

San José State University

American Studies Program (Humanities Department)
AMS-HUM169 American Dream, Spring 2021

Instructor:	Jorge M. Gonzalez, Ph.D.
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Office Hours:	Fridays, 11 am (via Zoom)
Class Day Times:	Mondays: Asynchronous Discussion Forum Wednesdays: Seminar Discussion via Canvas (Time: TBD)
Classroom:	Online Format
Prerequisites:	Completion of Core General Education Requirements; passed the WST; 100W completed or concurrent enrollment; upper division standing (60 units completed)
GE/SJSU Studies Category	Area 5

Canvas

Students must acquire access to Canvas for assignments, required and optional readings, collaboration, and communication with Prof. Gonzalez.

<http://sjsu.instructure.com/>

SJSU ONE username & password

Course Description

This course explores American's search for identity and meaning, the struggle for equality and success, in relation to myths, illusions, and realities reflected in history, literature, and the arts of what we know as the "American Dream". (Course Catalogue, Fall 2012)

Course Format

Technology Intensive, Online Courses

This is an online course that will require intensive technology engagement. You will need a computer with video and audio capabilities, reliable internet connectivity, and access to the Canvas for a regular weekly interaction.

We will screen a number of films that will require you to stream from select streaming services, such as Kanopy and Amazon video rentals to watch on your own time or via professor scheduled watch parties. Additionally, I highly recommend that students adopt Overdrive, an app that makes available eBooks from San Jose's and other local public libraries. Several of the selected readings can be borrowed in eBook format through this app service.

Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

GE/SJSU Studies Learning Outcomes (LO), if applicable

1. Describe how identities (i.e., religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age) are shaped by cultural and social influences within contexts of equality and inequality.

2. Describe historical, social, political, and economic processes producing diversity, equality, and structured inequalities in the U.S.
3. Describe social actions which have led to greater equality and social justice in the U.S. (i.e., religious gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age)
4. Recognize and appreciate constructive interactions between people from different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups within the U.S.

Required Texts/Readings

Textbooks

- Elaine Castillo. *America Is Not in the Heart*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2019) **ISBN: 0735222428**
- Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. (New York: Vintage Book, (1984) 2009) **ISBN: 9780679734772**
- Jim Cullen. *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) **ISBN: 9780195173253**
- Douglass, Frederick. *My Bondage and my Freedom*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1889 (2003) **ISBN-10: 0140439188**
- Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. (New York: Penguin Deluxe Edition, 2021) **ISBN: 0143136127**
- Jefferson, Thomas. *The Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson*, Ed. Paul Leicester Ford. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994) jStor Ebook available via SJSU Library login (<https://www-jstor-org.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/stable/j.ctt3fhx25>)
- West, Nathaniel. *The Day of the Locusts*. (Cambridge: New Direction Publishers, (1939 2015) **ISBN: 9780811224611**
- Wright, Richard. *Black Boy* [Seventy-fifth Anniversary Edition]. (New York: Harpers Perennial Modern Classic, (1945) 2020) **ISBN: 0062964135**

Films

- Requiem for the American Dream* (2016, documentary featuring Noam Chomsky)
Availability—Kanopy free w/ SJSU campus login
- A Reason on the Sun* (1961, Directed by Daniel Patric, starring Sidney Pontier)
Availability—Amazon Video Rental
- Mi Familia / My Family* (1995, Directed by Edward James Olmos)
Availability—YouTube free with ads (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYdawHjNIL8>)
- Homecoming King* (2017, stand up special featuring Hasan Minhaj)
Availability—Netflix
- Fight Club* (1999, Directed David Fincher)
Availability—Tubi (free) or YouTube (rental)

Other Readings

- Online readings (links provided on the course calendar, below)
- PDFs available in the Files section of Canvas, organized by author's last name (see course calendar for details)

Class Engagement Protocol

As a teacher, I have found that it is critical to a student's success to create an environment conducive to learning. To that end, we will strive together to create an atmosphere where we can focus together on the contents of the course and not have to worry about distractions of any kind.

