



## Master Course Syllabus

For additional course information, including prerequisites, corequisites, and course fees, please refer to the Catalog: <https://catalog.uvu.edu/>

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**Semester:** Spring

**Year:** 2025

**Course Prefix:** AMST

**Course and Section #:** 2000-002

**Course Title:** Introduction to American Studies

**Credits:** 3

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### ***Course Description***

This course introduces students to the interdisciplinary study of American culture through literature, religion, history, art, economics, sports, pop culture, and political science. It examines themes and issues central to understanding the American experience. Students will study a wide range of texts, images, and artifacts, employing several methods of cultural analysis. Through research, reflection, and discussion, students will gain a deeper knowledge of the complexity of American history and a nuanced perspective on contemporary American culture and identity.

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### ***Course Attributes***

This course has the following attributes:

- General Education Requirements
- Global/Intercultural Graduation Requirements
- Writing Enriched Graduation Requirements
- Discipline Core Requirements in Program
- Elective Core Requirements in Program
- Open Elective

Other: *Click here to enter text.*

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### ***Instructor Information***

**Instructor Name:** Jason L. Clark, Professor.

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### ***Student Learning Outcomes***

Upon successful completion of this course at Utah Valley University, you should have acquired confidence and proficiency in the following areas:

- Communication
  - Inclusion
  - Critical Thinking
  - Information Literacy
  - Ethical Reasoning
  - Learn more about [UVU's Essential Learning Outcomes](#).
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## Course Materials and Texts

- **Textbook:** Phillip J. Deloria and Alexander I. Olson (2017). "*American Studies: A User's Guide.*"
  - **Articles and supplemental information:** Available on Canvas.
  - **Technology:** Reliable internet connection and access to Canvas LMS.
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## Course Requirements

### Course Assignments, Assessments, and Grading Policy

- Students should expect to spend up to **6-8 hours** a week completing course research, assignments, projects, and assessments.
- **Homework:** Weekly assigned readings and corresponding questions.
- **Participation:** Class discussions and blog posts.
- **Quizzes:** Short assessments administered periodically in class that include arguments and understanding of the material covered in the course.
- **Exams:** Two exams will be given during the course; a midterm, and a Final Exam. Exams are similar to assessments from the homework or discussed in class. Exams are closed book, closed notes, and taken in class.

Assignments	Percentage of Final Grade
Class discussions	15%
Assigned work	20%
Quizzes and Presentations	25%
Essays and Exams	40%

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### Required or Recommended Reading Assignments

All required readings will be provided on Canvas and will correspond with the modules below.

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### General Description of the Subject Matter of Each Lecture or Discussion

#### Module 1: Founding Principles and National Identity.

Topics covered:

- What is "America?" What is American Culture?
- Interdisciplinary Approach to Culture.
- Key Themes in American History and Society.

Readings and Materials:

- "*American Studies: A Users Guide.*" by Philip J. Deloria, Alexander I. Olsen.
- "*Key Words for American Cultural Studies.*" by Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hedler.
- "*Letters from an American Farmer.*" by J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur (excerpts).
- "*What to a Slave is the Fourth of July?*" by Frederick Douglass.

Assignments:

- Analysis of texts. Answer specific questions about the documents.
  - Reflective essay: "What does it mean to be an American?"
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## **Module 2: Founding Principles and National Identity.**

### Topics Covered:

An examination of America's founding ideals.

The roles of liberty, popular sovereignty, democracy, individualism, and equality in American society.

### Readings/Texts/Images:

*"The Declaration of Independence,"* by Thomas Jefferson.

*"The Preamble to the Constitution."*

*"Democracy in America,"* by Alexis de Tocqueville.

*"The 1619 Project,"* by Hannah Nikole-Jones

*Santa Anita Relocation Center* – (image).

*The Statue of Liberty.* – (image).

### Assignments:

Analytical essay: "According to texts, what are the strengths, weaknesses, and structural concerns about democracy?"

## **Module 3: The American Dream.**

### Topics Covered:

The American Dream; myth or reality?

The roles of freedom, Democracy, and opportunity in defining American identity.

### Readings/Texts/Images:

*"The Epic of America,"* by James Truslow Adams.

*"The Great Gatsby,"* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

*"Death of a Salesman,"* by Arthur Miller.

### Assignments:

Blog post: "Do you believe the American Dream is possible today? Why, or why not?"

## **Module 4: Democracy and its Challenges.**

### Topics Covered:

Inclusion and exclusion in American society.

