

Fall 2008
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AMERICAN STUDIES PH.D. PROGRAM
Department of American Studies
School of English and American Studies, ELTE

Theories of American Studies

Radical changes have occurred in U.S. Studies in the past decades as scholars calling themselves “New Americanists” began to question and critique the foundational axioms of American Studies. This course sets out to examine the various aspects of the New Americanist revision, especially the ways this revolutionary paradigm shift is in dynamic interaction with our new notions about culture, history, and literature, as well as race, gender, class, and sexuality.

Course requirements: *Students are expected to do the (i) assigned readings for each class session. Other requirements include (ii) two in-class presentations, (iii) one oral presentation written up into a proper book review, and (iv) a term paper.*

Presentations: *each student is expected to do two book/text reviews. You can be very creative and imaginative here in how you connect your assignment with the theoretical topic of the day.*

Book review: *Students will have write a proper book review on one of the two books surveyed in their oral presentation. This review can be either descriptive or critical. Length: 1,500 words.*

Term papers: *the 15-20 page term papers are due January 6. Students are encouraged to write a prospectus/thesis outline as well.*

Grading: *Grades shall be based on (i) class participation, (ii) presentations, (iii) book review, and (iv) the term paper.*

*All required readings have been collected in a packet .
Students are advised to bring the packets to class.*

Syllabus

1. New Americanist reconceptualizations I

Gene Wise, "'Paradigm Dramas' in American Studies: A Cultural and Institutional History of the Movement" + Commentary by Jay Mechling

Reviews to be picked from:

Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land*

R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam*

Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* or *The New England Mind*

2. New Americanist reconceptualizations II

Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., "A New Context for a New American Studies?" (to p. 286)
+ Commentary by Barry Shank

Janice Radway, "What's in a Name? Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, 20 November, 1998

Reviews to be picked from:

F. O. Matthiessen, *The American Renaissance*

David Reynolds's *Beneath the American Renaissance*

Walter Benn Michaels and Donald E. Pease, *The American Renaissance Reconsidered*

Donald E. Pease, *Visionary Compacts: American Renaissance Writings in Cultural Context: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1982-1983*

3. American exceptionalism and its revisions

Bruce Kuklick, "Myth and Symbol in American Studies" + Commentary by
Howard P. Segal

Reviews to be picked from:

Perry Miller, *The New England Mind*

Perry Miller, *Nature's Nation*

Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness*

Leo Marx, *Machine in the Garden*

Sacvan Bercovitch, *The America Jeremiad*

R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam*

4. Literature and Ideology

Myra Jehlen, "Introduction: Beyond Transcendence"

Sacvan Bercovitch, "Afterword"

Reviews to be picked from:

Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*

Huck Finn controversies

Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America

Jane Tompkins, "Sentimental Power: Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Politics of
Literary History"

The American Self, ed. Sam Girgus

5. Multiculturalism

Gregory S. Jay, "Taking Multiculturalism Personally"

John Trombold, "The Uneven Development of Multiculturalism"

Book for review:

Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Disuniting America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society*

6. The Can(n)on in the Culture Wars

Paul Lauter, "The Literatures of America: A Comparative Discipline"

Donald Pease, "National Identities, Postmodern Artifacts, and Postnational
Narratives."

Book for review:

Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*.

New York: Riverhead Books, 1994.

7. Reading the Canon

Judith Fetterley, "Reading about Reading: 'A Jury of Her Peers,' 'The Murders

in the Rue Morgue,' and 'The Yellow Wallpaper'"

Texts for review:

Susan Glaspell, "A Jury of Her Peers"

E. A. Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"

8. Individualism: the crisis of hegemonic perceptions

Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860"

Linda Kerber, "Can a Woman Be an Individual? The Discourse on Self-Reliance"

Book for review:

Joyce W. Warren, *The American Narcissus*

9. Shifting centers: women and gay writers in the canon

Nina Baym, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction

Exclude Women Authors" + Commentary by Margaret McFadden

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Introduction: Axiomatic"

Books for review:

Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader*

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet*.

10. Shifting the centers: African American writers in the canon

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The Trope of the New Negro and the Reconstruction of
the Image of the Black"

Mary Helen Washington, "Disturbing Peace: What Happens to American Studies if
You Put African American Studies at the Center?"

Books for review:

Gina Wisker, *Post-Colonial and African American Women's Writing*

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

11. Producing American Races I

Wahneema Lubiano, "Mapping the Interstices between Afro-American Cultural Discourse and Cultural Studies (1996)."