1. Electronic/Digital Devices during live Zoom seminar session: All cell phones should be shut off and put away at the beginning of class. No texting: Disrespectful to me and to your classmates; and disruptive to your own

learning. Note: Sometimes during class, you will have a question that I cannot answer or that I want more details on. In those cases, I will ask someone to look up the answer and we will explore together as a class. If you want to look something up during the course of a lecture or discussion, please simply give me a heads up so I know what you're doing and so we can, again, explore the knowledge together as a class.

2. Participation, Courage to Speak, & Civility. Respect of your fellow students is critical to creating a learning atmosphere. In our course we may be discussing controversial issues or even matters that are personally important to someone in the class. You are encouraged to disagree and argue with each other and the professor, but it is imperative that you do so respectfully and without personal attacks. Any form of hate speech will result in ejection from the course for the day.

3. Preparedness for class, Read for retention, and Study to learn. To succeed in this course, students should attend live Zoom sessions having read the assignment for the day with questions and comments ready. Maximize your learning by studying (read and review to draw connections and think critically and synthetically, NOT just to repeat rote information).

See How to Get the Most Out of Studying

<http://www.samford.edu/how-to-study/default.aspx>

4. Discussion Forum engagement via Canvas should follow similar protocols of in person collegial engagement. You will be asked to engage a weekly ongoing discussion through prompts offered by the professor that will ask you to analyze the content according to the respective weekly themes. Your responses and peer replies should be thoughtful, well supported, and articulated on a respectful collegial manner. Use these opportunities to engage each other to compliment your peer's ideas, provide more food for thought or clarity, or pivot towards new topics inspired by your peer's thoughts. Always be respectful, collegial, and generous with each other.

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, etc. Information on add/drops are available at <http://info.sjsu.edu/webdbgen/narr/soc-fall/rec-324.html> . Information about late drop is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/advising/latedrops/policy/> . Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for adding and dropping classes.

Assignments and Grading Policy

WORKLOAD NOTE: Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of forty- five hours over the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities including but not limited to internships, labs, clinical practice. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus." (Senate Policy Recommendation S12-3, May 2012).

(35%) Weekly Discussion Forum (due every Monday by 9:00 a.m. for the prior week, unless otherwise noted on the calendar)

Discussion Forums have two functions: 1) to help you stay on top of the weekly ready material by asking you to consider it critically and thoughtfully and 2.) engage each other on a consistent basis to create a learning community where we share insight, clarify ideas, and support each other's understanding of topics we cover. Discussion Forum prompts will be posted Mondays (before Noon) and responses will be due Wednesdays (by Midnight).

To avoid monotonous engagement, we will alternate from three kinds of response formats, which I will select according to the topics and themes presented in the material we encounter.

Prompt Response: For these, the prompt will underscore a set of ideas for you to consider and respond to via open ended questions. You are to write at minimum two-three paragraphs addressing the prompt. Your answers must

strive for formality in these responses. These responses must include support, making concrete references to the readings to show the extent to which you are understanding and engaging the readings. I will offer an instruction and rubric sheet to give you a better idea of the expectation.

Answer/Pivot Question Bridge: This discussion board exercise is meant to add an element of chance while assessing reading completion and reading comprehension. The goal is to create a discussion thread that's a chain of answers and/or questions that bridges the class's limit of understanding with its insight. You can answer or pivot. If you pivot you must propose a new topic and explain why it's of significance before going on to accompany that topic with a relating question.

Rules:

1. *address latest response you see*
2. *answer and contribute a question (2 paragraphs to answer, formal language, well supported claims with textual support. So, 1 quote per paragraph even if it's a question. 1 paragraph for the question and it must correspond/ make reference to topics/themes/texts.)*
3. *or pivot by articulating a new topic and contributing a corresponding question (2 paragraphs articulating the new topic and why its significant, formal language, well supported claims with textual support. So, 1 quote per paragraph even if it's a question. Question must correspond/ make reference to topics/themes/texts.)*

Commonplace Book Post:

