

FS102—Academic Discourse II
Constructing America, Consuming America: The Cultural Construction of
American National Identity

MWF 11:00-11:50, Oddfellows 222

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Office Hours: T 11-1; Th 10:45-12:15; F 12-2:30; by appointment

Course Description:

This course will explore the ways in which media and other forms of “discourse” in popular culture work to actively construct and inscribe particular ideas about American identity. Through intensive speaking and writing practice, you will consider, evaluate, and challenge how your practices as consumers of American “culture” reflect, engage, and reshape what it means to be “American.” We begin our study by reading theories of nationalism and identity formation and then move to consider various artifacts of popular culture (advertisements, editorials, newscasts, television shows, movies, etc.) in relation to those theories. Students examine how the media and other vehicles of popular culture engage with issues of race and ethnicity, gender, and class to construct ideas about American national identity. We will also read and discuss various theories about discourse, cultural studies, and nationalism and use these theories as foundations for our own critical inquiry. Designated “W,” this section places particular emphasis on the practice of writing and offers specialized instruction to improve writing skills.

Course Goals:

As the second part of a two-semester seminar sequence designed to introduce students to college-level academic writing and speaking in the liberal arts, FS102 builds upon skills learned in FS101 with particular attention to the following:

- *Developing sophisticated theses and supporting evidence
- *Developing increasing awareness of rhetorical strategy and writing for a purpose
- *Increasing awareness of audience, context, and various rhetorical approaches
- *Increasing emphasis on regular critique and revision as a part of the writing process
- *Developing critical thinking and analytical skills

Required Texts and Materials:

- *Ackley, Katherine Anne. *Perspectives on Contemporary Issues: Readings Across the Disciplines*. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009.
- *Course Packet (available at the Allegheny bookstore)
- *Diana Hacker’s *A Writer’s Reference* (or comparable writing handbook)
- *Access to and awareness of 7th edition (2009) MLA style updates

Policies and Procedures

- Attendance and active participation are an assumed requirement. Excessive absences will negatively impact your grade.
- We will regularly critique one another's written and oral work. Therefore, you should prepare all work for a public audience and be prepared to offer constructive and professional critiques of your classmates' work.
- Late work will not be accepted unless in the case of documented medical emergency. Any and all late work will be docked one full letter grade for each day it is late (i.e., an A becomes a B after one day late, an A to a C after two days late and so on). This deduction will be applied to final portfolio grades.
- All papers and assignments must be typed, double-spaced, and submitted by the due date as a **paper copy**, unless otherwise indicated on the syllabus.
- Save all drafts of all work. Save on multiple disks and venues.
- This course subscribes to the Allegheny Honor Code. Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. Instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Honor Committee and will probably result in failure of the course.

Grading:

*The best way to improve your writing is write...and write...and write some more. This course is designed upon this principle; therefore, you should expect to write a lot and in many capacities. Though you will write a variety of informal and formal assignments, only those formal assignments listed below will be included in your final portfolio. I recommend avid and regular use of the speech and writing consultants in the Learning Commons.

Writing:

I will evaluate your writing regularly over the course of the semester, and the quality of work produced at each stage of the writing process will impact your final grade. However, in a course of this nature, progress and depth of learning is paramount. Thus, your final grade will be determined largely by your overall progress in the course as reflected by the quality of writing in your final portfolio. You will write 4 major assignments. Each of these pieces will undergo a significant process of revision, all versions of which will be included in a writing "portfolio" you will submit for evaluation at the end of the semester. Major writing assignments will include:

- Essay #1—Theoretical Analysis (3-4 pages)
- Essay #2—Cultural Analysis (4-5 pages)
- Essay #3—Comparative Ad Analysis (4-5 pages)
- Essay #4—Research Paper (7-8 pages)
- Research Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (6-8 sources)

Your final writing grade in the course will be based on the quality of your final essays and the significance of your progress as a writer as demonstrated by the strides made at each stage of each revision. You must save and store each draft of each paper, with my comments and the comments of your peers, and submit each draft of every paper in the final portfolio. You must also save and submit in the final portfolio every peer review you have received from and written for your peers. By enrolling in a ‘W’ section, you have chosen to focus intensively on improving yourself as a writer; thus, the written work you produce in this course will constitute 75% of your total course grade.

Speaking:

Though not the particular focus of this ‘W’ section of FS 102, speaking is still a fundamental and critical component of the entire FS sequence. You will deliver two formal speeches and have regular opportunities to speak in class. Seminars are discussion-based courses; thus, the success of this course depends largely on the quality of discussion and level of intellectual engagement you bring to our discussions. In keeping with this principle, your contributions to class discussion and other in-class activities will be weighted heavily. Your speaking assignments constitute 25% of your total course grade.