Patricia McKee, "Self-Division as Racial Divide: *The Sound and the Fury*"

12. Producing American Races II

Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory" (1987)

Michael Awkward, "Appropriative Gestures: Theory and Afro-American Literary Criticism" (1988)

13. Wrapping up: American Studies and the Postmodern Episteme

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U.S. Studies: A New Americanist Perspective

COURSE PACKET

1. Donald E. Pease, "New Americanists: Revisionist Interventions into the Canon"
(*boundary 2*, 17.1 [Spring 1990], 1-37)
2. Gene Wise, "'Paradigm Dramas' in American Studies: A Cultural and Institutional History of the Movement" + Commentary by Jay Mechling
(*Locating American Studies. The Evolution of a Discipline*. Ed. Lucy Maddox. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. 166-214)
3. Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., "A New Context for a New American Studies?"
+ Commentary by Barry Shank
(*Locating American Studies. The Evolution of a Discipline*. Ed. Lucy Maddox. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. 279-309)
4. Janice Radway, "What's in a Name? Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, 20 November, 1998
(*American Quarterly* 51.1 [March 1999]: 1-32)
5. Bruce Kuklick, "Myth and Symbol in American Studies" + Commentary by Howard P. Segal
(*Locating American Studies. The Evolution of a Discipline*. Ed. Lucy Maddox. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. 71-90)
6. Myra Jehlen, "Introduction: Beyond Transcendence"
(*Ideology and Classic American Literature*. Ed. Myra Jehlen and Sacvan Bercovitch. Cambridge UP, 1985, 1-18)
7. Sacvan Bercovitch, "Afterword"
(*Ideology and Classic American Literature*. Ed. Myra Jehlen and

Sacvan Bercovitch. Cambridge UP, 1985, 418-442)

8. Gregory S. Jay, "Taking Multiculturalism Personally"
(*American Literature and the Culture Wars*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997, 103-135)
9. John Trombold, "The Uneven Development of Multiculturalism"
(*Profession*. Ed. Phyllis Franklin. MLA, 1999, 236-247)
10. Paul Lauter, "The Literatures of America: A Comparative Discipline"
(*Canons and Contexts*.. Oxford UP, 1991, 48-95)
11. Donald E. Pease, "National Identities, Postmodern Artifacts, and Postnational Narratives."
(*National Identities and Post-Americanist Narratives*. Ed. Donald E. Pease. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994. 1-13)
125. Judith Fetterley, "Reading about Reading: 'A Jury of Her Peers,' 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue,' and 'The Yellow Wallpaper'"
(*Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts*. Ed. Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocínio P. Schweickart. John Hopkins UP, 1986, 147-164)
13. Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860"
(*Locating American Studies. The Evolution of a Discipline*. Ed. Lucy Maddox. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. 43-66)
14. Linda Kerber, "Can a Woman Be an Individual? The Discourse on Self-Reliance"
(*Toward an Intellectual History of Women*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina Press, 1997, 200-223)
15. Nina Baym, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors" + Commentary by Margaret McFadden
(*Locating American Studies. The Evolution of a Discipline*. Ed. Lucy Maddox. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. 215-234)
16. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Introduction: Axiomatic"
(*The Epistemology of the Closet*. U of California P, 1990, 1-63)
17. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The Trope of the New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black"
(*The New American Studies: Essays from Representations*. Ed. Philip Fisher. U of California P, 1991, 319-345)
18. Mary Helen Washington, "Disturbing Peace: What Happens to American Studies if You Put African American Studies at the Center?"
(*American Quarterly* 50.1 [March 1998], 1-23)
19. Wahneema Lubiano, "Mapping the Interstices between Afro-American Cultural

Discourse and Cultural Studies (1996)."

(*African American Literary Theory*. Ed. Winston Napier. New York UP, 2000, 643-652)

20. Patricia McKee, "Self-Division as Racial Divide: *The Sound and the Fury*"

(*Producing American Races*. Duke UP, 1999, 99-122)

21. Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory (1987)."

(*African American Literary Theory*. Ed. Winston Napier. New York UP, 2000, 280-289)

22. Michael Awkward, "Appropriative Gestures: Theory and Afro-American Literary Criticism" (1988)

(*African American Literary Theory*. Ed. Winston Napier. New York UP, 2000, 331-338)