

What is American Studies?

September 4

The Evolution of American Studies

- American Studies has changed dramatically over the years
- Exceptionalist project, it originally told the story of a singular, homogenous, and white "America"; therefore, numerous groups and individuals were left out of and marginalized by this story
 - Field had little room for minorities and women
- Anti-colonial revolutions around the world and the social movements of the 1960s, other stories began to be told
 - Crossroads of cultures- Fishkin
 - Oxford removed Gloria's poem which was about racism, sexism, brutality on the border, rape, murder and lynching (sanitized the book for the Americans)
 - Fear of alienating its target audience
 - Mark Twain
 - Cheerful, heartwarming Twain should live in culture's memory
 - Took out Twain's anti-imperialist writings
- Today, American Studies is a field that takes global and transnational approach to the study of America's multiple identities and cultures
 - See the inside and outside, domestic and foreign, national and international
- The goal
 - Is not championing an arrogant, pro-American nationalism, but understanding the multiple meaning of American and American culture in its complexity

The Official Concept of American Studies- Discourse

- A collection of images, cultural products, institutions, and practices that provide a common language of supporting a particular theme or ideology
- Dominant discourse, social construct of discourse
- After 9/11
 - Patriotism, unification
 -

Transnationalism

- Cultures, political and resistance movements, etc. stretch across the borders of various nations
- Challenges the idea that the nation is a fixed unit of study
- Argues that one should study American culture and other topics across nations
- “looking beyond the nation’s borders” and understanding how the nation is seen from vantage points beyond its borders
 - American studies just not about America, but see international perspective and learn more about American culture and history
- Benefits of taking a transnational approach to American Studies
- **Crossroads of cultures- Fishkin**
 - As the Transnationalism becomes more central to American Studies
 - Focus on minorities
 - Focus on inside and outside of US
 - Address how US environmental policies impact environmental problems in the world
 - Focus on social movements in different locations
 - Welcome investigations of public memory
 - Understand how American democracy shape and are shaped by conversations outside the US
- **Domestic Life on Diggings-Johnson**
 - God Rush allowed cross culture of Asians, Mexicans, Europeans, Africans and Americans
 - Established their own culture in the community- eating similar foods, sharing stories about Gold Rush

Defining Culture

- Culture is taught and reproduced
 - Teaching and learning is not absolute, so culture constantly changes
- it is process and it is always changing
 - **Domestic Life on Diggings-Johnson**
 - God Rush allowed cross culture of Asians, Mexicans, Europeans, Africans and Americans
 - Established their own culture in the community- eating similar foods, sharing stories about Gold Rush
- 3 elements of cultural systems
 - Ways of organizing society: family, organizations
 - Interdependent community
 - Society= community of people, sharing same culture

- Systems of meaning
 - Relationship between one group of variables (physical symbols, behaviors, words) and meanings (explaining variables).
 - Governs understanding of people's lives
 - When a society agrees between a certain word and its meaning, a system of meaning is established
 - Eg. Cat : furry four-legged animal
 - Giving a "finger"
- The distinctive techniques of a group and their characteristic products

Internationalization

September 7 – 11

Globalization

- Economic, social, political interdependence exchange
 - Capitalism ↑ communism ↓
- Fueled by global capitalism and reflected by Western European and North American authority
- Independence -> interdependence
- 3 late 20th century transformations
 - Post WW2 political structure changes
 - Nations are interconnected
 - Increased exchange in human activity
- American Studies scholars approach globalization in the following ways
 - Through cultural imperialism or hybrid cultures
 - Some argue that globalization is pushing for assimilation to western ideology
 - As the end of modern US myths of purity...

