

Spring 2004  
University of Kansas  
When: Wed., 7-9:30  
Where: 103 Bailey

Sherrie Tucker, Asst. Prof., American Studies  
Office hrs: Tues/Thurs 2:00-3:30 (sign-up  
sheet on my door) or by appt.  
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**REVISED!!!!**

# **AMS 802:**

## **Theorizing America**

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

What is the “America” one studies in a postmodern age? Is it a discourse? An alibi for cultural studies set in the western hemisphere? A bounded collective identity? A set of multiple, shifting, and contingent identities? A fiction? An idea? A history? A place? If place has *anything* to do with it, are we talking about a nation, or a bunch of nations within a nation, or a bunch of nations on a couple of continents and some islands? And who are “Americans”? What do they have in common? What is their “American-ness”? To theorize America is to theorize identity, belonging, history, culture, and place; *and the borderlands of* identity, belonging, history, culture, and place, *and the border crossings--both authorized and subversive,--of* identity, belonging, history, culture, and place.

In this seminar, participants will delve into several current theoretical debates on “theorizing America,” organized here as: theorizing Americans, theorizing American cultures, theorizing indigenous America, theorizing American borderlands, theorizing Americas, theorizing American histories, theorizing American identities, and theorizing America in a global perspective. We will take a very applied approach to studying several theoretical tools and moves as they are currently deployed in American Studies. For each unit, we will read some explicitly theoretical work, which will then be paired with a case study in which a scholar uses those theoretical assumptions to develop an analysis of a topic in relation to current questions and debates in American Studies.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

- 1) Facilitate one hour of one class meeting (15% of grade). You will be graded on your efforts to generate discussion that helps us to engage that week's readings. Feel free to be as creative or as banal as you wish. What is important is that you attempt to find ways to use the time to stimulate the kinds of discussions that are useful to you in understanding the material.
- 2) Short (one-page, typed, double-spaced) written assignment each week, consisting of two parts: 1) a **discussion question** based on the reading for that week; 2) a paragraph speculating on a **possible application** of one of the theoretical moves in the reading. These will be collected in every week in class, but you may miss three without consequence to your grade. (20% of grade)
- 3) Proposal for final paper is due 3/31. Instructions will be distributed 3/10. Included in the proposal will be a very short "position paper" (2 pages maximum) to be presented to the class on March 31, April 7, 14, 21, and 28. In this segment, you will reflect on your graduate work so far, and on the particular texts and theories we have studied in this seminar, and stake out a position on some aspect of your proposed paper: how do you imagine that you will theorize **identity**, for example, or **race**, or **gender**, or **culture**, or **globalization**, or **nation**, or ...? Think of this "position" as a snapshot of what you think now—certainly, your assumptions will change as you go along, but what is your position at the moment of your presentation? What approaches are most compelling and why? How might you use these theoretical maneuvers in your graduate work? What limits do you perceive in the theories you currently have at your disposal? What questions remain unanswered? (20% of grade)
- 4) Long (15-20 page) paper in which you identify a field of your research (or possible area of research) that will benefit from theoretical approaches studied in our seminar. Paper must begin to unpack this field in relation to a topic or planned topic in your area of research and must include an annotated bibliography in which you identify sources—both those you have read and those you plan to read—for theorizing a topic in American Studies. At least one text from our syllabus must be rigorously engaged in your discussion of theory. Paper proposal due March 31, paper due May 19 (35% of grade).

Class participation will count for the remaining 10% of the grade.

**REQUIRED TEXTS** (available on reserve in Anschutz)

Sarah Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World: Beauty Pageants and National Identity* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1999) **optional**

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990)

Alec McHoul and Wendy Grace, *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power, and the Subject* (New York University Press, 1997)

Louise Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford, 1999)

Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Routledge, 1994)

Tim O'Sullivan, *et al*, *Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies* (Routledge, 1994)

Emma Perez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Indiana University Press, 1999) **optional**

Claudia Sadowski-Smith, *Globalization on the Line: Culture, Capital, and Citizenship at U.S. Borders* (Palgrave, 2002)

Suzanne E. Smith, *Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1999)

Additional articles will be available on Electronic Reserve: <http://Eres.lib.ku.edu/>  
The password is AMS802. If they aren't there, please contact me immediately and I will post them on Blackboard.

### **Disability Statement**

The staff of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD), 135 Strong, 785\_864\_2620 (v/tty), coordinates accommodations and services for KU courses. If you have a disability for which you may request accommodation in KU classes and have not contacted them, please do as soon as possible. Please also see me privately in regard to this course.

