

Honors 310 – Versions of the Self: Performing the Nation

Fall 2012
 Section #L112
 MR 2-3:15
 Room: Fontaine 101

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 Office Hours: MT 9:30-10:45, MR 12:30-1:45

Course Description:

This course will explore how national identity has been performed in the US since the 19th century. We will look at the different ways in which the performance of a national identity interacts with personal and group identities. We will examine traditional theatrical performances, documentary theatre and film, and everyday performances, such as those by participants in thanksgiving parades. Course materials will be wide-ranging and will include plays, historical and theoretical documents, and performance footage. Besides Honors, this course satisfies the CORE requirement in Literature and serves as elective credit for the English major and minor.

Course Philosophy:

This course is set-up as a seminar, and seminars only work when all participants are present and active every day. As such, I expect that you will each be prepared to actively engage with each other and the materials during each class session. The subject matter of the course will at times be contentious, as we will be unpacking the iconography and mythology of the United States of America. The country has a sometimes ugly past; and we will be facing that past head-on. As we explore the past and its impact upon the present and future, we will encounter points of view and treatments of subjects that may offend or confound your sensibilities. While I do not want you to censor your reactions, I do ask that you please view historical documents and traditions as such. Always remember that you are reading this material and considering these events with the eyes of a 21st century student. Try to envision, based upon what we know of a particular period, how a text might have been received by that audience, at that time, in that place. You will discover that the fleeting nature of performance limits such exercises, but acknowledging our biases and the limits of our knowledge will permit us to begin to explore the past. That said, always be on the lookout for how the past is still with us.

Course Objectives:

At the completion of this course, students should have a greater capacity to:

- Be conversant with how performance can alter the presentation of a text or concept
- Be conversant with methods of creating national identities, icons, myths and stories
- Be able to critically analyze texts & performances
- Be more proficient with historical research and scholarly argumentation
- Be able to communicate the above information during class discussions and in written work
- Be stronger public speakers

Required Texts and Readings:

PLEASE REFER TO THE COURSE SCHEDULE for a complete list of readings and due dates.

Read assigned texts and accompanying introductions before dates listed. Any edition of the texts will serve your needs, but do work to follow along if you have another version. You should always bring the texts and other readings to class on the appropriate days.

Required Texts for Purchase:

Duberman: *In White America*
 Parks: *The America Play*
 Rabe: *The Vietnam Plays Volume One*. (Contains: *Sticks and Bones*)
 Sondheim & Weidman: *Assassins*

iLearn: Other readings for this class will be available via iLearn. Please consult your schedule for details. These readings are listed either individually (*Los Vendidos*) or in groups (Thanksgiving file.)

Attendance:

By enrolling in this course, you have implicitly agreed to be a present and active member of this class. Production work and other extra-curricular activity are not valid excuses for missing class or being unprepared. *Absenteeism and tardiness will not be tolerated, and excessive amounts (4+ instances) of either will result in at least a 10% reduction in your final course grade, in addition to the obvious impact it will have upon your participation grade.* Be present physically and mentally. ***Shut off the phone.***

I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, except in extremely serious cases. If extenuating circumstances develop, please contact CAAS and me as soon as possible so that we can work to keep your academic progress on track.

Graded Assignments:**1. Short Writing Assignments & Participation. 10% (100 points):****Short Writing Assignments**

There will be periodic in-class and out-of-class assignments that cover all course objectives and comprise part of this grade. These assignments may or may not be announced in advanced. ***Absolutely no make-up short writing assignments will be given.*** Your lowest SWA grade will be dropped.

Participation

I expect you to have done the reading and be ready to discuss the texts and their relationships to earlier class discussions. You will be participating in class through lively and intelligent discussion of the texts and application of the material to those texts. Failure to do so will result in a failing grade. ***Stay focused – no cell phones.***

2. Living Newspaper (Final Project). 40% (400 points):

This is a multi-part group research project wherein you will produce and perform the script for a Living Newspaper. This project will incorporate all of the course objectives. Scripts will be presented during the last week of class. Full detailed instructions of all of the components and due dates will follow.

3. Final Exam. 20% (200 points):

There will be one cumulative final examination in this course. This exam will cover all material covered throughout the semester and will ask you to analyze various methods of creating national identities, icons, myths and stories.

4. Analysis Papers. 30% (300 points):

There will be two analysis papers due during the semester which incorporate all course objectives. These papers will challenge you to apply the analytical skills & tools that we develop during class discussions to objects or performances. Full instructions for each paper will follow. Due dates are on the course schedule.

