

Bellevue College

CES 101 Introduction to American Myth

Fully Online Course

Sara Sutler-Cohen, Ph.D.

Summer Term June 27th – August 11th

Office Hours – online or by appt.

Phone: (425) 564-5722 Office: AI00-C

Email: sara.sutlercohen@bellevuecollege.edu

Website: <http://sarasutlercohen.com>

Facebook: www.facebook.com/docsara

****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 cultural power of myth in U.S. culture and society. You will analyze the myths of "America" 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:

- *Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking & Writing* by Gary Colombo, Robert Cullen & Bonnie Lisle. 8th Edition.
- Additional handouts. All material (syllabus included) available on our Blackboard Site. ***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
- [Re:Writing site](#) from Bedford/St. Martin's

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 at <http://bellevuecollege.edu/drc/>. 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.

- Main Library Media Center: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/>
- For the LMC online catalog: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/catalogs.html>
- For article databases: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/periodicals.html>

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

- Demonstrate an understanding of your own previously-held perspectives on a particular theme and explain how those perspectives may or may not have changed.
- Demonstrate an understanding of trends in American thought and attitude regarding a particular myth we study.
- Discuss in writing, the ways in which myths show demonstrate an interrelation of historical events, literary works and social changes.
- 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:

"Attendance" and Participation*:	200 points
Research Paper (1):	300 points
Discussion Boards (4):	300 points
Course Exams, Overall:	200 points
TOTAL:	1000 points

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.

Research Paper (6-8 pages): For this assignment, you will choose an **area** of American Studies we cover this quarter that is of interest to you and then narrow that down to a specific **topic**. Refer to the chapter topics in *Rereading America* for some examples of the areas we're covering. If you decide you're interested

in Socioeconomic Class, for instance, that would be your **area** and your **topic** could be something like the homelessness in the U.S. Your essay should be **exploratory** in that you will omit a hypothesis and instead find a topic or theme of interest to you and then explore it. The Research Paper is broken up into five parts: Topic, Brief Draft, Bibliography, First Draft, and Final Draft (see specifics below). You will find more detailed directions for this assignment in the Assignments area on the left-hand menu bar and the schedule for these assignments are located in the Course Schedule below as well as in the Calendar area of our class site.

1. **Topic – Due end of Week Two (1-2 paragraphs, 50 points)**
 - 1 – 2 paragraphs on your chosen topic, including an explanation as to why you chose what you did. What is interesting about it?
 - An answer to the following: What do you want to know and why do you want to know it?
 - Include any questions you have for me.
2. **Brief Draft – Due end of Week Four (2-3 pages, 50 points)**
 - Your brief draft needs an introductory paragraph, three main “points” explained in brief detail that you intend to make up the body of your paper, and a working conclusion (you can, of course, change all of these as you go along). In essence, this is a summary of your paper.
 - Further reflection on: What do you want to know and why do you want to know it?
 - On the last page, include any questions you have for me.
3. **Working Bibliography – Due end of Week Four as a separate document (50 points)**
 - Your working bibliography should be your research thus far. You’ll likely add to it or even delete something from it at the end of our term.
 - You must have **five sources** total, **two of which must be [scholarly](#)**.
 - One of your sources must be [annotated](#).
4. **First Draft (note here that I don’t say ROUGH Draft! ☺) – Due end of Week Six (3-5 pages, 50 points)**
 - Your first draft should closely resemble your final paper, free from grammatical and spelling errors, cited properly, and well thought-out/argued/presented.
 - You must use either [APA](#) or [MLA](#) format and you *must give credit where credit is due*. If you’re unsure about proper citation or what plagiarism is, email me immediately.
 - Please include a fresh & updated Working Bibliography, including your original sources from Week Four’s Working Bibliography. You must have **one additional source, which must be [scholarly](#)**. **Highlight your additional source**. So then, at this point you will have **six sources** total, **three of which must be scholarly**.
 - [Annotate](#) your added source.
 - If you would like to have this version considered as your Final Paper, please email me. After consultation, you may be permitted to submit this as your final paper (which would then need to be 6-8 pages), and I will read it as such. Point distribution will be adjusted accordingly. Your Final Bibliography will also need to be submitted if you would like this draft submitted as your final.
 - Include any questions you have for me.
5. **Final Paper & Final Bibliography with Final Annotations – Due August 12th (6-8 pages, 100 points)**