### **Writing Center Statement**

Most colleges and universities have a writing center, a place for students to talk about their writing with trained peer consultants. At KU, we call our student writing centers Writer's Roosts. When you visit, bring your work in progress and an idea of what you would like to work on--organization, support, documentation, editing, etc. The Roosts are open in several different locations across campus; check the website at [www.writing.ku.edu](http://www.writing.ku.edu) for current locations and hours. The Roosts welcome both drop-ins and appointments, and there is no charge for their services. For more information, please call 864-2399 or send an e-mail to [writing@ku.edu](mailto:writing@ku.edu)

### **COURSE OUTLINE**

**Jan 28 Introduction to Course Themes and Participants.** What is theory? Suggestions for practical approaches for the study and use of theory in this seminar--discussion. Sign-ups for facilitation and position

papers.

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## I Theorizing American Cultures

### Feb 11 \_\_\_\_\_ Sampling assumptions about culture

What are the assumptions about culture in each of the readings for this week? What are the implications for using one set of assumptions as opposed to another? Take notes on these assumptions in preparation for an in-class theoretical “lens-testing” exercise.

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#### Readings (Blackboard or Electronic Reserve):

- Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” (1944), collected in Simon During, ed., *The Cultural Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 29-43 (originally published in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*);
- Stuart Hall, “The problem of Ideology: Marxism Without Guarantees,” from Betty Matthews, ed., *Marx: A Hundred Years On* (Lawrence and Wishart, 1983), 57-85;
- Raymond Williams, “The Future of Cultural Studies,” and “The Uses of Cultural Theory,” *The Politics of Modernism* (London and New York: Verso, 1989), 151-176.
- “Reading is not Eating: Mass-Produced Literature and the Theoretical, Methodological, and Political Consequences of a Metaphor,” from T. Lovell, ed., *Feminist Cultural Studies* (1995) vol. 1, 437-459, but first published in *Book-Research-Quarterly*, 1986 Fall; 2(3): 7-29;
- Henry Giroux and Roger Simon, “Popular Culture as a Pedagogy of Pleasure and Meaning: Decolonizing the Body,” Henry Giroux, *Border Crossings, Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 180-206.

#### **FACILITATOR: Sherrie**

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**Feb 18** How do scholars apply their assumptions about culture? What are the strengths and limitations of various theories about culture? How do the theories/assumptions about culture affect the methodology?

Reading: Suzanne E. Smith, *Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit*, and:

(E-Reserve): Susan Douglas, "Why the Shirelles Mattered," Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are* (Random House, 1994), 83-98;

Gayle Wald, "Soul's Revival: White Soul, Nostalgia, and the Culturally Constructed Past," from Monique Guillory and Richard C. Green, ed. *Soul: Black Power, Politics, and Pleasure* (NY: NYU Press, 1998), 139-158.

**FACILITATOR(S):** \_\_\_\_\_

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## II Theorizing Americans: Identity, Belonging, Citizenship, Rights

**Feb 25** How do assumptions about identity connect with allocations of rights? What happens to needs in a citizenship paradigm based on rights? We might address these questions through a variety of foci, but for this week, we will concentrate on theories about race. What constitutes race, according to this week's authors, and what is the relationship between race, identity (individual and group), belonging, citizenship, and rights?

\_\_\_\_\_ Readings: *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* by Michael Omi and Howard Winant (2nd edition, 1994); (Electronic Reserve): Susan Koshy, "Morphing Race into Ethnicity: Asian Americans and Critical Transformations of Whiteness," *Boundary 2* 28:1, 2001, 183-194, Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property," from Kimberle Crenshaw, et al, *Critical Race Theory Reader* (New Press, 1995); Brian Donovan, "The Sexual Basis of Racial Formation: Anti-vice activism and the creation of the twentieth-century 'color line'," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* vol. 26, no. 4, July 2003, 707-727.

**FACILITATOR(S):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Mar 3** \_\_\_\_\_ Intersectional analyses and multiply-positioned subjects.