- Speech #1 (2-3 minutes)
- Speech #2 (5-6 minutes)
- Contributions to Class Discussions

Course Schedule (subject to change with due notice):

W	1-19	Introduction to the course—“What is America?”
<u>Theorizing the Nation</u>		
F	1-21	Renan—“What is a Nation?”
M	1-24	Anderson—“Imagined Communities”
W	1-26	Smith—“Civic and Ethnic Nationalism”
F	1-28	<i>First Writing and Speaking Workshop—giving good feedback in small group and class discussions</i>
M	1-31	Speech #1—Theories of Nationalism Debates Peer review responses due on Sakai
W	2-2	Speech #1—Theories of Nationalism Debates
F	2-4	Speech #1—Theories of Nationalism Debates

<u>Cultural Studies and “American” Popular Culture</u>		
M	2-7	Essay #1 Due—Critical Analysis of Theorist (Post to Sakai) Jordan and Weedon—“Literature into culture: Cultural Studies after Leavis” (Course Packet)
W	2-9	Geertz—“Notes on the Balinese Cockfight” (Course Packet) Peer Reviews for Essay #1 Due on Sakai
F	2-11	Discussion of Geertz continued...
M	2-14	Revision of Essay #1 due (Hard Copy) <i>Writing Workshop</i>
W	2-16	Twitchell—“In Praise of Consumerism” (<i>PCI</i> , pp. 607-623); Wolkomir and Wolkomir—“You Are What You Buy” (<i>PCI</i> , pp. 613-620) Sakai response due by Sunday, 2-21, at 8pm
F	2-18	Rose—“Shopping and Other Spiritual Adventures in America Today” (<i>PCI</i> , pp. 626-628); Ruskin and Schor—“Every Nook and Cranny: The Dangerous Spread of Commercialized Culture” (<i>PCI</i> , pp. 621-626)
<u>Constructing a “Consumers” in America</u>		
M	2-21	Essay #2 due—Cultural Analysis (Post to Sakai)
W	2-23	Kilbourne—““Two Ways a Woman can Get Hurt”; Advertising and Violence” (Course Packet) Peer Reviews for Essay #2 Due on Sakai
F	2-25	Ad Analysis—Ads Due
M	2-28	Revision of Essay #2 Due (Hard Copy) Continued Discussion of Ad Analysis
W	3-2	<i>Writing Workshop</i>
F	3-4	Medved—“That’s Entertainment? Hollywood’s Contribution to Anti-Americanism Abroad” (Course Packet); Bayles—“Now Showing: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly Americans” (<i>PCI</i> , pp. 394-397)
<u>America and the Myth of the Melting Pot</u>		
M	3-7	Booth—“One Nation, Indivisible: Is It History?” (<i>PCI</i> , pp. 440-446); Love—“Race in America” (<i>PCI</i> , pp. 449-451)
W	3-9	López—“The Social Construction of Race” (Course Packet)
F	3-11	Essay #3 Due (Post to Sakai) Morrison—“Recitatif” (Course Packet)

M	3-14	“Recitatif” continued <i>Writing Workshop</i> Peer Reviews for Essay #3 Due on Sakai
T	3-15	Film— <i>Crash</i> (7pm)
W	3-16	Discussion of <i>Crash</i>
F	3-18	Revision of Essay #3 Due (Hard Copy)
M-F	3-21— 3-25	SPRING BREAK
M	3-28	*Research Paper Proposals Due <i>Meet in Library for a Research Information Session</i>
W	3-30	Julia Alvarez— <i>How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents</i>
F	4-1	Julia Alvarez— <i>How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents</i>
M	4-4	Julia Alvarez— <i>How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents</i>
W	4-6	Julia Alvarez— <i>How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents</i>
F	4-8	Julia Alvarez— <i>How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents</i> *Research Paper—First three paragraphs due (including introduction and tentative thesis) (Hard Copy)
M	4-11	<i>Speech #2</i>
W	4-13	<i>Speech #2</i>
F	4-15	<i>Speech #2</i>
A New Kind of Research Paper—Researching at the College Level		
M	4-18	<i>Writing Workshop</i> Research Papers—3-4 pages due (Post to Sakai)
W	4-20	Using Evidence in a Research Paper—Balancing your ideas and the ideas of experts Peer Reviews for Research Papers Due on Sakai
F	4-22	The Mechanics of Integrating Sources
M	4-25	In-Class Workshop: Sample Research Papers

W	4-27	Research Papers Due (Hard Copy and Post to Sakai) In-class peer workshop
F	4-29	NO CLASS—INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES
M	5-2	NO CLASS—INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES
M	5-9	Final Writing Portfolios due in my office by 12pm