
- Students are expected to attend all seminars. Students who attend all classes, complete the assigned reading, and participate in class activities will be well prepared for the exams. One or two absences during any semester might occur—but remember, you must be there to be able to participate and participation affects your grade. If you miss class, it is up to you to find out what
you missed from a classmate. For both seminar and lecture, you are responsible for everything covered whether you are there or not.

- Students are expected to be courteous to others; to practice good listening and speaking skills; and to focus their attention on the topics and issues before the class, whether this takes the form of a lecture, discussion, individual writing task, or group activity. Discourteous and distracting behavior will result in a lower grade for seminar participation.
- All seminars will require students to attend and respond to at least one event offered by the SJSU Campus Reading Program this semester—for more info go to www.sjsu.edu/reading/

Participation

This is a seminar-style class, based on a group-discussion format rather than lecture. Asking questions and expressing ideas in seminar will indicate your participation in this process. Successful participation also includes contributing to small group discussions. No laptops, text messaging, etc., without permission of seminar instructor.

Questions to help you prepare for seminar discussion: Write these in your notebook and be prepared to discuss!

1. What is the main idea of this assigned reading?
2. How effective is the author in making an argument or getting you to see things from her/his perspective? Particular strengths or weaknesses in doing this?
3. What was new or surprising information, and why?
4. How does this reading connect to
   - my own experience?
   - current events in the world around us?
   - other readings or work we’ve done?
   - The focus of this class?
5. Questions I have for the class.

Journal Assignments:

You must submit ten journals total. Journals must be typed, stapled, and turned in at the beginning of seminar. Journals are not summaries or argumentative papers, but thoughtful reflections on the readings. You must turn in journals on the dates assigned.

DIRECTIONS: Begin your journals with a passage analysis

Choose a quote that is between 1-3 sentences.
Paragraph 1: Explain what the quote means in context of the reading. (100 words min.)

Paragraph 2: Explain what the quotation is saying about the development of American culture and society. In other words, answer the “so what?” question. (100 words min.)

Paragraph 3: Write a personal response to the reading as a whole, and explain your response. Draw connections to your experiences, beliefs, or worldview. (100 words min.)

**Length & Format:** 300 words minimum! Use page numbers and staples! Journals must have your name, the date, title and author of the reading on the front page. Number each journal. Keep track of how many journals you submit.

**Single-space your quotation; double-space your essay.**

**GRADING:** Journals are graded on a scale between 10-0. 7 or above is passing.

**LATE POLICY:** Late journals are not accepted—**not even by email.**

Make sure you have ten journals turned in by the last class meeting.

**Due dates:**

1. February 6
2. February 8 – “Mrs. Spring Fragrance” or “Poems and Family Portraits”
3. February 13 – “Skin Stories or the Queen’s “Speech” and “Protest”
4. February 15 – One short story will be assigned
5. March 6 – “Prufrock” or *Trifles*
6. March 8 – One poem will be assigned
7. March 13 – Choose one short story
8. April 5 – *All I asking for is my body* or *Maus*
9. April 12 – One writer will be assigned
10. April 19
11. April 26
12. May 3
13. May 8-One short story will be assigned (Tran, Kingston, Alvarez, Diaz)
14. May 10

**QUIZZES ON FONER**

There are twelve quizzes on the reading in Foner. Take these independently on Canvas. I will drop the two lowest grades; only ten will count. Make sure to take quizzes before their expiration date and time.

**Note:** Some of these dates or assignments might be slightly modified due to unforeseen changes in the schedule—but any such changes will be duly noted in advance. This schedule gives you a clear structure for planning time management to achieve the greatest success this semester.