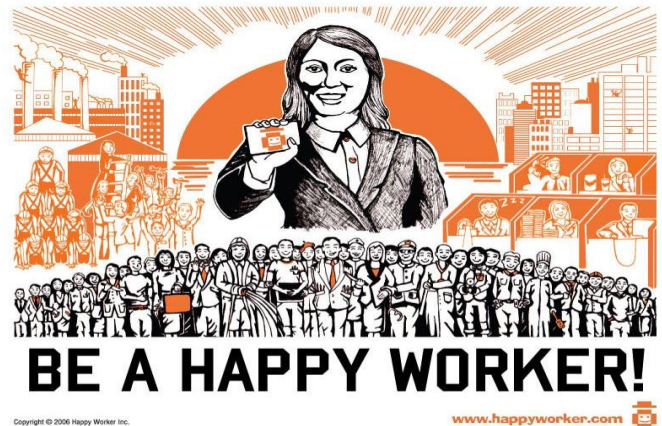
- With your final paper, include your Final Bibliography, updated from your first & second Working Bibliographies. **Two additional sources** are required, one **of which must be scholarly**. **One more Annotation is due**. Highlight your additional sources. This means:
 - i. EIGHT Sources, total
 - ii. FOUR of those sources are scholarly
 - iii. THREE Annotations, total
- A strong final paper incorporates all of my comments from previous papers and is free from spelling and grammatical errors. There are **no late Final Papers** accepted.

For all of your written 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: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/academicsuccess/>
- Academic Tutoring Center: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/tutoring/>
- TRiO Student Support Services: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/TRiO/>
- Writing Lab @ BCC: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/writinglab/>

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 written 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.

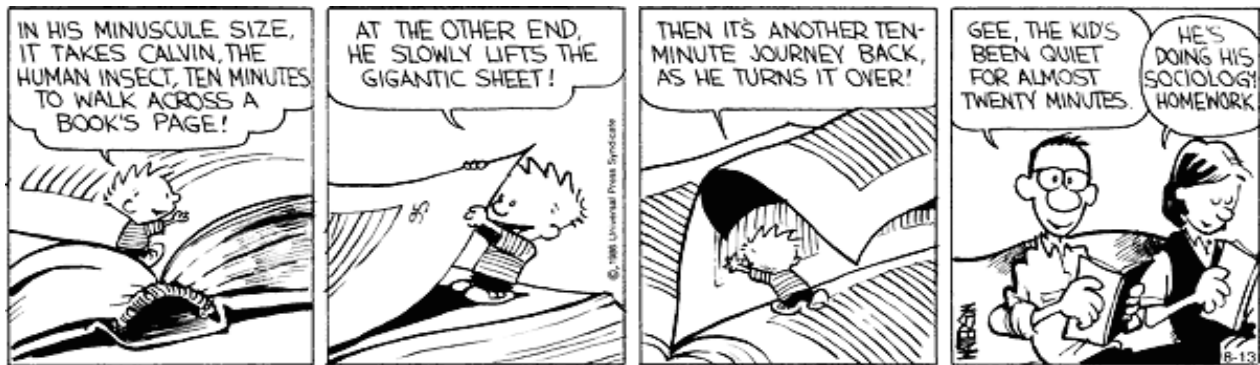
90-100 = A. "A" work shows me you're engaged with all course material by utilizing quotes and ideas. It is writing **completely free** from grammar and spelling errors, demonstrating your command not only of the English language, but of the form and flow of a solid piece of written work. I also like 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 27th - July 1st

Thematic Overview:

- Introduction to this course
- The Sociological Imagination
- What is American Myth?
- The Myth of the American Family

Readings:

