

Bellevue College

CES I02 Introduction to American Culture

Fully Online Course

Sara Sutler-Cohen, Ph.D.

Winter Term: January 2nd – March 20th

Office Hours – online only, by appt.

Phone: (425) 564-5722

Email: sara.sutlercohen@bellevuecollege.edu

Website: <http://sarasutlercohen.com>

No On-Campus office this quarter

Note: As a 2-Credit course there will be no research paper, midterm, or final exam for the class.
You will be reading and writing every week.

****Please always email me through the Canvas site first. If you don't hear from me within 24 hours, then email at the above address or call****

****If you see underlined, bold, red words in our syllabus, click on them!
They're links to webpages and will take you somewhere interesting!****

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course acquaints you with basic concepts and perspectives in American Studies as you become aware of and explore the importance and power of culture in the U.S. Over the course of the quarter, we will explore the question, “does society influence culture, or does culture influence society?” You will study culture in the U.S. as found in American life and thought, literature, the arts, and the mass media and



obtain an overview of the field of American Studies as it relates to other disciplines. Most importantly, you will begin to see yourself in the world, and understand your concepts of the world around you. Through posted lecture material, engaged online discussion boards, film clips and other media, as well as assigned readings, this course will take you on an exploration of the many dimensions of the exciting and interdisciplinary area of American Studies. We will make broad use of popular culture to understand the many ways we shape our social universe and the way our social universe shapes us. By the end of this course, I hope to have all of you thinking critically about the way things work, why things work the way they do, and who we are within the social fabric of the global entity in which we live. You will be asked, over the course of the term, to confront the things you take for granted. Everyday occurrences will be challenged and thought through critically. Imagine yourself as Neo from “The Matrix” when he decides to take the Red Pill or Alice when she decides to explore the rabbit hole. Both must deal with what’s at the end of their adventures. What will *you* find at the end of *this* adventure?

A NOTE ABOUT COURSE CONTENT: Since interdisciplinary academics examine just about every aspect of the social world, we talk about provocative material. When we explore controversial topics, they will always be framed within an academic context. Keep in mind that when we find ourselves in a space outside of our comfort zone, it's an opportunity for learning, and you may be confronted with subject matter that is difficult to watch, see, discuss, or listen to. Please note that you will be responsible for any course material you miss if you choose not to participate. If you have any questions or concerns about content or climate, feel free to speak with me about it right away.

READING REQUIREMENTS:

- *Made In America: A Social History of American Culture & Character* by Claude S. Fischer. University of Chicago Press. 2011.
- All material available on our Canvas Site. Documents are in Power Point, Microsoft Word, and PDF formats.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: If you have medical information to share with me in the event of an emergency, please contact me via email. Emergency preparedness is important! If you need course modifications, adaptations, or accommodations because of a disability, please let me know. I do not require that students go through the DRC for accommodations but I recommend you do this for your other classes. I can refer you to our Disability Resource Center (DRC). If you prefer, you may contact them directly by going to B132 or by calling 425.564.2498 or TTY 425.564.4110. Information is also available on their [website](#). Please note that *I do not require proof of need*. If you have learning struggles you're aware of, please communicate that with me. I make any and all necessary accommodations for students with or without paperwork.

EXPLORE THE LMC! The Library Media Center is at your fingertips! I *strongly* encourage you to visit the LMC at least once a week if you can, but you can also access it via the web. Talk to a Reference Librarian at the Library (D-126), by calling (425) 564-6161, or by [email](#).

- [Main Library Media Center](#)
- [LMC online catalog](#)
- [Article databases](#)

LEARNING AND COURSE OUTCOMES: By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of any own previously-held perspectives you may have on culture and society in the U.S. and be able to explain how those perspectives may have changed by the end of the course.
- Demonstrate an understanding of trends in American thought and attitude regarding U.S. life and culture.
- Discuss culture in the U.S. and show the interrelation of historical events, literary works and social changes over time.
- Demonstrate the ability to synthesize information from various sources/media and communicate that insight effectively.

GENERAL RULES & EXPECTATIONS:

- Check in to our online classroom no less than *four times per week* (yes – I do keep track!). This means you log on and surf around the site. No need to check in with me. Make this work for you on your own time.

