

# Bellevue College

## CES I02 Introduction to American Culture

### Fully Online Course

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Summer Term June 27<sup>th</sup> – August 11<sup>th</sup>

Office Hours – online or by appt.

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Note: As a 2-Credit course there will be no research paper or capstone assignment for the class.

**\*\*Please always email me through the Blackboard 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**, [blue](#) 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:**

- Course reader found on our Blackboard site.
- All material (syllabus included) available on our Blackboard Site. Documents are available in Microsoft Word and PDF formats. ***It is your responsibility to download and print all required material for yourself.***

**STRONGLY RECOMMENDED:**

- Any current Dictionary of the English Language
- Any current Sociology Dictionary

**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 [bccref@bcc.ctc.edu](mailto:bccref@bcc.ctc.edu).

- [Main Library Media Center](#)
- [For the LMC online catalog](#)
- [For 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!).
- Complete readings and homework assignments ***on time***.
- Late homework assignments ***are accepted***, but make-up exams ***are not permitted***.
  - Late homework is docked 10% for every day the work is late, including Saturdays and Sundays.
- 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.

**Remember: This is an accelerated course and falling behind can be hazardous to your health!**

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

<b>"Attendance" and Participation*:</b>	200 points
Discussion Boards (6):	300 points
Course Exams, Overall:	200 points
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>700 points</b>

**\*Participation points accrue with various short assignments on the DB, such as your Introductory DB. These are labeled *PARTICIPATION DBs*. The Graded DB assignments are labeled *GRADED DBs*. Please be aware of this difference.\***

*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 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.

**Exams:** Your exams cover everything up through the week they're given, and may include multiple choice and/or short-answer questions (either or both). Your responses should be clear and concise. Your short-answer responses will range from no less than **one full paragraph**, to three **full paragraphs**.

**"Graded" 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. This method of learning gets you going socially! 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.

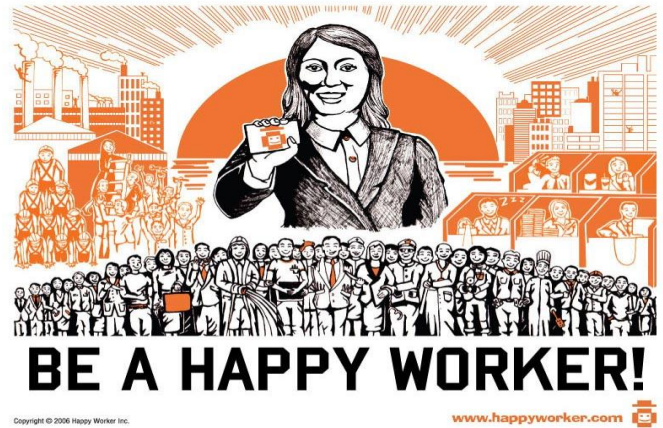
**"Participation" Discussion Board Assignments:** These meant to support you throughout the course and will include things like Introductions, Quiz Study Sessions & Q&A for Research Papers. They are required and the grades get folded into your overall Participation Grade.

**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.**

- 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
- Student information is at the top left of the page, single spaced
- There are no extra spaces between paragraphs.
- 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.
- 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. Occasionally, you will receive a Numerical Grade from me, with little-to-no commentary. This is only because I've found that most students do not read written comments from their professors. 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

### Week One: June 27<sup>th</sup> – July 1<sup>st</sup>

#### Thematic Overview:

- Introduction to this course
- The Sociological Imagination
- What is Culture?
- What is Society?

#### Readings:

- [What is Culture?](#)
- [Characteristics of Culture](#)
- [Methods for Learning about Culture](#)
- Sociological Imagination Power Point presentation (be sure to watch it in Slide Show view)

#### Assignments:

- Participation DB: Introductions. Due Friday, July 1<sup>st</sup>
- GRADED DB I: First Submission due Friday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, Response to two classmates due Tuesday, July 5<sup>th</sup> (This week only; in the future, your first submission is due on Wednesdays and your responses are due on Saturdays).

