

# **Narratives of America(s)**

**HUMN 4984/5984, SSCI 5050 & SJUS 4050**

**Student Commons Building 3208**

**Maymester**

**Sat & Sun, 9am-5pm (May 14-June 3)**

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Office Hours: By appointment

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Throughout the long history of the concept of “America,” different people have uttered, dreamed, presented, sang, filmed, painted and written a vast array of--often conflicting--narratives of America. We will study these narrative through a diverse range of media: movies, music, scholarship, speeches, diaries, literature, art, spirituality, and many more. This graduate seminar will expose students to the power of narrative to construct the political, economic, ideological and geographical boundaries of “America.”

The fundamental goal of this interdisciplinary seminar is to help students critically analyze narratives of inclusion and exclusion and to create their own persuasive rhetorical abilities. Students will be given assignments aimed at helping them to find their own “voice” by engaging with a wide variety of narrative formats and having regular opportunities to experiment and expand their own intellectual and rhetorical skills. Creativity and exploration will be central to this process, and students will be encouraged to explore writing, speaking, and presenting around the topic of the many America(s) that exist and are produced discursively.

## **COURSE GOALS**

1. Develop student’s ability to critically analyze the social, political, economic and cultural dimensions of narration
2. Introduce students to how the concept of America/Americas has been created through discourse and deepen appreciation for the many Americas that exist
3. Cultivate a broad interdisciplinary understanding of narrative, its varying manifestations, and its societal influence
4. Expose students to primary sources and help them to research primary sources related to their own interests
5. Expand and develop students personal and scholarly “voice” through regular, impromptu, expressive, and diverse methods of writing
6. Develop students belief in their own creativity, and cultivate that creativity through regular creative coursework and activity

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **1. CLASS PARTICIPATION (30% of grade)**

- a. Attendance is mandatory for each of the six meeting times. In case of serious illness or major life issues, please notify the professor immediately. Failure to attend the seminar without prior notification and rationale will result in a loss of 15% of your final grade per absence.
- b. Students are expected to have completed all required readings before class, and active seminar participation—in terms of both the quality and the quantity—is expected of all members of our learning community.

### **2. IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS (20% of grade)**

- a. Throughout the course of each day, there will be writing, reading, and other creative assignments. Students are required to put their full effort into completing the assignments and producing quality work.

### **3. WRITING ASSIGNMENTS (30% of grade)**

- a. Writing assignments are required for each of our weekly meetings. Citations in writing should be done simply as: (Smith, 46). Instructions for each week's writing assignments will be given to students on Sunday at the end of class.
  - i. Week 1: How have these readings helped you to understand what it means to "narrate America(s)," and what does that mean to you personally?
  - ii. Week 2: What are the "lands" and spaces narrated in the Americas? What are the "lands" and spaces narrated in Denver? How are you personally connected to, and disconnected from, these lands?
  - iii. Week 3: How do you understand the struggles/revolutions of the Americas differently after this week's readings compared to knowledge beforehand? What role does narration play in revolution?
    1. OR work on Creative Narratives (see below)
  - iv. Week 4: What role do spirits/gods play in the narratives of America? How does spiritual materialism impact these narratives?
    1. OR work on Creative Narratives (see below)

### **4. CREATIVE NARRATIVES (20% of grade)**

- a. Throughout the first three weeks, students will be responsible for developing a "Creative Narrative Presentation." This can be done either working with narratives from your own research interests (outside of the class), or building upon narratives we are engaging in the course. Either way, students will be required to expose us to new narratives not directly from class material.
- b. On June 4<sup>th</sup>, each student in the course will be responsible for developing and leading a 20-25 (max) minute creative narratives presentation. No PowerPoints allowed. Presentations will be graded on the basis of students exemplifying the their ability to express, perform, and engage an array of narratives in creative ways.

## COURSE POLICIES

1. Respect of members of our Learning Community. My only real “rule” is respect for all members of our learning community. It is okay to disagree, but never to do so in a way that disrespects other people. If you can’t say something without being respectful, don’t say it. Strive to make others feel valued.
2. Attendance is mandatory for each of the six class meetings. In case of serious illness or major life issues, please notify the professor immediately. Failure to attend the seminar without prior notification and rationale will result in a loss of 15% of your final grade per absence.
3. Two class periods will take place off-campus. Students are required to be respectful of other buildings, places, and people that we visit; to take precautions to act safely and to be mindful of the safety of their peers; to remain with the group for the entirety of our time together. If you have any physical needs, or have concerns, please contact the instructor.
4. Academic Honesty and Graduate Scholarly Ethics: All work for this course must be the student’s own. Anyone guilty of academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, paper or argument theft, etc.) will fail the course automatically and will be reported to the university for further disciplinary measures. If you have any doubt regarding what plagiarism is, you must speak with the professor at once. Students are responsible for being attentive to, or observant of, campus policies about academic honesty as stated in the University’s Student Conduct Code. The Code can be found at <http://thunder1.cudenver.edu/studentlife/studentlife/discipline.html>.