- Complete readings and homework assignments *on time*. I do not check whether you complete your readings; this is on the honor system! You do need to read your required material in order to complete homework assignments.
- Late homework assignments *are accepted*.
 - Late homework is docked 10% for every day the work is late, including Saturdays and Sundays.
 - Late Discussion Boards that go beyond the date for responses can only be made up for half credit. Responses are due three days after the Initial Posts are due (see schedule for details). A big part of these assignments is your communication with other students. If you make up an initial post past the deadline for responses, you'll get credit for that post, with late points assessed, but the base grade will be half of its original worth, regardless of the days you're late. Otherwise, your post will be assessed late points within the first three days and your response will be accepted.
- I expect that your behavior in our virtual classroom be respectful. Continued disrespectful behavior in my class will result in your grade lowering. Please keep your postings to discussion boards (DBs) thoughtful and polite. One-on-one conversations should be taken off-board and onto email so our DBs don't get clogged. If you find at any point that you are uncomfortable with anything posted to a DB, please email me right away. Be wary of soap boxing in this class; you may be tempted to present your opinion and editorialize, but refrain from doing this.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and Participation*:	200 points
Discussion Boards (6):	300 points
“It’s Your Turn” Assignments (3):	225 points
TOTAL:	725 points

Participation points accrue with various short assignments in the Discussion Area, such as your Introductory DB. These are labeled **PARTICIPATION DBs. The Main DB assignments are labeled **MAIN DBs**.*

The Fine Print (or, what I really mean by that table above):

Attendance & Participation: Check in no less than four times per week, be engaged with all of your discussion board assignments, provoke energetic and polite discussion, listen/read/comprehend actively, work respectfully with your colleagues in class, take loads of notes from your readings, look up words you don't understand, ask questions, think critically about the world around you, etc. Make use of the Q&A Board as well. This is not scored, but even if you don't have questions, you might be able to answer somebody's query – so have some presence there.

Main Discussion Board Assignments: The work done in the Discussion Board area will have you engage course material and work closely together. You are expected to participate in these assignments in order to generate critical discussion amongst one another. These assignments are always due on Wednesdays and Saturdays (your initial post goes up Wednesday and your responses to one another are due Saturdays). Your DBs are graded on two things: your original post and your responses (two of them) to colleagues of yours in the class. You must do both to earn full credit. A submission with no responses posted earns ½ credit at most, and responses without an original submission receive zero credit.

“Participation” Discussion Board Assignments: These are meant to support you throughout the course and will include things like Introductions, Some Uncategorized Discussions, & Feedback for the course. They are required and the grades are folded into your overall Participation Grade.

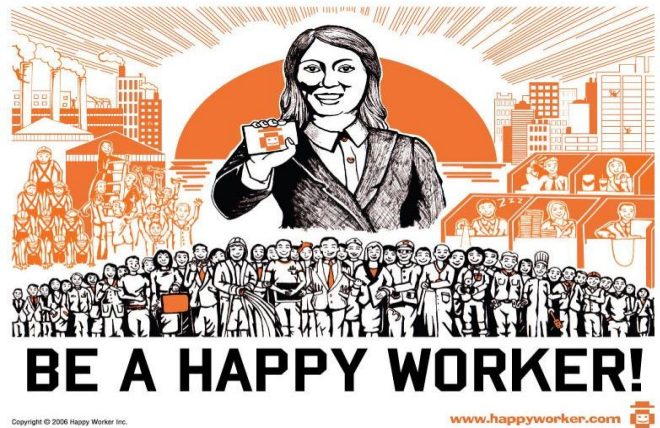
“It’s Your Turn” Assignments: These short assignments are an opportunity to put your learning to use as you explore the world of American Culture using the Sociological Imagination.

For *all* of your work: Submit proofread work **only**. Work not proofread will be returned **once** for a rewrite, expected to be handed in within 48 hours. If you need help with your writing, please make use of the following student support services:

- [Academic Success Center](#)
- [Academic Tutoring Center](#)
- [TRiO Student Support Services](#)
- [Writing Lab @ BC](#)

Below is a checklist for you to go over before you hand in each written assignment. These include your Discussion Board assignments; consider these very short papers – even at one or a few paragraphs, I expect your work to be college-level.

- Twelve-point sized Times font, double-spaced
- 1” margins all around
- MLA or APA Citations where appropriate – credit is given even where any *ideas* presented in the paper are not your own
- Title pages and bibliographies are not counted in final page count (no need to do this for DBs)
- Student information is at the top left of the page (no need to do this for DBs)
- Paragraphs contain no less than four sentences.
- Magazines, newspapers, journals, and books are *italicized*. Movie titles, article titles, song titles, etc. are “in quotation marks.” Quotes inside of a quotation use ‘single quotation marks.’