Exceptionalism

- An ideology, not a historical fact
 - Way of thinking shared by particular group
- Perceived unique qualities about the US
- Defining the US by not only what it is, but also by **what it claims that it is not**
 - Unique by saying “we are not!”
 - American is not monarchy or communism
 - Therefore, we are better than...
- Built on national myths: melting pot, American dream
- American Studies was founded on exceptionalism

Orientalism

- Orientalism is a process
- East/West binary
 - Feminized, weak, need help of the West

- Domestic Life in the Diggings- Anglo feminized Chinese who cooked and made money in laundry
- Values attached to the Occident and the Orient
- “Othering”
- A goal of Orientalism is that of domination. If the West casts “Orientals” as being inferior, then it is justified in colonizing them
- Like Exceptionalism, Orientalism is ideological. Orientalism does not accurately reflect cultures beyond the West; it intentionally distorts them

Race, Diaspora

September14-18

Race

- Race is socially constructed, not biological
- Institutions classify and categorize people based on race. Race is a category that legitimates who belongs and who does not belong within institutions
- Locate and analyze race through freedom and power and thus link it to gender and sexuality
- Race intertwines with economic, social, and political formations that inscribe the body and constitute identities. The body can then be read as a text full of marked and unmarked categories.
 - Consequences: history, violence
 - It shaped/misshaped identities, relationships, and communities
- Removal-Tiya Miles
 - Hierarchy-Cherokee family owned African slave in 1700s.
 - It shows myriad complexities, ironies, and tensions among African American, Native Americans, and the Whites in 19th century.
 - Both American Indians and African Americans were neglected by Whites, but between them, there was another hierarchy that African Americans were looked down upon Indians by being sold as slaves
 - Recently, Cherokee Court overturned their previous ruling and voted to make it possible for descendants of Afro-Cherokee, and black freemen/women to receive Cherokee citizenship, rebuilding the relationships between black and native people
- Crossroads of Cultures-Fishkin
 - Transnational questions and approaches can complicate Native American issues in American studies
 - Native Americans observed by British, how transnational can reshape our understanding of Native American history and culture
- Rethinking Race and Nation-Singh
 - Democracy
 - Racism resulted from American imperialism, internationalism, neocolonialism

- Black struggle for social justice has been for universal rights that benefit the nation as a whole and can represent model of democracy
- Myths: America was always a source of “justice for all”
 - Racism: hurts this country’s cultural and political imagination
 - Race: hope
 - Race provided a political space for 20th century activists to enlarge upon the freedom and democracy

Unmarked individuals and Whiteness ideology

- Unmarked individual: socially constructed as free, property owner, physically able, white, pure, educated, suffrage
- In history-Slavery, colonialism, imperialism
- Whiteness ideology is not about bad vs. good individuals but about the new form of racism that is structured in institutions (ideology, structures and materiality)
- White individual→ ideologies →structures (rules and regulations) →material consequences
 - Unmarked individual
 - Patriarchy, freedom, pure, property, right to vote, heterosexism
 - Ideology (shared values)
 - Free market
 - Religion
 - Traditional family
 - Superiority
 - Involved in politics
 - Have control to power and money
 - Structures (institutions) – naturalize rules and regulations built from ideology
 - Government, politics
 - Marriage
 - Schools
 - Religious temples
 - Health care
 - Capitalism
 - materiality

Diaspora

- The Practice of Diaspora-Edwards

- African American culture and literary expression is one piece of Diaspora movement of Black cultures across the globe
- Black transnational culture, the link between NY publications and newspapers in Paris
 - Different ways of imagining race beyond the barriers of nation and language
- Black intellectuals pursue a variety of international alliances

Empire, Nation

September 21-25

Empire

- Article: Redefining Security: Okinawa Women's Resistance to US militarism
- Redefined to justify US political and military actions throughout the world
 - US military throughout the world (Americans think they should protect East Asia which is not strong enough to protect themselves-Orientalism)
 - Taking advantages of their "superior" race
 - Hit and run, rape
 - Okinawa women protest for their individual security
- Manifest Destiny was used to justify territorial expansion
 - Discourse of religion
 - Most American believed that God gave them the right to spread the territory to the West, with complete disregard to native people
- The US cast other countries such as the Soviet Union, as evil empires. Thus, US domination and wars with other countries were seen as noble and justified, not imperialistic
 - Big Stick Policy
 - Speak softly and carry Bick stick- threatening with the military
 - Police in the West Hemisphere
 - International police power in cases of wrongdoing or weakness
 - To "help" maintain stability in the Western Hemisphere
 - Ensure Western Hemisphere to make a break from European influences
- Contemporary American Studies scholars reexamine and rewrite American history and culture to recover erased histories
- Exceptionalism
 - US's refusal of empire