## GRADING SCALE

100-93	A	76-73	C
92-90	A-	72-70	C-
89-87	B+	69-67	D+
86-83	B	66-63	D
82-80	B-	62-60	D-
79-77	C+	59-0	F

## REQUIRED BOOKS

\*\*\*Make sure to buy the exact version listed below. Do not buy eBooks\*\*\*

- Jean Baudrillard, *America*, Verso, ISBN: 978-1844676828
- Neil Gaiman, *American Gods: Author’s Preferred Text, 10th Anniversary Edition*, William Morrow, ISBN: 978-0062472106
- Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*, Beacon Press, ISBN: 978-0807057834
- Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, editor Richard D. Heffner, Signet Classics, ISBN: 978-0451531605
- Aime Cesaire, *A Tempest*, G. Bochardt Pub. ISBN: 978-0913745151

# COURSE SCHEDULE

\*\*\*All texts should be read in the order they are listed below\*\*\*

## WEEK 1: NARRATIVES OF AMERICA(S)

**Class 1:** INTRODUCTORY NARRATIVES: Sunday May 14<sup>th</sup>

- PART I: Why Narrative?
  - Richard Delgado, “Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative” [PDF]
- PART II: Three Historical Narratives of ‘America’
  - Paul Johnson, *A History of the American People* [PDF]
  - Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States* [PDF]
  - Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous People’s History of the United States*, “Author’s Note” & “Introduction” p.xi-xiv; 1-10
- PART III: Two Cultural Narratives of ‘America’
  - 1835 C.E.—Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, “Introduction” & “Part 1: Sections 1-3” p. 22-59;
  - 1988 C.E.—Jean Baudrillard, *America*, “Introduction,” & “Vanishing Point,” ix-xvi; 1-11

## WEEK 2: AMERICAN(S) LAND(S)

ALL WEEK: Begin *American Gods*, roughly p. 1-200

**Class 2:** BORDERLANDS: Saturday May 20<sup>th</sup>

- MON:
  - Robert Cottrol, *The Long, Lingering Shadow: Slavery, Race, and Law in the American Hemisphere*, p. 1-10 [PDF]
  - Selections from Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera* [PDF]
- TUE:
  - Ronald Takaki, *Different Mirrors*, “The ‘Tempest’ in the Wilderness” [PDF]
  - Read the Sparknotes summary of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*:  
<http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/tempest/summary.html>
  - Aime Cesaire, *A Tempest*

**Class 3: DENVERLANDS: Sunday May 21<sup>st</sup>**

BIKE DENVER DAY: We will be doing a bike tour around Denver on this class period. All students are required to wear a helmet and bring a bike lock. If you do not have a bike, helmet, or lock (and are unable to borrow them), I suggest renting one at nearby Confluence Kayaks: <https://www.confluencekayaks.com/bikes.htm>  
If you have concerns about this bike ride for any reason, please discuss this with the instructor the first day of class.

- THUR & FRI:
  - David Harvey, “Introduction,” *Social Justice in the City*
  - Visit: [www.NorthEastDenverChange.org](http://www.NorthEastDenverChange.org) and, in order:
    - Read “About Us,” “Plans,” “Impacts”
    - Watch the videos in “Community”
    - Look through—and analyze—the material in “Resources”
  - Tom Noel, *Denver Landmarks*, “Introduction” [PDF]

**WEEK 3: AMERICA(S) REVOLUTIONS & MAJORITIES**

ALL WEEK: Continue *American Gods*, roughly p. 200-450

**Class 4: REVOLUTIONS: Saturday May 27<sup>th</sup>**

- MON:
  - Jacqueline Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement” [PDF]
    - What is Hall’s thesis? Please come to class prepared to answer this question.
  - Dunbar-Ortiz, “The Birth of a Nation” (Chapter 5)
  - Herbert Marcuse, “The Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition”
- TUE:
  - Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Women’s Movement Changed America*, “The Longest Revolution” [PDF]
  - Robert F. Williams, *Negroes With Guns*, [PDF] (\*\*read only “Prologue”)
  - Gene Marine, “The Persecution and Assassination of the Black Panthers as performed by the Oakland Police,” *Ramparts* [PDF]
  - C. Wright Mills, *Listen Yankee!* [PDF] (\*\*read only p. 13-22)
- WED:
  - Martin Luther King Jr., “Beyond Vietnam: A Time To Break Silence” [PDF]
  - Malcolm X, “This is Not an American Problem, This is a World Problem” [PDF]

**Class 5: MAJORITYLANDS ?:** Sunday May 28<sup>th</sup>

- THUR:
  - Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or The Racial Basis of European History*
- FRI:
  - De Tocqueville, “Power of the Majority...its Consequences,” p. 124-144
  - Jean Baudrillard, *America*, “New York,” & “Astral America,” 12-80

**CREATIVE NARRATIVES PRESENTATIONS PART I**

**WEEK 4: SPIRIT(S) OF AMERICA(S)**

ALL WEEK: Continue *American Gods*, roughly p.450-Chapter 17 (not end of the book)

**Class 6: SPIRITUAL MATERIALISM:** Saturday June 4<sup>th</sup>

OFF CAMPUS MEETING: We will be meeting at Naropa University in Lincoln Hall 4140. Free street parking is available north of campus.