Commonplace Book posts, while less formal, will require a measure of creative thinking from you. Most of you might not be familiar with commonplace books as it's a lost art, however, this old practice is useful for readers because it helps them retain words, phrases, quotes, passages and images. Since I am adapting this exercise for the class, common place posts will reflect the interests of the class, the meaning you are generating from key words, passages, or key moments in the texts we encounter. I will come up with a heading and a short prompt related to the week's material to prompt your mind in a particular direction. You will be free to post something that speaks to the heading/prompt. You can be literary, scientific, or visually oriented in your replies, which can include transcribed key passages, memes, gifs, illustrations, photographs, sections of podcasts, songs, graphs of data, links to relevant, thought provoking websites, excerpts from news stories (type out excerpts or hand write them, take a pic and post them), excerpts from videos, etc. The limits of your creativity are bound to what can be posted to a Canvas discussion so get familiar with the tools available on that portal. When you use a non-verbal visual medium to make a point you must include a brief written explanation to make sure we don't miss the point you are trying to make.

“A Brief Guide to Keeping a Common Place Book”

(<https://notebookofghosts.com/2018/02/25/a-brief-guide-to-keeping-a-commonplace-book/>)

(45%) Short Assignments (choose four (4) of the following; if you do more than 4, the lowest scores dropped)

- No. 1: Communitarianism without Religion
- No. 2: Happiness in the 21st Century: An Evaluation of Jefferson's Core Theory
- No. 3: Pop Cultural Representations of Meritocracy
- No. 4: Visual Mapping of Racial Inequality
- No. 5: Life Magazine Image Analysis
- No. 6: Multiculturalism, Sexuality, and Justice
- No. 7: Current News Coverage, Inequality, & Immigration

(15%) Summative Term Paper

Each assignment has a corresponding Assignment Sheet explaining the requirements and objectives posted on Canvas.

NOTE ON EXTRA CREDIT: At this point, I don't plan on offering extra credit. Keep this in mind and make sure you pick your points where you can.

(5%) Film Quizzes

Since viewing some of the things in the class are not simply for pleasure, though I hope you like the selections, I will award points for critically attentive and engaged viewing of the films in the syllabus. These quizzes will consist of short self-assessments gauging your level of engagement.

Generally speaking, I apply the standard rules of thumb to assigning grades.

- “A” work demonstrates mastery of the material, retention of key information, and the ability apply and use knowledge gained in class.
- “B” work falls somewhere between, having taken steps toward mastery but with some errors or some trouble with the application of knowledge.
- “C” work demonstrates an acceptable level of retention with an average familiarity of key issues; it may make some errors but generally knows the basics; a “C” may have trouble applying or using the knowledge gained in class.
- Both “D” and “F” work have serious problems with accuracy, skills, retention, and application.

Late Policy: I accept late work for a 10% (the equivalent of one grade) reduction, **no questions asked**. Given the adjustments we all have to make during the pandemic, I will be flexible with all assignments but it is up to you to reach out to me to let me know that you intend to turn in late work so we can arrange a new due date for you. Late Discussion Forums will be penalized 10% per week (up to 50%). You have up to 5 weeks past the due date of a respective DF response to turn it in before you forfeit the grade for the given DF response.

University Policies

Academic Integrity

Students should know that the University’s [Academic Integrity Policy is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf). Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University’s integrity policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The website for [Student Conduct and Ethical Development is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html).

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person’s ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU’s Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of instructors.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the DRC (Disability Resource Center) to establish a record of their disability.

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Course Schedule

Professor Gonzalez reserves the right to modify this calendar during the semester in order to meet pedagogical goals and student needs. Changes will be announced in class and on Canvas.