Nation

- Article: Removal- Tiya Miles
- Is not defined by a government or by geographical boundaries
- Is a social construct—it is an imagined community (based on beliefs, privileges)

- Nation-states construct a national people by elements of inclusion and exclusion—such as immigration restriction and population-control
- Cherokee Nation in the state of Georgia
 - Georgia enlisted Georgia Guard to seize the Cherokee printing press (violated constitution)
 - Ironic that while America emphasizes life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, it did not include original Americans in that human rights
 - Cherokee's removal= Africans awaiting the slave ships = Japanese Americans during WW2
 - Cherokee people were loaded into concentration camps

Citizenship, State, Public

Sep28-Oct2

Citizenship

- Article: The Intimate Public Sphere- Berlant
 - Sexuality and heteronormativity
 - A lot of articles about Obama's politics, journalists mention his wife and children on the purpose of showing heterosexual coupledness
 - Contemporary ideal of citizenship is measured by personal private acts rather than civic acts
 - American dreams: Not everyone can fit into
 - Changing the definition and boundaries of citizenship
 - Shrinking concept of citizenship on increasing class, racial, sexual, gender hatred
 - Consequences of Reagan Revolution
 - Limiting frames of citizenship (religion, race, culture, sexuality)
 - Mass media -> Patriotic Norm/ who is American? Who counts as American?
- Can be defined in a wide variety of ways, not just in terms of state participation and protection
- Is not just a theoretical idea; it is something lived and practiced in everyday life
- Is delivered unevenly and hierarchically based on factors such as race, gender, sexuality, religion, and social class
 - Hard to obtain citizenship- citizenship test usually asking about the structure of US government and history
- People are regularly included and excluded from citizenship in nations and other imagined communities

State

- Article: *The Citizen and the Terrorist*- Volpp
- Refers to the government
- Is responsible for protecting personal rights and political rights of citizens
 - But passes laws that affect certain group of people such as Patriot Act.
 - Sep 11 made easy to group together persons who appear Middle Eastern, Arabs, Muslim.
 - This group is identified as terrorists and disidentified as citizens
 - Security in airport

- Participation in the state is limited
 - Women
 - Other races: has to be born in American- limited to immigrants
 - Although naturalized citizens take an oath of allegiance to the US and are required to renounce citizenship in other countries, strong notions persist that the foreign-born are not completely loyal to their country

Public

- Majority
- Majority of people except for white people cannot find bandages with their color (African Americans, Asians, Indians).
 - They do not want to wound to be visible

Gender, Sex, Immigration

Oct5-Oct9

Gender

- gender role: how society views, expected, stereotyped
 - man : muscular
 - drag king- a woman who dresses like a man: ties, suits
 - blue toys
 - woman: below man
 - drag queen- a man who dresses and acts like a woman: thick makes ups, dresses, sexy
 - pink toys
 - considered that woman makes decisions based on emotions (with heart rather than head)
 - Can be changed- Domestic life in the Diggings by Johnson
 - Gender role can be changed in the inevitable circumstances
 - During Gold Rush, in the place with almost no women, men take domestic works-cooking, washing, cleaning, etc that are considered women's job in most of countries
- is not directly linked to sex. We do not have a masculine gender because we are male or a feminine gender because we are female

- the masculine/feminine binary is socially constructed. None of us is either. We instead perform our **gender on a continuum** between the two
- Performative and something we all act out in our everyday life
- not biological, but sociological and cultural
- a matter of choice
 - **online**: one person can have more than six different identities (can be woman online, man in real life) and people's assumptions may affect how they treat
 - can be influenced by environment
- purpose of American studies in gender "completely constructed by society"

