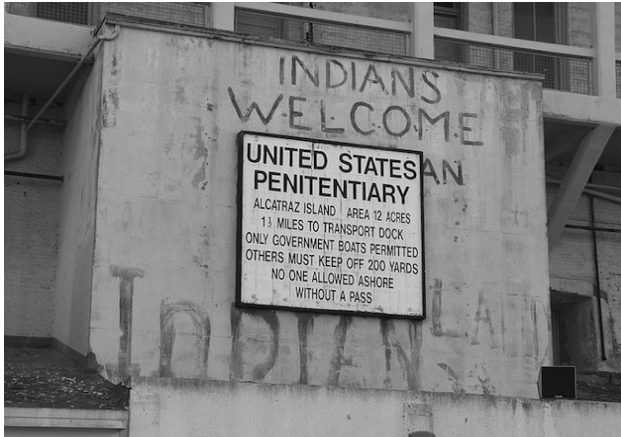


## Introduction to American Studies



Graffiti from the 1969-1971 occupation of Alcatraz by indigenous activists

### Professor

Marisol LeBrón / [lebronm@dickinson.edu](mailto:lebronm@dickinson.edu)

### Time and Location

Tuesday and Thursday: 10:30am – 11:45am  
Denny 211

### Office Hours

Tuesday: 2:30PM – 4:30PM

### Office Location

Denny Hall 10A

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course serves as an introduction to the interdisciplinary field of American Studies. We will start the course with readings that detail the emergence of the field, its various methodological approaches, and critical turns within American studies scholarship. Informed by these conversations in the field, we will turn to questions about differential power relations within American society. How do race, class, culture, gender, sexuality, and citizenship intersect to shape the “American experience” and what it means to be American? How do political, economic, and social institutions transmit or reinforce certain concepts about American identity and culture? We will discuss not only identity formation and state practice, but also social movements, popular culture, media, and labor. We will end the course with Bethany Moreton’s *To Serve God and Wal-Mart* as a case study for American Studies scholarship that touches on the multiple and intersecting questions of religion, transnational capital, consumerism, and identity.

## COURSE MATERIALS

Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, eds., *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).

Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

Janice A. Radway, Kevin K. Gaines, Barry Shank, and Penny Von Eschen, eds., *American Studies: An Anthology* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

All other reading material for this course will be available through Moodle [marked \*]. You are expected to print out these readings and bring them to class.

## EXPECTATIONS

During our time together, you will engage in discussion-based intellectual exchange with your fellow classmates and rigorous, original analysis of the weekly readings. Our class sessions will help you to develop critical thinking capacities that will prove indispensable both in the classroom and beyond.

We are collectively responsible for the quality of our time together. In other words, you will get out of this class what you invest in terms of preparedness and effort. Therefore, you are expected to arrive to each session on time, having read the assigned material, having determined relevant questions and points for discussion, and ready to engage each other respectfully in the classroom.

Please note that this is a *reading intensive* course. There are many difficult readings that will require independent thinking, processing, and work. You will have to seek out extra help if you are having difficulty understanding the concepts in the course. Therefore, if you do not have the time or are not committed to making the time to take on this amount of effort, this is most likely not the course for you.

## A NOTE ON DIFFERENCE, DISCOMFORT, & RESPECT IN THE CLASSROOM

Respect for difference, in all its forms, is essential to building a classroom environment where everyone feels able to learn and contribute to class discussions. The material covered in this course will engage with questions of how difference produces distinct forms of knowledge and diverse experiences. The experiences and ways of knowing discussed in the course materials may be similar or different from your own experiences, both of which can result in questions and possibly even feelings of discomfort. When these moments arise, I encourage you to view them as valuable and important components of learning.