Week	Month	FORUM OPENS	DUE BY	Topic / Reading Assignment/ Webinar Dates
0	Jan.	1/27	<p>Your Post by following <u>Sunday</u></p> <p>Response by following <u>Tuesday</u></p>	<p>Instructional Video (Wed, 1/27): Welcome, Syllabus Review, Expectations (see Canvas Module 1, Zoom login required)</p> <p><i>Forums will go “live”—be available—by the date indicated (if not earlier). Unless otherwise indicated, you will then have until the following <u>Sunday</u> at midnight to post your initial response AND through the following <u>Tuesday</u> at midnight to respond to, comment, or in some cases simply “like” one or more of your peers’ posts. Weekly discussion prompts will cover two topics per week. I read everything as it is posted, although I might not comment/respond/grade immediately. Typically, I will comment/respond/grade on Mondays and Fridays.</i></p> <p><i>Besides the weekly topic readings listed below, you also need to stay current with your reading of Orange’s “There/There,” which is central to your periodic literary exploration essays and your summative literary analysis term paper.</i></p> <p><u>view</u>: “Requiem for the American Dream,” (Kanopy, SJSU login required)</p> <p><u>engage discussion forum by 2/2</u>: tell us about yourself & “What does the American Dream Mean to you?”</p>
1	Feb.	2/1	<p>1/7 (post)</p> <p>1/9 (respond)</p>	<p>Tracking the American Dream <i>read: Cullen, Introduction: A Dream Country (PDF available, see Canvas)</i></p> <hr/> <p>Theorizing Inequality in American Dreams / Dreaming / Dreamers <i>read: M. Bush and R. Bush, “The Shifting Terrain Makes Clear the Tensions in the American Dream” (PDF)</i> <i>suggested reading: White, “African American Dreams” (PDF)</i></p>
2		2/8	2/14	The Dream of Communitarianism, Part 1

			(post)	<i>read: Ch. 1, Cullen</i>
			2/16 (respond)	The Dream of Communitarianism, Part 2 <i>read: Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" (PDF)</i>
3		2/15	2/21 (post)	The Dream's Charter: Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness, Part 1 <i>read: Ch. 2, Cullen; The Declaration of Independence (PDF); The Constitution of the United States (PDF)</i>
			2/23 (respond)	The Dream's Charter, Part 2 <i>read: The Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson (pgs. 1-50); "Jeffersonian Democracy" (Wikipedia page) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeffersonian_democracy)</i> <i>Assignment No. 1 due—Communitarianism Without Religion? (2.19.21 by 5pm via Canvas upload)</i>
4		2/22	2/28 (post)	The Jeffersonian Dream: Property and Political Economy, Part 1 <i>read: The Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson (pgs. 51-100)</i>
			3/2 (respond)	The Jeffersonian Dream: Democracy and Race, Part 2 <i>read: The Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson (pgs. 101-161)</i>
5	March	3/1	3/7 (post)	The Dream of Upward Mobility: The Birth of "Meritocracy" in the 19th Century, Part 1 <i>read: Ch. 3, Cullen; "Horatio Alger: The Myth of the American Dream" (https://owlcation.com/humanities/horatio-alger)</i> <i>recommended: Ragged Dick or, Street Life on New York with the Boot-Blacks, Horatio Alger (PDF)</i>
			3/9 (respond)	The Dream of Upward Mobility: Social Darwinism and the Myth of Meritocracy, Part 2 <i>read: The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald, pgs.1-95; "The Rise and Fall of the American Dream," Packer-Kinlaw (PDF)</i> <i>Assignment No. 2 due-- Happiness in the 21st Century: An Evaluation of Jefferson's Core Theory (3.5.21 by 5pm via Canvas upload)</i>
6		3/8	3/14 (post)	The Dream of Upward Mobility: Social Darwinism and the Myth of Meritocracy, Part 3 <i>read: The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald, pgs.96-191</i>
			3/17 (respond)	Dreams of Equality: Race and the American Dream, Part 1 <i>read: Ch. 4, Cullen; Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Douglass, Ch.1-4</i> <i>view: "I Have A Dream" speech, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1963) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_nvqRqTiKk)</i>
7		3/15	3/21	Dreams of Equality: Race and the American Dream, Part 2