Sex

- Article:
 - Race, Gender, and the Privileges of Property - Peggy Pascoe
 - Miscegenation laws
 - Allowed sexual practices between whites and different races, but opposed actual marriage
 - Keep the purity of whites and did not want other races to have same properties and same social status as whites
 - Eg. **Fred (white man) and Ophelia (Indian)** got married, but when Fred died, the judge took a side of John's brother although he was known for dishonesty and immorality because Fred was a white man.
 - Fred and Ophelia worked together and bought a land, but the land was belonged to Fred because he was a man.
Man gets property.
 - Tried to justify the unconstitutional law by the name of **God**-unnatural and not God intended
 - Similar to **gay marriage**- oppositions say "God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve": looked down upon in some circles
 - **Israel** has a miscegenation law- Palestinian and Israeli
- "sex" originally was referred to biological differentiations and sexuality (destiny dictates by biology)
- Criticism
 - show how sex/sexuality revolves around power relations that organize around "constructions of gender and sexuality" (constructivist position)
 - Gender and sexuality are constructed by culture and society
- Result:

- create male/female binary
- examine the social construction of sexuality

Immigration

- Article: The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 and the Reconstruction of Race in Immigration Law-Ngai
- American Studies views immigration as a fluid movement across borders
 - Human movement is normal and natural like back and forth
- The regulation of immigration has shaped the make-up of the nation and the way we think of citizenship
 - Constructed certain hierarchies of race and nationality
 - Citizenship: non-white people were “ineligible to citizenship” including those with American citizenship by native-birth
 - Non-European people were erased from the American nationality
 - Colored races were imagined as having no country of origin and no concept of nationality
- The regulation of immigration
 - In 1882, congress passed Chinese Exclusion Act
 - Physical examinations: excluded people who likely to be unproductive in society
 - Less healthy, less educated, poorer
 - Favor to Europeans because of color of the skin, cultural attachment
- Illegal immigration
- Immigration is not always a choice—it is affected by larger contexts such as histories of imperialism, invasion, investment, trade and political influence
- The heterosexual family serves as the model of assimilation for all immigrant families, thus reinforcing oppressive structures through the unexamined construction of the heterosexual family

Reproduction of Work

Oct21-23

Capitalism

- Karl Marx critiques capitalism
 - Capitalists profit by extracting value above and beyond the cost of labor power (surplus labor)
 - Capitalism designates not just an economic structure, but the conflicts and contradictions inherent in the structure
- Continued development of capitalist manufacturing required vast international migrations of laborers
- Compared to feudalism, slavery
 - Feudal lords, slave-owners, capitalists
 - Serfs, slaves, wage-laborers
- Capitalism: the goods and services human beings produce have both a use-value and an exchange-value
 - Freedom to buy and sell commodities
 - Able to calculate the ability of external objects to satisfy their needs and desires
- Affect of capitalism
 - Imperialism (raw material and markets for final goods)
 - Great migration to Northwest (rural areas to big industrialized cities)
 - International migrations of laborers
 - Governments, business groups, and social movements struggled

Liberalism

- Liberalist = free man
- Liberalism is embedded in economic and political structures that create inequality and exclusion
 - Property rights
 - Class inequality
 - Political participation
- Market Liberalism and Political Liberalism form the contradicting notion of individual freedom and a stable cohesive social organization
 - Market Liberalism: encourage individuals to participate in market (individual freedom)

- Political Liberalism: government intervene in market and take away some freedoms
- Neoliberalism currently assumes that a free market economy generates prosperity and social organization

Class

- Class consciousness
- Resonance value, quality, religious virtue
- American Studies complicated class
 - Use class analytical tool to study historical cultural, social stratification
- Class and culture can't be separated
- Cultural forms become sites where class struggle are fought out