Thus, this course will ask you to think critically and thoughtfully about social differences and societal inequalities in ways that may expand or challenge previously held ideas. That being said, the goal of this class is not to “force” certain ways of thinking onto anyone, but rather, to expose everyone to ways of thinking and being in the world that may or may not be different from their own. I expect and encourage students to disagree with the course material, your fellow classmates, and me; however, I expect that everyone remain respectful and willing to listen at all times. Although you are under no obligation to agree with the course materials, the instructor, or the other students, you are still responsible for displaying a comprehension of the texts assigned and the conversations taking place.

If you have concerns about course content or the expectations regarding the classroom environment, please consult with me during the first week to determine whether this class is a good fit for you. If you are uncomfortable with or uninterested in discussions of race, im/migration, gender, dis/ability, sexuality, class, histories of colonization, exploitation, capitalism, and violence, this class may not be for you as these will be central themes covered throughout the semester.

## COMMUNICATION

*Email:* You are welcome to email me with any questions or concerns. I expect, however, that you be timely and considerate with your emails. Requests or questions related to scheduled assignments that are received less than 12 hours before the assignment is due may not receive a response.

Please be professional in your email communications with all your professors, including me. Consult the following rules on how to email your professors: <http://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/professors-guide/2010/09/30/18-etiquette-tips-for-e-mailing-your-professor>

*Office Hours:* Do not hesitate to come see me if you have any questions regarding the course materials or your written work. If you are unable to attend my scheduled office hours, contact me to set up another time by appointment.

## ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Attendance at all classes is required. Because this class only meets twice per week, ***students will be allowed one absence without penalty.*** All other absences will lower your participation grade for the course. ***Students with 5 or more absences will automatically fail the course.*** Students are expected to arrive to class on time; students arriving to class more than 15 minutes after the class has started will be marked absent for the day.

If an extenuating circumstance requires that you be late or miss a class session, please consult with me ahead of time. Please note that, in addition to contacting me, it is *YOUR* personal responsibility to attain and review notes for any missed classes from your fellow students.

You are expected to attend every class and be fully present in our collective space. Therefore, ***cell phones must be put on silent and remain out of sight. Additionally, all laptops, iPads, tablets, and digital notebooks are prohibited in class,*** unless there is a documented need for students who require specific learning accommodations. Because this is a discussion-based class, you will not need to take digital notes. Also, you must remember to bring the readings with you to class in order to appropriately reference and engage them during our discussions.

## LATE PAPER POLICY

***No Late Papers Will Be Accepted Without Penalty.*** One-third of a letter grade will be deducted for every day that a paper is late (i.e., B+ to B). Late papers may also not receive written comments. If you do not hand in a paper at all, you will receive a ZERO for the assignment. Papers cannot be rewritten. If you are having difficulty with an assignment, please come see me during my office hours.

## PAPER FORMAT

All papers must use 12-point font, Times New Roman, double-spacing, and 1" margins on all sides. All students must use the following header:

Your name  
 The class title  
 The assignment (i.e. midterm exam, reflection paper, etc.)  
 The date you handed in the paper (not the due date)

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Any breach of academic integrity will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary review. I expect all students to familiarize themselves with and adhere to Dickinson College's policies regarding academic misconduct, which can be accessed here: [http://www.dickinson.edu/student-life/resources/dean-of-students/content/Conduct---Community-Standards/#Academic Misconduct](http://www.dickinson.edu/student-life/resources/dean-of-students/content/Conduct---Community-Standards/#Academic%20Misconduct)

## WHAT IS PLAGIARISM?

Plagiarism is the appropriation of someone else's work or ideas – whether they are written or not – without acknowledgement, proper identification of the source, or citation. It is irrelevant whether this was done intentionally or not. Further, a lack of knowledge about U.S. standards of academic citation is not an excuse or explanation. While the most egregious forms of plagiarism use entire phrases, sentences, or paragraphs verbatim without quotation marks or citation, paraphrasing someone else's work without attribution *and* altering a few words to pass someone else's ideas off as your own also constitute equally serious forms of plagiarism. The inclusion of non-textual images (i.e. drawings, maps, graphs, and charts) in a paper is also considered to plagiarism if the images are not properly cited.