Your work is evaluated on:

- 1) Content
 - a. Fulfilling the entire assignment. Doing the minimum amount of work expected will likely get you a passing grade, but not an outstanding one. You’re expected to go the extra mile.
 - b. Fully developing your argument(s) and making use of examples and evidence to support your argument(s).
 - c. Flow of thought throughout the paper, with strong analyses and conclusions.
 - d. Assignments eligible for high marks must present evidence that all material has been reviewed.
- 2) Writing Style

- a. Excellent command of the written English language. In other words, most excellent grammar. **NOTE: If you struggle with grammar and spelling or are an ESL student, please let me know! I'm happy to work with you and point you in the right direction.**
- b. Clarity of thought.
- c. Good organization and attention to detail.
- d. Persuasiveness of your argument/s.
- e. Creativity. Make it an interesting read!
- f. PROOFREAD your work. Please do a spell/grammar check before you hand it in. Read it out loud to yourself, too! It really helps.
- g. Dude, like totally don't write **colloquially**. A conversation is a conversation. A paper is an entirely different way of presenting your research and ideas. ☺

Preventing Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty occurring when students use information or material from outside sources and do not properly cite those sources. This is grounds for disciplinary action. It is your responsibility to understand plagiarism and its consequences. Plagiarism occurs if:

- a. You do not cite quotations and/or attribute borrowed ideas.
- b. You fail to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks.
- c. You do not write summaries and paraphrases in his/her own words and/or doesn't document his/her source.
- d. You turn in work created by another person.
- e. You submit or use your own prior work for a current or past course, or work from one current course in another course *without express permission* from your professors. This may also be considered academic dishonesty.
- f. Consequences: If it is determined that you have plagiarized or engaged in other forms of academic dishonesty, you will likely fail the assignment and possibly the course, despite points earned through other work. Acts of academic dishonesty are reviewed for disciplinary action.

Grading:

Please use the following rubric to help explain the grade you're given for a given assignment. Please do not hesitate to come to me with any questions you ever have on a grade you receive. There is no limit to how many times you email me! My email door is *always* open and I'm always happy to go over grades with you. I'm also on campus Monday through Friday and am available to meet in person during my office hours or by appointment.

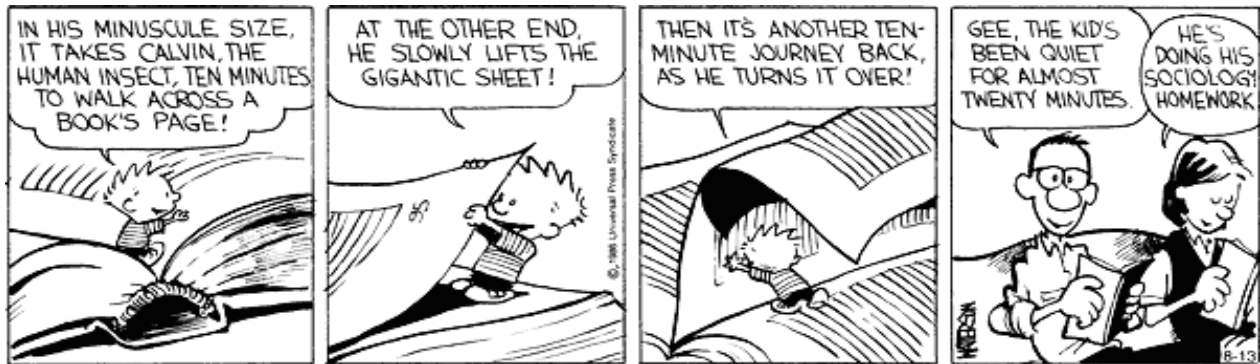
90-100 = A. "A" work shows me you're engaged with all course material by utilizing quotes and ideas. It is writing **completely free** from grammar and spelling errors, demonstrating your command not only of the English language, but of the form and flow of a solid piece of written work. I also like to see/read/hear your "writing voice." That is, I want your style to come through! Your arguments should be solid and backed up with intellectual ammunition. You should demonstrate a strong understanding of our readings and the in-class media and how they intersect with one another. Your ideas should be "fleshed out" and not just a series of statements, in other words.

80-89 = B. The "B" tells me you're doing very good work. You may have a couple of grammar issues, but your work is still tidy and the writing is still strong. You have a firm grasp on the themes in the course but you may not be as well-versed in the readings and/or media and/or lecture material as you could be. I

should see that you're being challenged and that you're struggling with the course issues and themes, and what they represent to you in an interconnected way. Your understandings of some of the course materials are stronger than others.

70-79 = C. "C" work means that you're not as invested in the material as I would like to see. Your writing is relatively weaker than it could be and you're not thinking as critically as I would like you to. You write the bare minimum of the length requirement. Some of what you point out I may not follow logically, and your use of the course materials may not be as solid as it could be. You omit some of the important points raised in class.

60-69 = D. Ah, the "D." "D" is for "Don't be Discouraged." I will work closely with each of you as much as time allows, getting you up to speed in class. Your struggles should not be with writing so much at this point but if they are please see me immediately. "D" work is not proofread, nor does it deal critically with the themes in the course. It responds, perhaps, to one part of one of the readings but there is little-to-no integration of material and you're not responding to the questions raised in the assignment. Demonstrated understanding of the course materials is not presented clearly, or at all. (NOTE: A "D" and below may be rewritten **once** if you choose to do so. It must be turned in within 72 hours, and I enter the better grade.)



COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

READINGS SHOULD BE DONE BY MONDAY EACH WEEK

ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES VARY; PLEASE SEE SCHEDULE BELOW

ASSIGNMENTS ARE ALWAYS DUE BY MIDNIGHT

DO NOT WORK AHEAD MORE THAN ONE WEEK

THE SYLLABUS SCHEDULE IS MIRRORED IN THE MODULES SECTION OF THE COURSE.

Week One: January 2

Readings:

- [What is Culture?](#)
- [Characteristics of Culture](#)
- [Methods for Learning about Culture](#)
- Sociological Imagination Power Point presentation

Assignments:

- Participation DB I: Introductions. Due Saturday, 1/5
- Participation DB II: Sociological Imagination. Due Saturday, 1/5

Week Two: January 7

Readings:

- *Made In America*, Chapter One: “The Stories We Tell”. Pages 1-16
- *Made In America*, Chapter Two: “Security”. Pages 17-58

Assignments:

- Main DB 1 Due Wednesday, 1/9, responses by Saturday, 1/12

Week Three: January 14

Readings:

- “Does Socioeconomic Status matter? Race, Class, and Residential Segregation” by John Iceland & Rima Wilkes
- Videos from **People Like Us: Social Class in America**
 - [Opening](#)
 - [WASP Lessons](#)
 - [Tammy’s Story](#)
- Video clip from **Race: The Power of an Illusion**
 - [The House You Live In](#)

Assignments:

- Main DB 2: First Submission Due Wednesday, 1/16; Responses Due Saturday, 1/19

Week Four: January 22

January 21st: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day; college is closed

Readings:

- *Made In America*, Chapter Three: “Goods”. Pages 59-94

Assignments:

- It’s Your Turn – Assignment I. Due Friday, 1/25.

Week Five: January 28

Readings:

- *Made In America*, Chapter Four: “Groups”. Pages 95-160

Assignments:

- Main DB 3: First Submission Due Wednesday, 1/30; Responses Due Saturday, 2/2
- Participation DB 3: How are we doing? Due Friday, 2/1

Week Six: February 4

Readings:

- Power Point Presentation on Race

Assignments:

- Main DB 4: First submission Wednesday, 2/6, Responses Due Saturday 2/9

Week Seven: February 11

Readings:

- *Made In America*, Chapter Five: “Public Spaces”. Pages 161-194

Assignments:

- It’s Your Turn Assignment Two. Due Friday, 2/15.

Week Eight: February 19

February 18th, President's Day, Professional Development Day; college closed

Readings:

- *Made In America*, Chapter Six: "Mentality". Pages 195-240
- "Changing Paradigms with Sir Ken Robinson" on [YouTube by RSA Animate](#)
- "Made In America" blog by Dr. Fischer, ["Competitive Intelligence"](#)

Assignments:

- Main DB 5: First submission due Wednesday, 2/20, Responses Due Saturday 2/23

Week Nine: February 25

Readings:

- *Made In America*, Chapter Seven: "Closing". Pages 241-246

Assignments:

- It's Your Turn Assignment Three. Due Friday, 3/1

Week Ten: March 4

Readings:

- "Made In America" blog by Dr. Fischer, ["Meeting, Mating, and The Web"](#)

Assignments:

- Main DB 6: First submission due Wednesday, 3/6. No response due.
- Extra Credit Requests taken this week. You must have a grade of C or lower to qualify for an extra credit assignment. You must email me by Friday, 3/8 and request an Extra Credit assignments. ECs will be different for each student, and are randomly selected. You may earn up to 50 points. Requests for ECs later than the 8th will not be granted.

Week Eleven: March 11

Readings:

- No readings. Take a breather! Catch up on any readings you'd like to.

Assignments:

- Extra Credit Assignments due 3/15

Finals Week: March 18 - 20

There is no final exam for our course

Readings:

- No readings.

Assignments:

- Final Participation DB 4, due Wednesday, 3/20

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR:

When I'm not teaching, I'm usually skating, whipping up some sort of baked goodness in my kitchen, doing collage art, taking photos of the world around me, hanging out with my kid, watching horror movies, playing roller derby, or going out to listen to live music. Mostly, I go to hear metal, bluegrass, punk, or local hip-hop shows. I received my Ph.D. in Sociology (with an emphasis in American Studies) from UC Santa Cruz. I received my first MA in Sociology from Humboldt State University and my second MA in Sociology from UCSC, my BA in Sociology and Journalism from Mills College, and my AA in English and

Creative Writing from Vista Community College. This is my seventh and final year as Instructor of Sociology at BC. I am currently working on two research projects. One that deals with heavy metal and social class and another that looks at death, dying, and bereavement. More at: <http://sarasutlercohen.com>.

Let's have a wonderful term!