Performance and Practice

Oct26-30

Performance

- To perform
 - Meaning shift from achievement of action to the embodiment of an identity
 - In theater, people take identities of others and perform
 - How people perform race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, profession, region and nationality (embodiment of an identity)
 - How physical body represents social identities
 - Eg. Masculine – black – mainstream
Female-white-marginal
- Explain the relation between individual identities and social formations
 - Eg. Gender is socially constructed (drag queen)
 - Body gestures and movements (masculinity/femininity are repeated over time)
- Should be open to bigger space for other classes (race, gender)
- Teatro Viva
 - Counter hegemony
 - Wealthy: powerful
 - People on the bottom: minorities
 - Resistance of the minorities against the top
 - Oppositional consciousness
 - Not only ideological form
 - Adopt ideologies of powerful group to survive
 - Eg. Latino pass as white because of whiter skin
 - Survival tactic
 - Depending on situation , choose my identity
- Multifocality
 - Different components of your identity (sexuality, ethnicity, class, gender)

Society

- We socialize freely with others and we are also socialized into normal patterns that government shaped
 - Eg. Queers come out into society, but become subcultural (away from sexual norms)
- Dual relationship
 - Individual: sole agent and object of action

- [(individual) society, institutions] [(society) individual action]
- Laws
 - Result normalizing form of knowledge
 - Exceptions and social patterns -> deviations from the norm (not productive)
- Image
 - Not as individual moral failing, but social problems (social image)
 - Eg. Prostitution, drinking, drugs
- Organic metaphor
 - Sociology (biology)
 - Social Darwinism
- Neo Marxist – impossibility of society
- Process and structure (social relations)
 - Social categories
 - Historical formation (sexual, racial)
 - Keep changing
 - Eg. Racial categories keep changing
 - Neoliberalism
 - Anti globalization
 - Globalize not capital, but society itself
 - Eg. WTO

Aesthetics

- Individual feeling, but affects mass (poetry, drama, film etc)
 - In politics
 - Americanize the heterogeneous population
 - Role in the democratization of culture (revolution)
- Sensus communis (common sense)
 - Common standard of aesthetic judgment
 - Marshals public sentiment for the revolution
 - Collective feeling, mass unified by emotion
 - Problem
 - Individual feeling remain private, never connected/shared
 - Reconciles individual to the social world as it is instead of reshaping the world
 - For harmony and unity (as criticizes aesthetics b/c of this)

Body Talk

Nov2-6

Body

- Body politic (organized society)
 - Physical body social text rather than a given form
 - Collective entity, an artificial person created by people in power for certain ends (eg. Corporation)
 - Political agency (collective) are embodied rich white men
 - Their privilege is depending on other race, gender, classes
 - “ironic” form that have no relation to “natural” body
 - Eg. Assume a gender through the repeated bodily enactment

Queer

- Sexual identities that are abnormal
- Challenging culture and destabilize only normalcy
- Heteronormativity
 - Heterosexuality: privileged for groups that have power
 - Minorities although heterosexual, defined as outside the norms and values of dominant society

Disability

- Disability: powerless b/c of mainstream tendency to favor normal body
- View disability as
 - Personal problem, pity, can be overcome w/ help of medical intervention
- Minority
- Able body-> work and citizenship, productive
- Controlling population of undesired body (eugenics)
- Social Darwinism
 - Deaf school-> monolingual society (sign language)
 - Indicates intellectual inferiority
- Gaze: male's point of view on female (dominant view, stigmatize body)
 - Eg. In movies, camera starts from the bottom to top

Mediating Technologies

Nov9-13

Civilization

- Definition
 - Civil life-> harmony in public world
 - Formation of serviceable political subjects in a given nation
 - Framed citizenry
 - Good organization (cultural and communal(more fundamental than political constitution
 - Social civilization
 - Eg. Mark Twain- Huck Finn
- Bring lights to inequality
- Definition changes (colonialism, civil life)
- Certain people -> bottom of civilization