- a) **Object Analysis Paper 10% (100 points).** This 1000 word paper is intended to introduce you to the level of analysis and writing expected in this course. You will choose a piece of Americana to analyze on the second day of class. In the paper, you will be analyzing the intersection between the function of your chosen object and its symbolic elements.
- b) **Presidential Election Analysis Paper and Presentation 20% (200 points).** This 1500-2000 word paper and five-minute presentation requires you to locate and analyze a performance of the presidency from the current election cycle.

Assignment Submissions, Extensions and Late Assignments:

In fairness to students who meet deadlines, *assignments handed in at any time after the beginning of the class period in which they are due will be reduced by one full letter grade* (10% of the point value of the assignment) for each class period it is late; over breaks and exam weeks, the late penalty is applied for each 24-hour period past the due date/time. No incompletes will be granted unless an emergency situation develops.

Presentations and workshop session participation cannot be made up. Paperwork can be submitted late.

I do NOT grant individual extensions. You know your paper due date months in advance. On opening night you must be off-book, fully painted, hung and focused, etc., and so your paper must be written on the date it is due. No excuses. Save your work to multiple disks. Plan ahead. I will always accept work ahead of time.

Written assignments are to be submitted to the Assignments section of iLearn unless otherwise noted. I do not accept assignments submitted via e-mail.

If you know in advance that you will miss a class, I expect you to make arrangements to hand the work in on time and get notes and assignment sheets from a classmate.

iLearn, E-Mail, Etiquette and Other Policies:

- All readings not available in book format will be posted on iLearn. *Consult your schedule.*
- You are in class to learn; be here mentally and physically. Take notes. **Shut off the phone.** *Failure to be a respectful class participant will result in a lowered final grade.* Respect your peers, self, and profs.
- I will use e-mail to communicate with you. Please check your Marist e-mail regularly.
- Kindly put the course number in the subject line of your e-mail messages, especially if you are not using your Marist account. With all the spam in my inbox, messages entitled "Help!" run the risk of deletion.
- While e-mail is a great communication tool, please remember that you are still addressing a professor. Do not hit that send key until you have taken a moment to reflect upon what you have written. If you respect yourself and present yourself respectfully, the world will take you more seriously than it would if your communications are incomprehensible, full of typos, or generally rude. Remember, it is in print.
- Do not email within 24 hours of our class meeting and expect that I will have time to read and respond. I check email at least once daily on weekdays, but expect a delay on weekends and nights.
- If you need a quick answer or need to ask a long question, come to my office hours.
- Grades on assignments are not negotiable; if you have questions about an assignment or your grade in the class, then you need to come into my scheduled office hours *with your assignments*. Federal law prohibits faculty from discussing grades over email.
- Unclaimed assignments will only be held until the end of the following semester. Claim them.

GRADING SCALE:

A	= 1000-930 points	Outstanding
A-	= 929-900 points	
B+	= 899-870 points	Very Good
B	= 869-830 points	
B-	= 829-800 points	Good
C+	= 799-770 points	
C	= 769-730 points	Satisfactory
C-	= 729-700 points	
D+	= 699-670 points	Unsatisfactory
D	= 669-630 points	
D-	= 629-600 points	
F	= Less than 600 points	Failure

Special requirements or accommodations:

- If you have any condition that will make it difficult for you to carry out the work as I have outlined it, or which will require extra time in testing situations, please notify me *within the first two weeks* of the class so that appropriate arrangements can be made. An early heads up allows us to work with your situation; a last-minute plea rarely does.
- If you have a disability or other medical condition requiring specific accommodations, please speak with Special Services (SpecServ@Marist.edu) in order to obtain their assistance and intervention on your behalf. The office provides services that can significantly enhance your learning experience. If you are using their assistance, please notify me early in the semester so that we can be sure that we are working to create an optimal learning environment.
- Extended absences (more than one class period) must be cleared through CAAS.
- If your observance of a religious holiday conflicts with the course schedule, you must also notify me *at least two weeks prior to the holiday* so that appropriate arrangements can be made.
- Participation in college-sponsored activities does not excuse you from your responsibilities as a student in this course. You know your schedules ahead of time. Plan accordingly.

Academic Honesty:

The currency of higher education is knowledge and as you would not steal money, so I expect you not to steal other people's ideas. The exchange of information allows us to improve society and ourselves, but we cannot grow unless we first admit that we need to rely on the thoughts of others to generate our own ideas. When you use someone else's ideas, you must cite that person. When in doubt, cite.