It is *YOUR* responsibility to consult with your instructor, a librarian, or writing tutor if you are unsure or unclear about how to properly use citations.

For more information about plagiarism please consult the Purdue Online Writing Lab's webpage dedicated to avoiding plagiarism: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>

## ACCESSIBILITY & ACCOMODATIONS

Dickinson College makes reasonable academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students requesting accommodations must make their request and provide appropriate documentation to Disability Services in Biddle House. Because classes change every semester, eligible students must obtain a new accommodation letter from Director Marni Jones every semester and review this letter with their professors so the accommodations can be implemented. The Director of Disability Services is available by appointment to answer questions and discuss any implementation issues you may have.

Disability Services proctoring is managed by Susan Frommer at (717)-254-8107 or [proctoring@dickinson.edu](mailto:proctoring@dickinson.edu). Address general inquiries to Stephanie Anderberg at (717)-245-1734 or e-mail [disabilityservices@dickinson.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@dickinson.edu).

If you prefer to be called by a different name or referred to by a different gender pronoun than the one under which you are officially enrolled, please inform me.

## ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

### *Class Participation: 25%*

On-time completion of the reading assignments, active listening during lectures and in-class discussion, and adding to discussions by making comments and asking questions are all required of you in this course.

### *Midterm Exam: 25%*

This exam will consist of a selection of short essay questions. Students will choose **one** question and write a 3-5 page paper responding to the question. Papers must seriously engage the readings and address the questions posed, demonstrating an understanding of key concepts and arguments from the course. This is a take home exam. **Midterm Exam due Thursday, October 23.**

*Précis: 15%*

Students will select one week of the course that especially interests them and write a 3-page paper in which they analyze the set of readings assigned for that week. These are not simply summaries of the readings. You are expected to discuss the authors' central arguments, the strengths and weakness of each author's arguments, and how the readings relate to each other and other readings from the course. You are also welcome to include your own reactions to the readings; however, you must prioritize your discussion of the main points of the readings and how the readings relate to each other. Students will sign-up during the first week. Reflection papers are due at the beginning of the week selected.

*Final Exam: 35%*

The final exam is similar in format to the midterm. For the final, however, students will select **two** questions and write 7-9 pages responding to the two questions selected. This is a take home exam. ***Final Exam due December 16 at 5pm.***

**Week One: Situating America, Situating American Studies****Tuesday, September 2**

- Introduction to the course

**Thursday, September 4**

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

**Week Two: Empire, Nation, Diaspora****Tuesday, September 9**

- Alys Eve Weinbaum, "Nation" in *Keywords*, p. 164-170.
- Nikhil Pal Singh, "Rethinking Race and Nation" in *American Studies: An Anthology*, p. 9-16.

**Thursday, September 11**

- Brent Edwards, "Diaspora" in *Keywords*, p. 81-84.
- Brent Edwards, "The Practice of Diaspora" in *American Studies: An Anthology*, p. 33-40.

**Week Three: States, Citizenship, Rights****Tuesday, September 16**

- Lauren Berlant, "Citizenship" in *Keywords*, p. 37-42.
- Laura Doyle, "Liberty's Empire" in *American Studies: An Anthology*, p. 59-68.

**Thursday, September 18**

- Eithne Luibheid, "Immigration" in *Keywords*, p. 123-131.
- Mae Ngai, "The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 and the Reconstruction of Race in Immigration Law" in *American Studies: An Anthology*, p. 69-77.

**Week Four: Reproduction of Work****Tuesday, September 23**

- Walter Johnson, "Slavery" in *Keywords*, p. 221-224.
- Jennifer Morgan, "Women's Sweat: Gender and Agricultural Labor in the Atlantic World" in *American Studies: An Anthology*, p. 145-154.

**Thursday, September 25**

- Lisa Lowe, "Globalization" in *Keywords*, p. 120-123
- Lisa Lowe, "Work, Immigration, Gender: New Subjects of Cultural Politics" in *American Studies: An Anthology*, p. 177-184.