Identity

- Accentualizing (fixing to one thing)
 - Eg. When I see Chinese, I see only “Chinese part” not other characteristics
- Social identity changes <- personal identity allows social identity to shift
- Identity politics
 - Advantage
 - Reform, Civil Rights
 - Range of social struggles for justice, equality, right
 - Importance of recognizing devalued identities (stick with one identity)
 - Linking social identities to one another
 - Disadvantage
 - Media utilizes-> group people and exclude certain group. Shows % in poll -> make that group to vote for them
 - Hooks as to concepts of belonging
 - Transgression of identity politics
 - Coalition of different identities -> improvement
 - Strong sense of affiliation to the group where you belong
- Democratic politics
 - We need to free ourselves from socially constructed fiction
 - Recognize different social identities
 - Recognition-> circuit of power, not naming of reality

Site, Space and Land

Nov16-23

Environment

- Definition
 - Nature, What man has not made, Wilderness
- Nature used to be romanticized, mythologized
- Preservation of wilderness -> preservation of civilization
 - Importance in producing nationalism during US independence
 - US- nature, purity, civilization
 - Europe-perceived decadence
- Eco feminism
 - Nature is connected to culture
 - Feminine
 - Land is used for politics
 - Environment is shown as passive
 - It is endangered
 - Link salvation of earth to issues of social equality
 - Environment has right survive
 - Preserving wilderness -> save poor communities (less power) from industrialization
 - Environmental racism
- Rethinking environmental racism: white privilege
 - Environmental racism scholarship itself limits race
 - Narrow thinking of racism...discriminating factor
 - Intentionality
 - Scale
 - Racism
 - Has to be understood as institutional, not individual act
 - White privilege- not easily recognized for whites surrounded by whites

Region

- Places
 - Created, preexists by
 - Historical process (global capitalism, migration, eco/cultural development)
 - Industrial advances (eg. Railroads)

- Law: restricted by ownership
- Area of interest
- Changes rapidly

White

- Shifting category of whiteness
 - Geographical region
 - Skin color
 - Sociological
 - dominance, norm, privileged
 - psychological, physical violence against people of color
- past and now
 - early 1970s: white is used to show race problem, explain individual prejudice
 - now: white studies
 - emphasize privilege, reproduce white domination
 - response of African American studies
- white (color)
 - purity, saintliness
 - became justification of slavery
- eg. US naturalization Act of 1790 – citizenship to free white
 - white-> scientific category, but defined culturally, socially... depends on how majority thinks -> common knowledge
 - Irish, Italians -> not fully white b/c of their social status
- Color blindness and white privilege – self reflect
 - Race no longer matters in legal, political, economic institutions
 - White privilege X
 - “race neutral”
 - Expression of normative whiteness
 - See themselves as normal, raceless, neutral
- Perform “naturally” in moral, culture -> norms b/c of white benefits

Memory and Re-memory

Nov30-Dec4

Sentiment

- Most individual
 - Reaction is universal
 - Acknowledged by others (connect to culture, tradition)
 - Can reform society by writing touchy stories (bring sympathy)
 - Eg. Uncle Tom's Cabin
 - Expression of women's value
 - Domestic ideology is so imbedded in discourse of sentimentality
 - Colonialism, imperialism, manifest destiny, immigration
 - Changes people's sentiment (linked in social structure)
 - Influence how they dress and how they act
 - Realists dismissed "sentiment" but feminist writers refocus
 - Public and private -> can't be separated

Reform

- Form something out of something already exists
- Gender, race -> bring changes in history (morality discourse)
- Improve the world, bring sentiment in public (holocaust critics)
- Crucial to identity construction
 - Cause people to join in reform group (choose either this/that)
 - A lot of it is through sentiment and feelings
 - Reform brought unity-> social progress (women suffrage, dress reform)
 - Some countries-> same power, structure-> stuck in same culture, structure
 - Welfare reform-> hurts certain groups of people, keeping people from participating ruling (benevolent charity)