#### Quote of the Week:

“Perhaps the world's second worst crime is boredom. The first is being a bore.” - Jean Baudrillard

### Week Two: July 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>

### Holiday July 4<sup>th</sup>

#### Thematic Overview:

- Tourism & Travel as Staunch Americanism

#### Readings:

- “Remapping American-Ness” by Scott Magelssen
- “The Sociology of Tourism: Approaches, Issues & Findings” by Erik Cohen
- [Discover America](#) website

#### Assignments:

- GRADED DB 2 Due Wednesday, July 6<sup>th</sup>, responses by Saturday, July 9<sup>th</sup>

#### Quote of the Week:

“Without deviation from the norm, progress is not possible.” - Frank Zappa

### Week Three: July 11<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup>

#### Thematic Overview:

- Class Culture

#### 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](#)

#### Assignments:

- GRADED DB 3: First Submission Due Wednesday, July 13<sup>th</sup>; Responses Due Saturday, July 16<sup>th</sup>

#### Quote of the Week:

“You can bomb the world to pieces, but you can't bomb it into peace.” - Michael Franti

### Week Four: July 18<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup>

#### Thematic Overview:

- Education and Language – cultural responsibility

#### Readings:

- “Foreign-Language Departments Bring Everyday Texts to Teaching” by Burton Bollag
- “Language and reforming schools: A case for a critical approach to language in educational leadership” by Rosemary Henze & Gilberto Arriaza

#### Assignments:

- GRADED DB 4: First Submission Due Wednesday, July 20<sup>th</sup>; Responses Due Saturday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>
- Exam open from Thursday, July 21<sup>st</sup> – Sunday, July 24<sup>th</sup>. The Exam can only be taken once and will be open for four hours to accommodate those of you who struggle taking tests. Open Note/Open “book”.

#### Quote of the Week:

“All you touch and all you see is all your life will ever be.” - Roger Waters

**Week Five: July 25<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup>**

**Thematic Overview:**

- Gender Culture – what does it mean in the U.S.?
- The American Myth of Masculinity

**Film:**

- **Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats & Rhymes**
  - [Watch full video](#) (click on each “part” 1-6 as you go through the videos)
  - Also available in the Bellevue College LMC. Call number: ML3531.H57
- Power Point Presentation, “What Makes a Man, a Man?” Be sure to watch it in Slide Show format!

**Assignments:**

- Graded DB 5: First Submission Due Wednesday, July 27<sup>th</sup>; Responses Due Saturday, July 30<sup>th</sup>

**Quote of the Week:**

“In every conceivable manner, the family is link to our past, bridge to our future.” – Alex Haley

**Week Six: August 1<sup>st</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup>**

**Thematic Overview:**

- Race & Class: at the crux of the Melting Pot Myth
- Cultural Citizenship & American Identity

**Readings:**

- Power Point Presentation on Race Definitions
- Explore Dr. Kearsley's [website on race and assimilation](#)

**Assignments:**

- Graded DB 6: First submission due Wednesday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, Responses Due Saturday August 6<sup>th</sup>

**Quote of the Week:**

“College isn't the place to go for ideas.” - Helen Keller

**Week Seven: August 8<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup>**

**FINAL EXAM DUE THURSDAY, AUGUST 11<sup>th</sup>**

**Thematic Overview:**

- ...and in the end...

**Readings:**

- No readings; wrap it up!

**Assignments:**

- Participation DB – end of quarter overview and discussion ***Due Monday, August 8<sup>th</sup>!***
- Final Exam open from Sunday, August 7<sup>th</sup> – Thursday, August 11<sup>th</sup>. The Exam can only be taken once and will be open for four hours to accommodate those of you who struggle taking tests. Open Note/Open “book”.

**Quote of the Week:**

“A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.” - Marcus Garvey

**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,



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 fifth year as Instructor of Sociology at BC. I also play roller derby with [Tilted Thunder Rail Birds](#), Seattle's only banked track derby league! I love to write and am currently working on a memoir and a collection of poetry. More at: <http://sarasutlercohen.com>, or you can add me as a friend on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/docsara>.

*Thank you for a wonderful term!*