### Readings/Texts/Images:

*"The Federalist Papers, No. 10."*, by James Madison.

*"Individualism in America,"* by Alexis de Tocqueville.

*"Gettysburg Address,"* by Abraham Lincoln.

*"Letter from Birmingham Jail,"* by Martin Luther King Jr.

### Assignments:

Argumentative essay: The texts provide insight into the challenges facing our democracy today. In your essay, evaluate the significance of each challenge and to what extent they continue as threats today.

## **Module 5: Capitalism, Economics Freedom, and Wealth Inequality.**

### Topics Covered:

The role of capitalism in America's founding.

Consequences of the Gilded Age.

Relationship between economic freedom and wealth disparity.

### Readings/Texts/Images:

*"Wealth of Nations,"* by Adam Smith (1776).

“*Capitalism and Freedom*,” by Milton Friedman (1962).  
“*Capital in the Twenty-First Century*,” by Thomas Piketty (2014)  
“*Labor and Greed*,” Collection. Cartoons from the Gilded Age.  
“*Pyramid of the Capitalist System*,” the “*Industrial Worker*, 1911” (painting).

Assignments:

Analytical essay: “Analyze the relationship between democracy and capitalism. And explain how capitalism influenced early American society.”

Blog post: “Does capitalism inherently produce inequality, or is it the result of policy decisions?”

### **Module 6: Migration, Westward Expansion, and the Frontier.**

Topics Covered:

How migration and the “Frontier” shaped American identity.

Readings/Texts/Images:

“*The Frontier Thesis*,” by Frederick Jackson Turner.

“*The Legacy of Conquest*,” by Patricia Nelson Limerick.

“*I Will Fight No More Forever*,” speech given by Chief Joseph.

“*American Progress*,” (painting by John Gast, 1872).

“*The Captive*,” (painting by Eanger Irving Couse, 1891).

“*The Chinese Question*” (political cartoon by Thomas Nast, 1871).

Assignments:

Reflective short essay: “How do the texts and images redefine American identity, and for whom?”

### **Module 7: Industrialization, Innovation, and Technology.**

Topics Covered:

The Industrial Revolution, technology, and the transformation of labor and culture.

Readings/Texts/Images:

“*The Gospel of Wealth*,” by Andrew Carnegie.

“*The Jungle*,” by Upton Sinclair.

Assignments:

Primary Document Sourcing: Library of Congress Collection.

### **Module 8: Art and Visual Culture.**

Topics Covered:

How art and visual culture are methods of expressing American values, struggles, and identity.

Readings/Texts/Images:

“*The Declaration of Independence*,” by John Trumbull (1818).

World War I Posters. Library of Congress collection.

“*American Gothic*,” by Grant Wood (1930).

“*Migrant Mother*,” by Dorothea Lange (1936).

“Coca-Cola advertisements.” [Collection](#) 1950s.

Assignments:

Comparative analysis: “Compare two pieces of visual art from different periods and evaluate how they represent shifts in American culture.”

### **Module 9: Religion, Family, and Community.**

Topics Covered:

Religion, family structures, and community practices.

Readings/Texts/Images:

“*A Model of Christianity*,” by John Winthrop (1680).  
“*Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*,” by Jonathon Edwards (1741).  
“*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*,” by Harriet Beecher Stowe (1852).  
“*Freedom of Worship*,” by Norman Rockwell (painting, 1943).  
“Family Life advertisements.” [Collection](#) 1950s.

Assignments:

Reflective essay: “How do religion, family, and community shape American cultural identity, and how have they evolved to include more diverse voices?”

### **Module 10: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity.**

Topics Covered:

Explore how race and ethnicity have shaped and reflected American culture and identity.  
Evolution of racial and ethnic narratives throughout history.

Readings/Texts/Images:

“*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*,” by Frederick Douglass (1845).  
“*The Souls of Black Folk*,” by W.E.B. DuBois (1903).  
“*The Problem We All Live With*,” by Norman Rockwell (painting, 1963).  
“*Borderlands*,” by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987).  
“*White Fragility*,” by Robin DiAngelo (2018).

Assignments:

Reflective essay: “How have cultural concepts of race and ethnicity evolved in American history? How do these narratives impact inclusion and exclusion in society today?”

### **Module 11: Gender and Sexuality.**

Topics Covered:

Explore how gender and sexuality have shaped and reflected American culture and identity.  
Evolution of representation, power, and social norms in American history.

