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Please Note: this course description is designed to offer examples of assignments and the general way I approach courses of this sort. It is not designed to be a fully fleshed-out syllabus, one with a complete list of primary readings, reserve readings, course rules, etc. Also, the below remarks owe a debt to Michael Denning's Culture in the Age of Three Worlds and Eric Lott's The Disappearing Liberal Intellectual

From the Popular Front to the End of History: An Introduction to American Studies

This course introduces students to the field of American studies by investigating five seminal moments: 1929, 1950, 1968, 1989, and 2001. At each of these moments, the course readings map the shifts in the field's governing tenets, methodologies, and unstated assumptions. In addition, the course discussions will investigate the way these changing values grow out of larger historical shifts — the Great Depression (1929), the Cold War (1950), the transformations of the 1960s (1968), the collapse of the Cold-War world order (1989), and, finally, the attacks of 9/11 (2001). As students explore this genealogy of American studies they will also work on their own archival projects in close consultation with me (more on this below).

1929: In the wake of world economic collapse, the rise of the New-Deal state, and a revived vision of a social-democratic America, Popular Front intellectuals like Sidney Hook, Kenneth Burke, Elizabeth Hawes, and C.L.R. James sought to Americanize Marx (often by melding him with pragmatism). In doing so, they initiated a socially conscious cultural criticism that, while largely suppressed by the generation of 1950, remains an essential touchstone for many more recent American studies scholars. Readings will include selections from the above authors, excerpts from the first years of *American Literature* (founded in 1929), as well as a critical overview of the period provided by Michael Denning. In the initial weeks of the course, we will also read some standard histories of American studies provided by Gene Wise, Lucy Maddox, Don Pease, Robyn Wiegman, and others in order to provide an overview of the field (which the course will expand upon and problematize).

1950: At the beginning of the Cold War, American studies programs were established at Yale, University of Pennsylvania, and elsewhere, often with explicitly anticommunist agendas. This is also the moment of American studies ur-texts like Henry Nash Smith's Virgin Land and R.W.B. Lewis's The American Adam that placed at their centers a supposedly unique and exceptional ideal of America which was closely aligned with the Cold-War nation-state's self-understanding. In 1950, the inauguration of the American Studies Association and *American Quarterly* further marked American studies as an established field. Readings will include selections from the above books, journals, and institutions, as well as work more closely allied with the earlier Popular Front intellectuals. Don Pease provides a critical overview of this period's problematic emphasis on liberal consensus and U.S. exceptionalism, and Immanuel Wallerstein offers a critique of the field's unrecognized participation in the larger capitalist world system.

1968: Deeply affected by the '60s liberation movements, post-'68 American-studies scholarship began to challenge the Cold-War consensus paradigm through a dialogue with the black, Chicano, Native American, area, and women's studies programs that developed in the 1970s, as well as an exchange of ideas with social historians and anthropologists who frequently worked in the tradition of Marx during the '70s and '80s. Key scholarship emerged that placed racial, gender, class, and ethnic identity at its center (albeit almost always still within the frame of the nation-state). This new scholarship frequently expanded American studies' objects of study to include dance, clothing, film, TV, music, popular arts, geography, visual culture, etc. The late 1960s and the 1970s also marked the arrival of post-structuralism which often worked in concert with identity scholarship over the next quarter century to break up traditional historiography and to re-think subject formation. Readings in this section will include work by Richard Slotkin, Eric Sundquist, Carolyn Porter, Nina Baym, Houston Baker, Henry Louis Gates, Ann Douglas, Lawrence Levine, Nancy Cott, Carol Smith-Rosenberg, Janice Radway, and Alan Trachtenberg, as well as more recent work by Eric Lott, Lisa Lowe, George Lipsitz, José David Saldívar, Tricia Rose, Michael Warner, Priscilla Wald, Michael Moon, and others.

1989: This year marked the "end of history" according to Francis Fukuyama's rather brash formulation — that is, the end of the old historical paradigm of state socialism v. liberal capitalism, the end of the Cold War between "first" and "second" "worlds" (which often turned hot in the "third world"). This re-mapping of the world order has pressed American studies scholars to think beyond the nation-state, even beyond first, second, and third worlds. The full effects of '89 on American studies have not yet been completely realized, but work during the 1990s and the first decades of the new century from trans-oceanic, hemispheric, and post-national perspectives is rapidly transforming the field, so much so that even the name "American" studies seems somewhat misleading and anachronistic. This portion of the course will include readings by Paul Gilroy, Shelley Streeby, Srinivas Aravamudan, and others.

2001: The terrorist attacks and the U.S. response may well transform American studies yet again. How will the field address questions of fundamentalism, politicized violence, a polarized public sphere, and neo-liberal imperialism? The field is only beginning to articulate answers to such concerns; our work is cut out for us.

Archival Project: There will be an exam on the readings, but the students' most important work in this course will be their archive-based final projects. Students should have a very general idea of their final projects when they enter the course, and as the semester unfolds they will meet with me to develop further these projects (in dialogue, of course, with course readings). The final project may range from traditional literary-historical criticism to work on, say, internet communities and new media; it may involve research in library special collections or, for example, ethnographic or oral history methodologies. The project itself may take traditional essay form or the more unconventional shape of a web site or service work. In all instances, of course, projects should demonstrate an engagement with the field — a *critical* engagement that measures and challenge the field itself.