**Directions:** <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Naropa+University/@40.0138766,-105.2671672,15z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x0:0x298dfceb72968f05!8m2!3d40.0138766!4d-105.2671672>

- MON: Dunbar-Ortiz, “Doctrine of Discovery,” & “The Future of the United States,” p. 197-236
- TUE: Work on Creative Narrative
- WED: Selections from Chogyam Trungpa, *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* [PDF]
- THUR: Work on Creative Narrative
- FRI: Baudrillard, Baudrillard, “Utopia Achieved?” “The End of US Power?” & “Desert Forever” p. 81-138

**CREATIVE NARRATIVES PRESENTATIONS PART II**

## OTHER IMPORTANT COURSE INFORMATION

Format of the Final Research Paper: The paper shall be typed, double-spaced, on letter size white paper using 12 pt. Times New Roman font with 1" margins and left justification, with each page numbered starting on the first page of text. Do not include the cover page as a numbered page. Additionally, the last name of the student shall be included on the top right corner of each page. Please use only one side of the page. Papers will be graded on content, organization, presentation style (e.g., paragraph structure, grammar, spelling), and proper use of citations. Please note that unless expressly permitted by the instructor, emailed assignments will not be accepted. If you are going to be absent the day the assignment is due, it is your responsibility to get your paper delivered to me before that class.

Disability Accommodations: The faculty at the University of Colorado system have both a legal and moral obligation to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. To be eligible for accommodations, students **must** be registered with the UCD Office of Disability Resources and Services (DRS). The DRS staff has experience to assist faculty in determining reasonable accommodations and to coordinate these accommodations. If a student is given accommodations, they must be followed. If a student chooses not to accept the accommodations set forth by the DRS, they **MUST** complete all assignments and do all course work in the same manner as all other students. No exceptions or alternate forms of evaluation can be used except those mandated by the DRS. Faculty cannot arbitrarily decide to give a student extra time, extra assistance or other forms of aid unless it is formally mandated by the DRS.

CLAS Incomplete (IW/IF) Policy: The faculty in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences passed the following policy relating to the awarding of incomplete grades. This CLAS policy is consistent with the UCD campus policy. Incomplete grades (IW or IF) are NOT granted for low academic performance. To be eligible for an Incomplete grade, students **MUST** (1) successfully complete a minimum of 75% of the course, (2) have special circumstances beyond their control that preclude them from attending class and completing graded assignments, and (3) make arrangements to complete missing assignments **with the original instructor**. Verification of special circumstances is required. Completion of a CLAS Course Completion Agreement is strongly suggested. Incompletes cannot be awarded that stipulate (1) a student may repeat the entire course, (2) repeat or replace existing grades, (3) allow the student an indeterminate period of time to complete a course, or (4) allow the student to repeat the course with a different instructor. The CLAS Course Completion Agreement is available from the CLAS Advising Office, NC 4024.

MHMSS Incomplete Policy: Incomplete grades are not given to students simply because they are receiving lower grades than they would like. To be eligible for an incomplete grade, students must have completed 75% of the course assignments with passing grades and have special circumstances outside of their control that preclude completion of the course. The incomplete grade that will be given if the above conditions are met is an IF,

which means that if the student does not complete the work for the course within 12 months, the grade reverts to an F.

Military Personal: If you are a student in the military with the potential of being called to military service and/or training during the course of the semester, you are encouraged to contact your school/college Associate Dean or Advising Office immediately.

Policy For Returning Papers & Exams: I encourage students to provide me with a SESE at the end of the semester so I can return their papers. If you do not, papers will be discarded after grades have been submitted.

Religious Holiday Accommodations: Faculty in the University of Colorado system have both a legal and moral obligation to provide reasonable accommodations to students who must be absent from classes because of religious holidays. Faculty are expected to develop course-consistent accommodations for students who miss class or graded assignments in order to observe religious holidays. Faculty are encouraged to (1) avoid examinations during major religious holidays and (2) ask students to privately identify all course conflicts at the beginning of the semester. For a list of such holidays, please consult <http://www.interfaithcalendar.org>.

Student Complaints About Course or Instructor: 1) meet with the instructor face-to-face; 2) if not satisfied, meet with the head/chair of the department/unit; 3) if not satisfied, appeal to the Associate Dean. No step in this process may be skipped. See "Procedures for Student Grievances about Courses or Faculty, CLAS."

Student Email Policy: Email is an official means of communication for students at the CU Denver. All official university email, *including email I send as part of this class (which I will do on a fairly regular basis)*, will be sent to each student's assigned CU Denver email address. CU Denver will *only* use CU Denver student email accounts if it elects to send email communication to students. CU Denver email accounts are available through IT Services. Students are responsible for reading emails received from CU Denver. Official emails sent through this system will be presumed to have been received by students.