Readings/Texts/Images:

Seneca Falls Convention.” (excerpts, 1820).  
“*Hunger Strike*,” by Alice Paul (1910).  
“*The Feminine Mystique*,” by Betty Friedan (1963).  
“*The History of Sexuality, Vol. I*,” by Michel Foucault (1976).  
“*Sister Outsider*,” by Audre Lorde (2007).

Assignments:

Analytical essay: “What intersections exist between gender, sexuality, race, class, and power in American history?”

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## ***Required Course Syllabus Statements***

### **Generative AI**

This course requires you to complete assignments that assess your understanding and application of the material. Therefore, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as chatbots, learning language models, paraphrasers, summarizers, or solvers, is strictly prohibited for any part of your written assignments. Plagiarism or cheating will result in a failing grade for the assignment and possible further action. See the Student Code of Conduct for more information [UVU's Student Rights and Accountability](#)

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## Using Remote Testing Software

This course does not use remote testing software.

This course uses remote testing software. Remote test-takers may choose their remote testing locations. Please note, however, that the testing software used for this may conduct a brief scan of remote test-takers' immediate surroundings, may require use of a webcam while taking an exam, may require the microphone be on while taking an exam, or may require other practices to confirm academic honesty. Test-takers therefore shall have no expectation of privacy in their test-taking location during, or immediately preceding, remote testing. If a student strongly objects to using test-taking software, the student should contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to determine whether alternative testing arrangements are feasible. Alternatives are not guaranteed.

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## *Required University Syllabus Statements*

### **Accommodations/Students with Disabilities**

Students needing accommodations due to a permanent or temporary disability, pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions may contact UVU [Accessibility Services](#) at [accessibilityservices@uvu.edu](mailto:accessibilityservices@uvu.edu) or 801-863-8747.

Accessibility Services is located on the Orem Campus in BA 110.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing students requesting ASL interpreters or transcribers can contact Accessibility Services to set up accommodations. Deaf/Hard of Hearing services can be contacted at [DHHservices@uvu.edu](mailto:DHHservices@uvu.edu)

DHH is located on the Orem Campus in BA 112.

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### **Academic Integrity**

At Utah Valley University, faculty and students operate in an atmosphere of mutual trust. Maintaining an atmosphere of academic integrity allows for free exchange of ideas and enables all members of the community to achieve their highest potential. Our goal is to foster an intellectual atmosphere that produces scholars of integrity and imaginative thought. In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged and UVU students are expected to produce their own original academic work.

Faculty and students share the responsibility of ensuring the honesty and fairness of the intellectual environment at UVU. Students have a responsibility to promote academic integrity at the university by not participating in or facilitating others' participation in any act of academic dishonesty. As members of the academic community, students must become familiar with their [rights and responsibilities](#). In each course, they are responsible for knowing the requirements and restrictions regarding research and writing, assessments, collaborative work, the use of study aids, the appropriateness of assistance, and other issues. Likewise, instructors are responsible to clearly state expectations and model best practices.

Further information on what constitutes academic dishonesty is detailed in [UVU Policy 541: Student Code of Conduct](#).

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### **Equity and Title IX**

Utah Valley University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age (40 and over), disability, veteran status, pregnancy, childbirth, or pregnancy-related conditions, citizenship, genetic information, or other basis protected by applicable law, including Title IX and 34 C.F.R. Part 106, in employment, treatment, admission, access to educational programs and activities, or other University benefits or services. Inquiries about nondiscrimination at UVU may be directed to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights or UVU's Title IX Coordinator at 801-863-7999 – [TitleIX@uvu.edu](mailto:TitleIX@uvu.edu) – 800 W University Pkwy, Orem, 84058, Suite BA 203.

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### **Religious Accommodation**

UVU values and acknowledges the array of worldviews, faiths, and religions represented in our student body, and as such provides supportive accommodations for students. Religious belief or conscience broadly includes religious, non-religious, theistic, or non-theistic moral or ethical beliefs as well as participation in religious holidays, observances, or activities. Accommodations may include scheduling or due-date modifications or make-up assignments for missed class work.

To seek a religious accommodation, a student must provide written notice to the instructor and the Director of Accessibility Services at [accessibilityservices@uvu.edu](mailto:accessibilityservices@uvu.edu). If the accommodation relates to a scheduling conflict, the notice should include the date, time, and brief description of the difficulty posed by the conflict. Such requests should be made as soon as the student is aware of the prospective scheduling conflict.

While religious expression is welcome throughout campus, UVU also has a [specially dedicated space](#) for meditation, prayer, reflection, or other forms of religious expression.