

Bellevue College
Fully Online Course
Introduction to American Culture

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Spring '17 Term: April 3 – June 16

[Email](#)
[Web](#)
[Scout Coaching](#)

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 the provocative material. When we explore controversial topics, I frame them 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, no matter the difficulty of the subject matter. Please note that you are responsible for any

course material you miss if you choose not to participate. If you have 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 PowerPoint, Microsoft Word, and PDF formats.

STRONGLY RECOMMENDED:

- Any current Sociology Dictionary
- Any writing guide to help you in your quest for mastering college-level writing.
- Purdue College's [resources for college students](#).

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: If you have medical information to share with me in the event of an emergency, please contact me via email or come to see me during office hours. Emergency preparedness is important! If you need course modifications, adaptations, or accommodations because of a disability, 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](#).

EXPLORE THE LMC! The Library Media Center is at your fingertips! I *strongly* encourage you to visit the LMC at least once a week, 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](#)
- [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 into 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 on this one. Make this class work for you on your own time. We're on the Honor System with your presence in class.

- Complete readings and homework assignments *on time*. I do not check whether you complete your readings; again, this is on the honor system. You do need to read your required material to complete homework assignments.
- Late homework assignments *are accepted*, but *late exams are not*. Understand that this is *set in stone*. Take it seriously.
 - Late homework is docked 10% for every day the work is late, including Saturdays and Sundays, except for Discussion Boards (see special note, below).
 - Special Note on Discussion Boards:
 1. Initial Posts are due on Thursdays by midnight.
 2. You are required to respond to the *Initial Posts* of at least two colleagues in your Main DBs. These responses are due Sundays by midnight (you may respond to people anytime between Thursdays and Sundays).
 3. To have an opportunity to receive full credit for Main DBs, you must complete the Initial Post *and* Responses. Initial Posts only receive half-credit. Responses-only receive zero credit. Take care to note this. However, to receive credit for Main Discussions, you have to participate in the discussion during the week of the discussion. In other words, when it's active. Think of it this way: if we were in a brick and mortar classroom and you arrived to participate in the discussion a week later, nobody would be there, correct? Same deal here.
 4. If you are late on your DBs, I deduct based on your Initial Posts.
- I expect that your behavior in our classroom is 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 offline, 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 soapboxing in this class; you may be tempted to present your opinion and editorialize, but refrain from doing this.

Remember: Falling behind can be hazardous to your health!

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and Participation*:	150
points	
Discussion Boards (5):	250
points	
Flex Your Head Assignments (3):	225 points
TOTAL:	525 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.
All are required.**

The Fine Print:

Attendance & Participation: Check in no less than four times per week, be engaged with all of your discussion board assignments, and provoke energetic and polite discussion. Listen/read/comprehend actively, work respectfully with your colleagues in class, take loads of notes from your readings, and look up words you don't understand. Finally, ask questions and think critically about the world around you. Make use of the (ungraded) Q&A Board as well; 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 to generate critical discussion amongst one another. These assignments are always due on Thursdays and Sundays (your initial post goes up Thursday, and your responses to one another are due Sundays). I grade your DBs 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 & Feedback for the course. They are all required, and the grades make up your overall Participation Grade.

Flex Your Head Assignments: These short assignments are an opportunity to put your learning to use as you explore the world of American Culture.

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

Required Writing Guidelines (emphasis on *required*):

- ***You must follow the required writing guidelines in the syllabus. Not doing so will result in your grade lowering by 5 points per item.***
- Twelve-point sized Times font, *double-spaced*. Single spaced assignments will be docked points.
- 1" margins all around

- APA Citations where appropriate – credit must be given even where any *ideas* presented in the paper are not your own (see notes below about avoiding plagiarism)
- Title pages and bibliographies *are not counted* as pages due
- 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.’
- Avoid the universal “we”, “our”, “us” – ask yourself: Can I speak for everyone? If you cannot, do not write it. Avoid phrasing such as “nowadays...” and “since the beginning of time.” Be accurate. Know what you’re writing and why.
- *Do not ever use* Wikipedia, CliffNotes, or other such encyclopedic references or online dictionaries. Wikipedia is not peer-reviewed and therefore unreliable. Do your research. If you’re going to research online (which is encouraged and totally legit), make sure you understand what you’re seeking. Do a deep dive into the internet to find your stuff.
- Be sure that no more than 20% of your papers are outside sources. You must be providing your analysis while you draw from material presented to you in class.