**Week Five: Religion, Spirituality, and Alternate Ways of Being in the U. S.****Tuesday, September 30**

- Janet R. Jakobsen, "Religion" in *Keywords*, p. 201-204.
- Michael Warner, "Secularism" in *Keywords*, p. 209-213.

**Thursday, October 2**

- In class screening: *Friends of God: A Road Trip with Alexandra Pelosi* (2007)

**Week Six: Performances and Practices****Tuesday, October 7**

- Russ Castronovo, "Aesthetics" in *Keywords*, p. 10-12.
- Robin Kelley, "Riddle of the Zoot: Malcolm Little and Black Cultural Politics during World War II" in *American Studies: An Anthology*, p. 280-289.

**Thursday, October 9**

- Susan Manning, "Performance" in *Keywords*, p. 177-180.
- George Lipsitz, "Mardi Gras Indians: Carnival and Counter-Narrative in Black New Orleans" in *American Studies: An Anthology*, p. 290-298.

**Week Seven: Body Talk****Tuesday, October 14**

- Bruce Burgett, "Sex" in *Keywords*, p. 217-221.
- Nayan Shah, "Between 'Oriental Depravity' and 'Natural Degenerates': Spatial Borderlands and the Making of Ordinary Americans" in *American Studies: An Anthology*, p. 346-356.
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**Thursday, October 16**

- Kanta Kochhar-Lindgren, "Disability" in *Keywords*, p. 85-88.
- Lennard Davis, "The Rule of Normalcy: Politics and Disability in the USA" in *American Studies: An Anthology*, p. 357-364.

**Week Eight: NO CLASS, MIDTERM DUE****Tuesday, October 21**

- MIDTERM PAUSE – NO CLASS

**Thursday, October 23**

- PROFESSOR LEBRÓN AT PUERTO RICAN STUDIES CONFERENCE – NO CLASS
- **MIDTERM EXAM DUE TODAY AT 5PM**

**Week Nine: Sites, Space, and Land****Tuesday, October 28**

- Laura Pulido, Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California” in *American Studies: An Anthology*, p. 465-475.
- In-class screening of “Majora Carter: Greening the Ghetto,” *TED Talk* (2006).

**Thursday, October 30**

- Martin Manalansan, “Race, Violence, and Neoliberal Spatial Politics in the Global City,” in *Social Text* (2005) \*
- In-class screening of *Fenced Out!* (2001)

**Week Ten: Mediating Technologies****Tuesday, November 4**

- Herman S. Gray, “Television and the Politics of Difference” in *American Studies: An Anthology*, p. 433-441.

**Thursday, November 6**

- PROFESSOR LEBRÓN AT AMERICAN STUDIES CONFERENCE – NO CLASS

**Week Eleven: Memory and Re-Memory****Tuesday, November 11**

- Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History” in *American Studies: An Anthology*, p. 558-566.

**Thursday, November 13**

- Matthew Pratt Guterl, “South” in *Keywords*, p. 230-233.
- David Blight, “The Lost Cause and Causes Not Lost” in *American Studies: An Anthology*, p. 528-539.

**Week Twelve: What makes Wal-Mart So American?****Tuesday, November 18**

- Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart*, Prologue and Chapters 1-2

**Thursday, November 20**

- Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart*, Chapters 3-4

**Week Thirteen: Christianity and Service Work**

**Tuesday, November 25**

- Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart*, Chapters 5-6

**Thursday, November 27**

- THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS

**Week Fourteen: Evangelizing the Market**

**Tuesday, December 2**

- Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart*, Chapters 7-8

**Thursday, December 4**

- Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart*, Chapters 9-11

**Week Fifteen: Free Trade Missions**

**Tuesday, December 9**

- Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart*, Chapters 12-13 and Epilogue

**Thursday, December 11 [final day of class]**

- Wrap up & Evals

**FINAL EXAM DUE DECEMBER 16 AT 5PM.  
NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED – NO EXCEPTIONS!**