ANY STUDENT FOUND TO BE IN VIOLATION OF THE MARIST COLLEGE STUDENT HANDBOOK ACADEMY HONESTY CODE AS IT PERTAINS TO OUR CLASS WILL AUTOMATICALLY FAIL THE ASSIGNMENT AND MAY FACE FURTHER SANCTIONS, INCLUDING FAILURE IN THE COURSE.

Violations include but are not limited to activities such as citation fabrication, plagiarism, cheating, and falsifying attendance sheets or other documents.

If you do not understand how to properly cite sources, *please contact me* and I will gladly walk you through that minefield.

Please note that the course schedule is subject to change based on our progress, although readings and assignments will never be due before the published due date.

Honors 310 Versions: Performing the Nation Fall 2012

Week		Date	Topic	Texts & Performances	Work Due
1.1	M	8/27	Introduction to Course: Performing the Nation	Bates: "America the Beautiful."	
1.2	R	8/30	Conceptualizing "America"	iLearn: AmericaPoems (Whitman: "I Hear America Singing;" Hughes: "Let America Be America Again;" " Guthrie: "This Land is Your Land.") Watch Jibjab.com parody of "This Land is Your Land" http://www.jibjab.com/originals/this_land	
2.1	M	9/3	Labor Day - No classes		
2.2	R	9/6	Performance: Adding Bodies & Space to Text	iLearn: Tuan: from "Space and Context" and Turner: "From Ritual to Theatre"	
3.1	M	9/10	Performing Stereotypes: The Other	iLearn: Lott: from <i>Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class</i> ; and "The Minstrel Show"	
3.2	R	9/13	Performing Stereotypes: The Self	iLearn: Valdez: <i>Los Vendidos</i>	
4.1	M	9/17	Documentary Theatre	Duberman: <i>In White America</i>	
4.2	R	9/20	Documentary Theatre	Duberman: <i>In White America</i>	Object Analysis Paper
5.1	M	9/24	Documentary Theatre	Living Newspaper & Documentary Theatre Script Analysis Day.	
5.2	R	9/27	Documentary Theatre	Living Newspaper Techniques Day	
6.1	M	10/1	National Icons & Myths	iLearn: Miroff: "The Presidential Spectacle;" Watch Jibjab.com "It's Time for Some Campaignin'" " http://www.jibjab.com/originals/time_for_some_campaignin	
6.2	R	10/4	Final Project Proposals	Final Project Proposal Pitch Day	Final Project Proposal
7.1	M	10/8	National Icons & Myths	Sondheim: <i>Assassins</i>	
7.2	R	10/11	National Icons & Myths	Sondheim: <i>Assassins</i>	
8.1	M	10/15	National Icons & Myths	iLearn: Schwartz: "Mourning and the Making of a Sacred Symbol: Durkheim and the Lincoln Assassination."	
8.2	R	10/18	Final Project Workshop	Final Project Workshop #1	Script Draft #1
9.1	M	10/22	National Icons & Myths	Parks: <i>The America Play</i>	
9.2	R	10/25	National Icons & Myths	Parks: <i>The America Play</i>	
10.1	M	10/29	National Icons & Myths	Election Analysis Presentations	Election Presentation & Paper
10.2	R	11/1	National Icons & Myths	Election Analysis Presentations	Election Presentation & Paper
11.1	M	11/5	Family as Nation	iLearn: Coontz: "...American Families in the 1950s;" View "Ozzie & Harriet" in class	
11.2	R	11/8	Family as Nation	Rabe: <i>Sticks & Bones</i>	
12.1	M	11/12	Family as Nation	Rabe: <i>Sticks & Bones</i> ; view & discuss <i>Red Nightmare</i> in class	
12.2	R	11/15	Final Project Workshop	Final Project Workshop #2	Script Draft #2
13.1	M	11/19	Family as Nation	iLearn: Cantor: "The Simpsons;" view & discuss episode in class	
13.2	R	11/22	No Class	Watch the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and other Thanksgiving Activities over break. See assignment sheet.	
14.1	M	11/26	Celebrating the Nation	Parade & Holiday Discussion & Analysis	Thanksgiving Response Post
14.2	R	11/29	Final Project Workshop	Final Project Workshop #3	Script Draft #3
15.1	M	12/3	Final Project Workshop	Group Meetings for Final Tweaking and adjustments	
15.2	R	12/6	Final Project Presentations	Final Project Presentations	Project Assignments
16			Final Exam	In-class cumulative essay exam	

Schedule subject to change based on our progress, but written assignments will never be due before the dates listed.