

**Department:** AMST/ENGL/HIST

**Course No:** AMST 1201/ ENGL 1201 / HIST 1503 [165]

**Credits:** 3

**Title:** Introduction to American Studies

**Contact:** A. Harris Fairbanks

**Content Area:** CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism

**Catalog Copy:** AMST 1201/ ENGL 1201 / HIST 1503 [165]. Introduction to American Studies (Also offered as INTD 165). First semester. Three credits. Not open to students who have passed INTD 276. What is American? A multi-disciplinary inquiry into the diversity of American societies and cultures.

**Course Information:** -

The course encourages students to address for themselves the question, "What is an American?" and studies historical documents to show how this question has been addressed at different points in the nation's history and from different ethnic perspectives. It discusses ways in which "Americanness" has been codified and contested both in historical documents and literary texts. It also leads students to understand how different ethnic groups including Native Americans, African Americans, and immigrants from Latin America, Europe, and the Far East have contributed to what we now think of as the "American" identity as well as the kinds of obstacles they have faced in their attempt to fit into or resist the larger American society.

Although it could conceivably be taught by faculty from other departments, to date "Introduction to American Studies" has been taught only by English Department faculty and advanced graduate students. In every incarnation of the course there has been a good deal of writing required, from response papers to major essays. There is also always a mid-term and a final exam.

In every version of the course to date the students have been asked to consider what it has meant, and what it currently means, to be an American. The classroom discussions can go in a number of different directions, but at the heart of the course are the efforts by writers past and present to formulate language that reasonably depicts "Americanness," a term that can be both inclusive or exclusive depending on the context.

**How Meets Goals of Gen Ed.:** - This course helps students acquire moral sensitivity since it centrally considers the prejudices and other social obstacles encountered by Native Americans, African Americans, and immigrants. It helps students acquire an awareness of both their ethnic group and society at large since it centrally concerns the formation of America and the ethnic mix in its present population. It makes students aware of cultural diversity since the course studies the diverse cultural influences on the social evolution of America.

**CA4 Criteria:** The course emphasizes the variety of cultural backgrounds brought by immigrant groups and Native Americans to the ethnic mix that constitutes America. It emphasizes that America itself is a social structure created by the various contributing cultures. The course considers the prejudices encountered by Native Americans and immigrant groups as America has evolved historically. It considers the changing places of ethnicities in the economy and power structure of America.

Role of Grad Students : Advanced graduate students may serve as primary instructors this course. Their major advisor will normally be their primary supervisor, responsible for training them as teachers of the course and overseeing their work. If for some reason the major advisor is not available or, as will only rarely happen, lacks expertise in the course, he or she is responsible for finding a competent faculty replacement. When the graduate student first teaches the course, the supervisor will approve the syllabus, tests, and writing assignments, will sit in on at least one class session, and will review the grade distribution. If the graduate student teaches the course subsequently, supervision will naturally be more relaxed, but the advisor will continue to oversee the instructor's performance.

Supplementary Information: This course is cross listed as ENGL 165 and INTD 165. The inclusion of this course in Group 4 has received the verbal approval of Jerry Phillips for American Studies and Margaret Lamb for INTD, the cross-listing unit.

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Sample Syllabus: English 165/INTD 165

*Course Description:*

Beginning with St. John de Crevecoeur's revolutionary attempt to define "What is an American," we will discuss a number of efforts in the centuries since to articulate what makes one an American or to codify "Americanness." Our readings will be drawn from the works of literary artists, historical commentators, and contemporary theorists in the fields of race and ethnicity studies. There will be one-page responses to each week's readings, a final examination, and one 6-8 page paper. Attendance is mandatory. Participation is encouraged.

Texts: Ronald Takaki, *From Different Shores: Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity in America* ; Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* ; Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* ; David Hollinger, *Postethnic America* ; David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly* ; Lori Alviso Alvord, *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear* . All other readings will be distributed or on reserve in Homer Babbidge Library.

*Schedule of Readings:*

Week 1: Course Introduction: Michel Guillaume St. Jean de Crevecoeur, "What is an American"; Thomas Jefferson, "The Declaration of Independence"; Thomas Howell, The American Mosaic" in *Ethnic America: A History* (handouts)

Week 2: Benjamin Franklin, "Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America"; Jane Tompkins, "Indians"; Herman Melville, fr. *The Confidence Man*, "The Metaphysics of Indian Hating" (handouts); Ron Takaki, "The Metaphysics of Civilization: Indians and the Age of Jackson" (Takaki, 52-66).

Week 3: James Madison, "Federalist 10" (handout); Nathan Glazer, "The Emergence of an American Ethnic Patter" (Takaki, 11-23); Ron Takaki, "Reflections on Racial Patterns in America" (Takaki, 24-35); Walt Whitman, fr. *Song of Myself* (handout)

Week 4: Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity*, "Typology and Ethnogenesis," "Melting Pots" (Sollors, 20-101); Henry Timrod, "Ethnogenesis" (handout)

Week 5: Vine Deloria, Jr., "Identity and Culture" (Takaki, 93-102) and fr. *Custer Died for Your Sins* (handout); N. Scott Momaday, fr. *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (handout)

Week 6: Edna Bonacich, "A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism"; Robert Blauner, "Colonized and Immigrant Minorities" (Takaki, 139-60); Michael Gold, fr. *Jews Without Money* (handout); Mid-term Exam

Week 7: Bonnie Thornton Dill, "Race, Class, and Gender: Prospects for an All-Inclusive Sisterhood" (Takaki, 214-223); Alma M. Garcia, "The Development of Chicana Feminist Discourse" (Takaki, 175-83); Gloria Anzaldua, fr. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (handout)

Week 8: David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly*; Ester Ngan-ling Chow, "The Feminist Movement: Where are all the Asian American Women" (Takaki, 184-91)

Week 9: Molefi Kete Asante, "The Afrocentric Idea"; Diane Ravitch, "Cultural Pluralism" (Takaki, 283-92); Werner Sollors, "Ethnicity and Literary Form" (Sollors, 237-58)

Week 10: Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*

Week 11: Lori Alviso Alvord, *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear*; Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, "Why I can Read Wallace Stegner" fr. *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner and Other Essays* (handout)

Week 12: Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. "The Return to the Melting Pot"; Ron Takaki, "At the End of the Century: The 'Culture Wars' in the United States" (Takaki, 293-99); William Boelhower, "A Modest Ethnic Proposal"; Lawrence Buell, "American Literary Emergence as a Postcolonial Phenomenon" (handouts)

Week 13: David Hollinger, *Postethnic America*; Paper Due

Week 14: Ron Takaki, "Creating a Community of Larger Memory" (handout); Course Conclusion.

Final Examination: Date and Time to be Announced