			(post) 10/23 (respond)	<p>read: <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass</i>, Douglass, Ch.5-8 view: <i>James Baldwin vs William F Buckley: A debate at Cambridge Union (1965)</i> (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Tek9h3a5wQ)</p> <hr/> <p>Dreams of Equality: Race and the American Dream, Part 3 read: <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass</i>, Douglass, Ch.9-11</p> <p><i>Assignment No. 3 due: Pop Cultural Representations of Meritocracy (3.19.21 by 5pm via Canvas upload)</i></p>
8		3/22	3/28 (post) 3/30 (respond)	<p>Dreams of Home Ownership, Part 1 read: Ch. 5, Cullen; from <i>Walden</i>, excerpts from Ch.1 "Economy", H.D. Thoreau (PDF)</p> <hr/> <p>Dreams of Home Ownership, Part 2 read: <i>The House on Mango Street</i>, Cisneros, pgs. 3-55 view: <i>A Reason in the Sun (1961, film)</i> stream on Amazon Video (rental)</p>
SB		3/29-4/2		Spring Break
9	April	4/5	4/11 (post) 4/13 (respond)	<p>Dreams of Home Ownership, Part 3 read: <i>The House on Mango Street</i>, Cisneros, pgs. 56-110</p> <hr/> <p>Dreams of the Good Life: American Consumption and Its Discontents, Part 1 read: Ch. 6, Cullen; <i>Day of the Locust</i>, West, pgs.1-55</p> <p><i>Assignment No. 4 due: No. 4: Visual Mapping of Racial Inequality (4.9.21 by 5pm via Canvas upload)</i></p>
10		4/12	4/18 4/20	<p>Dreams of the Good Life: American Consumption and Its Discontents, Part 2 read: <i>Day of the Locust</i>, West, pgs.56-105 view: <i>Fight Club (199, film)</i> stream on Tubi (free) or YouTube (rental)</p> <hr/> <p>Dreams of the Good Life: American Consumption and Its Discontents, Part 3 read: <i>Day of the Locust</i>, West, pgs.106-160</p>
11		4/19	4/25 (post) 4/27 (respond)	<p>Dreams of Personal Fulfillment, Part 1 read: <i>Black Boy</i>, Ch. 1-3, Wright; "Self-Discovery Journey of Women: Richard Wright's <i>Black Boy</i>," Boynukara (PDF)</p> <hr/> <p>Dreams of Personal Fulfillment, Part 2 read: <i>Black Boy</i>, Ch. 4-7, Wright</p> <p><i>Assignment No. 5 due: No. 5: Life Magazine Image Analysis (4.23.21 by 5pm via Canvas upload)</i></p>

12		4/26	5/2 (post) 5/4 (respond)	<p>Dreams of Personal Fulfillment, Part 3 <i>read: <u>Black Boy</u>, Ch. 8-11, Wright</i></p> <hr/> <p>Dreams of Personal Fulfillment, Part 4 <i>read: <u>Black Boy</u>, Ch. 12-14, Wright</i></p>
13	May	5/3	5/9 (post) 5/11 (respond)	<p>Immigrant Dreams, Part 1 <i>read: <u>America's Not the Heart</u>, E. Castillo, "Prologue, Or Gali-La!"; <u>The Burden of Globalization</u>," Shabanpan-Yu (PDF)</i></p> <hr/> <p>Immigrant Dreams, Part 2 <i>read: <u>America's Not the Heart</u>, E. Castillo, Ch.1-4</i></p> <p><i>Assignment No. 6 due: No. 6: Multiculturalism, Sexuality, and Justice (5.7.21 by 5pm via Canvas upload)</i></p>
14		5/10	No Discussions Forum Assignment	<p>Immigrant Dreams, Part 3 <i>read: <u>America's Not the Heart</u>, E. Castillo, Ch. 5-9</i> <i>view: <u>Mi Familia (1995, film)</u> stream free via YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYdawHjNIL8)</i></p> <hr/> <p>Concluding Thoughts on Semester</p>
FINAL DUE DATES	<p><i>Wed., May17</i></p> <p><i>Friday, May 21</i></p>		<p><i>Assignment No. 7 due: No. 7: Current News Coverage, Inequality, & Immigration (5.17.21 by 5pm via Canvas upload)</i></p> <p>Summative Term Paper/Project (cumulative; covers concepts from the entire semester) due Friday, May 21st by 5pm (17:00) via Canvas file upload</p> <p>NOTE: Any pending late assignments due on this day by 5pm (1700) for partial credit.</p>	