- Introduction: Thinking Critically, Challenging Cultural Myths, p. 11
- Harmony at Home: The Myth of the Model Family, p. 17

- An Indian Story, p. 52
- Visual Portfolio, p. 71
- What is Marriage?, p. 89
- YouTube Video: [What is Family?](#)

Assignments:

- Participation DB: Introductions. Due Friday, July 1st
- GRADED DB I: First Submission due Friday, July 1st, Response to two classmates due Tuesday, July 5th (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 5th - 8th

Holiday July 4th

Thematic Overview:

- The American Dream of Education
- The “End” of Education

Readings:

- Idiot Nation, p. 128
- Against School, p. 148
- From *Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work*, p. 169
- Visual Portfolio, p. 187
- Learning to Read, p. 210
- In the Basement of the Ivory Tower, p. 238

Assignments:

- GRADED DB 2 Due Wednesday, July 6th, responses by Saturday, July 9th
- Research Paper Topic Due Friday, July 8th

Quote of the Week:

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

Week Three: July 11th - 15th

Thematic Overview:

- “Pull yourself up by your bootstraps” and other mythical American phrases
- SUCCESS! Wait...what?
- What’s behind Curtain Number One?

Readings:

- The Lesson, p. 264
- Horatio Alger, p. 272
- Class in America – 2006, p. 304
- Visual Portfolio, p. 321
- Framing Class, Vicarious Living and Conspicuous Consumption, p. 330
- Tent City, USA, p. 357
- From *America’s New Working Class*, p. 361
- Stephen Cruz, p. 366

- Videos from **People Like Us: Social Class in America**
 - [Opening](#)
 - [WASP Lessons](#)
 - [Tammy's Story](#)

Assignments:

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

Quote of the Week:

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

Week Four: July 18th - 22nd

Thematic Overview:

- The Myth of Assimilation
- Race & Class: at the crux of the Melting Pot Myth
- Cultural Citizenship & American Identity
- Power Point Presentation: Race Definitions

Readings:

- Causes of Prejudice, p. 384
- C. P. Ellis, p. 398
- Loot or Find: Fact or Frame?, p. 422
- Visual Portfolio, p. 439
- Models of American Ethnic Relations, p. 449
- Deconstructing America, p. 462
- The Crossing, p. 473
- Assimilation, p. 483

Assignments:

- Brief Draft for Research Paper Due Friday, July 22nd
- Working Bibliography for Research Paper Due Friday, July 22nd

Quote of the Week:

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

Week Five: July 25th - 29th

Thematic Overview:

- Gender and Rules of the road
- The Myths of Masculinity and Femininity

Readings:

- Girl, p. 524
- Becoming Members of Society: Learning the Social Meanings of Gender, p. 527
- A Boy's Life, p. 546
- Visual Portfolio, p. 568
- From Fly-Girls to Bitches & Hos, p. 601
- The Death of Macho, p. 629
- Power Point presentation on Men & 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

Assignments:

- Participation DB: Research Paper Discussion Due Friday, July 29th (no responses required)
- Graded DB 4: “What Makes A Man, A Man?”

Quote of the Week:

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

Week Six: August 1st – 5th

Thematic Overview:

- Global Warming: Is it real or what?
- Who owns nature?
- Wanderlust and other forgotten ways of travel

Readings:

- From *Walking*, p. 646
- From *An American Childhood*, p. 656
- A Life of the Senses, p. 664
- Visual Portfolio, p. 695
- From *The End of Nature*, p. 743
- In Search of Justice, p. 764
- Our Unhealthy Future Under Environmentalism, p. 772

Assignments:

- Research Paper First Draft Due Friday, August 5th

Quote of the Week:

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

Week Seven: August 8th – 11th

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE THURSDAY, AUGUST 11th

Thematic Overview:

- ...and in the end...

Readings:

- No readings; wrap it up!

Assignments:

- Final Research Paper due Thursday, August 11th. No late papers accepted.
- Participation DB – end of quarter overview and discussion *Due Monday, August 8th!*

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!