Reading: (E-Reserve): Chela Sandoval, "U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World," *Genders* 10, Spring 1991, 1-24; Ingrid Monson, "The Problem with White Hipness: Race, Gender, and Cultural Conceptions in Jazz Historical

Discourse,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* XLVIII, Fall 1995, no. 3, 396-422; Christopher Newfield and Avery Gordon, “Multiculturalism’s Unfinished Business,” *Mapping Multiculturalism* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 76-115; Naomi Pabst, “Blackness/Mixedness: Contestations over Crossing Signs,” *Cultural Critique* 54 (2003), 178-212. Chandra Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1991), 51-80;

**FACILITATOR(S):** \_\_\_\_\_

*Pertinent Event.....*

**MARCH 4-5, JAZZ CHANGES: An Interdisciplinary Jazz Studies Colloquium**  
**Please try to attend one speaker or panel. You may write one of your response papers on these events.**

Mar 10	<b>Feb 25</b>	On what assumptions does Newman’s work rely? How does she theorize race? Gender? What other key concepts does she theorize? How does she organize her theoretical moves in relation to her historical evidence? <u>Reading: Louise Newman, <i>White Women’s Rights</i></u> <b>Paper Proposal Instructions Distributed</b>
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**FACILITATOR(S):** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Judith Butler *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*

**FACILITATOR(S):** \_\_\_\_\_

Mar 17      (Electronic Reserve): Jose Munoz, selected readings from *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*: (University of Minnesota Press, 1999)

**FACILITATOR(S):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**SPRING BREAK MARCH 22-26**

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**III Theorizing Borderlands**

**Mar 31** Reading: Claudia Sadowski-Smith, *Globalization on the Line: Culture, Capital, and Citizenship at U.S. Borders* (Palgrave, 2002)  
(Electronic Reserve): Gloria Anzaldúa, "La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness," from *Borderlands, La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Press, 1987), 99-113

**FACILITATOR(S):** \_\_\_\_\_

**POSITION PRESENTATIONS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DUE: FINAL PAPER PROPOSALS (WITH POSITION COMPONENT)**

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**IV Theorizing Americas**

**Apr 7** (Electronic Reserve): TBA

**FACILITATOR(S):** \_\_\_\_\_

**POSITION PRESENTATIONS:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**V Theorizing Indigenous America**

**Apr 14** Reading: (Electronic Reserve): M. Annette Jaimes Guerrero, "Academic Apartheid: American Indian Studies and 'Multiculturalism'," from Gordon and Newfield, *Mapping Multiculturalism* (University of Minnesota Press, 49-63); Philip J. Deloria, "American Indians, American Studies, and the ASA," *American Quarterly* December 2003, vol. 55, no. 4, 669-680; Robert Warrior, "A Room of One's Own at the ASA: An Indigenous Provocation," *American Quarterly* December 2003, vol. 55, no. 4, 681-687; Jean M. O'Brien, "Why Here? Scholarly Locations for

American Indian Studies," *American Quarterly* December 2003, vol. 55, no. 4, 689-696; Mary Helen Washington, "Commentary," *American Quarterly* December 2003, vol. 55, no. 4, 697-702. Additional articles from *American Studies* TBA.

**FACILITATOR(S):** \_\_\_\_\_

**POSITION PRESENTATIONS:** \_\_\_\_\_

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***Pertinent Event....***

**MAASA CONFERENCE APRIL 17<sup>TH</sup> AND 18<sup>TH</sup>**

**REQUIRED: Attend as much of the MAASA Conference as you possibly can. We will discuss it in April 21 seminar meeting. You may write about it for one of your response papers if you wish.**

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**Apr 21      Theorizing America in a Global Context**

Selected articles TBA from Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease, ed., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham, 1993)

**FACILITATOR(S):** \_\_\_\_\_

**POSITION PRESENTATIONS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Paper Proposals Returned with Comments**

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**Apr 28      Theorizing American Histories**

Reading: (E-Reserve): Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les lieux dememoire*" in Genevieve Fabre and Robert O'Meally, eds., *History and Memory in African American Culture*; Gary Okihiro "Recentring Women," from *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture*; Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis," from *Gender and the Politics of History*; Shirley Thompson, "Ah Toucoutou, ye conin vous": History and Memory in Creole New Orleans," *American Quarterly* June 2001, vol. 53, no. 2, 232-266.

**FACILITATOR(S):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**May 5 Theorizing Power**

Alec McHoul and Wendy Grace, *A Foucault Primer* (all)

(Electronic Reserve): Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures" and something from *Archeology of Knowledge*

**FACILITATOR(S):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**May 12**

Reading: Sarah Banet-Weiser *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World*  
OR Emma Perez, *Decolonial Imaginary*. Half the class will read Banet-Weiser, and half will read Perez. Be prepared to explain what theoretical moves from Foucault the author borrows and how they use them.

**EVERYONE WILL TEACH THE CLASS**

**FINAL PAPER DUE MAY 19 by 5:00 PM IN MY MAIL BOX, AMS 213**