Your written work is evaluated on:

1) Content

- a. You are expected to fulfill 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. The flow of thought throughout the paper, with strong analyses and conclusions, should be consistent throughout your writing. I add points to your final grade for continued improvement.

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. Your demonstrated clarity of thought.
- c. Good organization and attention to detail.
- d. The clear and present persuasiveness of your argument/s.
- e. Your ability to be creative, thoughtful, and clever. 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 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 attribute borrowed ideas.
- b. You fail to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks.
- c. You do not write summaries and paraphrases in his/her words and doesn't document his/her source.
- d. You turn in work created by another person.
- e. You submit or use your 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. I offer comments on all of your written work and general comments on the Discussion Boards – sometimes more, sometimes less. Please read my comments and 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.

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 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 the little-to-no integration of material, and you’re not responding to the questions raised in the assignment. Demonstrated an 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.)

A: 94-100

A-: 90-93

B+: 87-89

B: 84-86

B-: 80-83

C+: 77-79

C: 74-76

C-: 70-73

D+: 67-69

D: 64-66

D-: 60-63

F: 59 and below

90-100 = A-Range. “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 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-Range. 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 media and lecture material as you could be. I should see that you’re challenged and grapple 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-Range. “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.

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COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

ASSIGNMENTS ARE ALWAYS DUE BY MIDNIGHT

DO NOT WORK AHEAD MORE THAN TWO WEEKS

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

Week One: April 3

Readings:

- [What is Culture?](#)
- [Characteristics of Culture](#)
- [Methods for Learning about Culture](#)

Assignments:

- Participation DB I: Introductions. Due Sunday, 4/9
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Week Two: April 10

Readings:

- *Made In America*, Chapter One: “The Stories We Tell”
- *Made In America*, Chapter Two: “Security”

Assignments:

- Main DB 1 Due Thursday, 4/13, responses by Sunday, 4/16

Week Three: April 17

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](#)
 - [Tammy's Story: Update 2013](#)
- Video clip from **Race: The Power of an Illusion**
 - [The House You Live In](#)

Assignments:

- Main DB 2: Initial Submission Due Thursday, 4/20; Responses Due Sunday 4/23

Week Four: April 24

Readings:

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

Assignments:

- Flex Your Head 1. Due Sunday 4/30

Week Five: May 1

Readings:

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

Assignments:

- Participation DB 2: How are we doing? Due Sunday, 5/7

Week Six: May 8

Readings:

- [Prezi Presentation on Race](#)

Assignments:

- Main DB 3: Initial submission Thursday, 5/11, Responses Due Sunday 5/14

Week Seven: May 15

Readings:

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

Assignments:

- Flex Your Head Assignment 2. Due Sunday 5/21

Week Eight: May 22

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 4: Initial submission Thursday, 5/25, Responses Due Sunday 5/28

Week Nine: May 29

Readings:

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

Assignments:

- Flex Your Head Assignment 3. Due Sunday 6/4

Week Ten: June 5

Readings:

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

Week Eleven: June 12

There is no final for this class.

Our last official session is Friday, June 16. No assignments will be accepted after this date

Readings:

- No readings. Congrats! You made it!

Assignments:

- Main DB 5: Initial Submission due Tuesday, 6/13, Responses due Friday, 6/16
- Final Participation DB 3, due Friday, 6/16

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR:

I am a professor here at Bellevue College part-time (I was FT here from 2006-2013 and also served as Dean of the Social Science Division) as well as at Colorado State University-Global. I'm a [Career Coach](#) and focus on career transitions and advising for college, grad, and post-grad students as well as "recovering academics" (if you've read this far, you can ask me about this in the Internet Café. I'm a freelance editor and indexer, a published writer and poet, a roller-skater, artist, and researcher. I received my Ph.D. in Sociology (with an emphasis in American Studies) from UC Santa Cruz in 2005, my first MA in Sociology from Humboldt State University in 2000, my second MA in Sociology from UCSC in 2003, my BA in Sociology and Journalism from Mills College in '97, and my AA in English and Creative Writing from Vista Community College in '95. This is my eleventh year teaching 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. I frequently travel for conferences as well.

Let's have a wonderful term!