

GROWING UP AMERICAN: Who do I say I am?

SPRING 2017

MDGK 1998 (4 units)

SECTION TIMES/DAYS: T/TH 11:20-12:50 pm in STR 234

INSTRUCTOR: Christina Bogdanou, Ph.D

CORE AREA/ATTRIBUTES: STUDIES IN AMERICAN DIVERSITY (FDIV/FND)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Inspired by the common aspiration for a better life, the all-powerful "American dream," generations of immigrants from different parts of the world have made this country what it is while themselves have struggled with the personal, cultural, racial, and socio-economic realities of what it means to be(come) American.

Through interdisciplinary readings that will include personal narratives, testimonies, opinions, literature and film, popular culture debates and the academic discourses of history, sociology, psychology, and critical race theory studies, the course will focus on such personal and collective realities: assimilation and/or differentiation, conflicting loyalties and expectations, relationships with parents/older generations and peers, with other dominant or minority racial/ethnic groups, cultural protectionism, language and cultural issues. In addition to race/ethnicity related identity problems, social class, economic status, and gender will inform class discussions in order to connect them to broader issues of American identity politics and how they relate to privilege, inequality, injustice, bias and discrimination in contemporary American society.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students completing the course will:

- obtain a historical and critical perspective to different groups' immigration history, struggles, and achievements; as well as understanding of their voice and stories
- reflect on their own white-American or immigrant-American identities; how such identities have originated and persisted; how they have influenced their understanding of their own identities as Americans and their relationships with others/the (immigrant/racial) Other
- learn how to read, think, and listen *critically* and make broader connections between academic discourse and real life
- engage reflectively and critically in rigorous scholarly discourse, research, and writing about contemporary American identity politics (including their own American identity)
- write critically with a voice that demonstrates clarity, coherence, intellectual force, and awareness and respect for others

PREREQUISITES/RECOMMENDED BACKGROUND: None

REQUIRED TEXTS / READING LIST:

Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex*

Heidi Durrow, *The Girl who Fell from the Sky*

Selected readings from the field of history, sociology, psychology, critical theory, literary selections, films, and personal essays will be available at the class site at MYLMU Connect.

*Depending on the group's interests, this syllabus and its contents may be subject to revision; students are responsible for any changes or modifications distributed in class and/or posted on

LMU's course management system MYLMU Connect. Please, check the announcement board in MYLMU Connect class site regularly (especially if you have to miss class).

READINGS:

The weekly assigned readings are listed in the class calendar on your syllabus (posted on MYLMU Connect class site too). **DO NOT LOSE** your syllabus. Consult it for the weekly reading assignments and other important dates and information. Bring your syllabus to class in **every** meeting. The reading pace is **rigorous**. Although effort has been taken to make the reading balanced (and actually lighter on weeks that papers are due), the reading load is not always the same. Depending on your personal reading pace, consider reading ahead on days /weeks that the reading is lighter. You should come to class prepared, i.e., you should have finished the required reading **BEFORE** you come to class. **ALWAYS** print out and bring the reading for the day with you. Please, do not use the electronic texts to study as you cannot annotate them while you are doing the reading and/or write comments on them during class discussion.

COURSE WORK / EXPECTATIONS:

- attendance / participation (10%)
- five current event postings and commentary (10%)
- reading quizzes (10%)
- one 15-minute presentation (10%)
- ten weekly 1-page (single-spaced) critical reading responses (15%)
- one mid-term paper (5-6 pages) (15%)
- one final research project (10-12 pages) (30%)

The reading and writing pace of the class is **rigorous**. At LMU, one credit hour is defined as a minimum of 3 hours of work per week for a 15-week semester. That means that a 4-unit class must average a minimum of 12 hours of work per week (including class time). Typically, this will mean one hour of classroom instruction and two hours of out of class student work each week per each unit of a course. This course meets twice a week for an hour and a half and expects a minimum of 12 hours of work per week for **ALL** class-related activities. Students will be held accountable for keeping up with the workload individually and as a group.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS:

The course is not a lecture. Instead, it aims to be a personal as well as a critical journey of self-reflection and examination about who we think we are as Americans and who we think others are as Americans as well. Thus, it relies on group discussions as the primary in-class method of teaching and learning. This discussion-based format invites students to share openly—and respectfully to others—their own thoughts about their own identities, their own experiences as well as their thoughts on others' identities and experiences. This method asks for students to participate actively in their own learning process and that of their peers. Rather than spending time in class reviewing the assigned readings, class time will be used to deepen our understanding of the texts in their historical and cultural context; and to reflect seriously on our often preconceived ideas about ethnicity, race, class, and gender as reflected in our understanding(s) of what it means to be(come) American.

ATTENDANCE / PARTICIPATION (10%):

As mentioned above, this class is not a lecture. Therefore, both your prompt attendance and participation are essential for its success. Both lateness and absence will affect your grade. **Being present in class without ever participating cannot earn you more than a “C” for attendance and participation.** Keep in mind that good class participation does not necessarily mean that you have all the right answers. It rather means that you are willing to pose questions, work with and challenge in an academic and civil way others' opinions, and generally contribute to class. If you need

to miss class, please contact me. Six or more unexcused absences will result in “**F**” for your **final** grade.

EXTRA PARTICIPATION CREDIT: As Provost Hellige suggested in a university-wide communication, “Presidential elections offer opportunities for us to engage in conversation about many issues affecting the country and the world. That is even more true of the 2016 presidential election, a particularly close and divisive race. As an educational institution committed to forming engaged citizens, we seek to take up the pedagogical challenge of this particular historical moment.” Inauguration Day Teach-Ins will take place on January 20th, 2017 from 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. and they will include sessions offering historical and comparative perspectives, others will be devoted to specific issues such as climate change and undocumented immigrants, and still others will focus on campus issues. To receive the extra credit, you will have to write a one-page (single-space) reflection that can count as one of your regular weekly RRs.

CURRENT EVENT POSTS AND COMMENTARY (10%)

In an effort to make meaningful and critical connections between academic discourse and real life, students are asked to follow current events that reflect directly the class themes, readings, and discussions. Students are asked to post commentary on five relevant events (no more than a page) on the discussion board of the class site on MYLMU Connect and be ready to present and discuss in class as a way of contributing to class discussions. These posts are due by 9:00 pm the day before class meets. Bring a hard copy of your post on the weeks that you contribute to the discussion board. Students are encouraged to respond to other students’ posts for participation credit. Credit will be determined on the relevance and quality of the commentary. For full credit, post regularly (vs. all 5 posts the last week of class)

READING QUIZZES (10%):

In order to promote student accountability in keeping up with the weekly readings, expect quizzes on the days new readings are due (see the syllabus). The format of the quizzes will refer to the ways you are asked to read and study: carefully for important/relevant details, critically for arguments and support. If you do the readings carefully and are prepared for class discussion, there is no further preparation you need in order to take the quiz.

PRESENTATION (10%):

Students will be asked to give a 15-minute **CRITICAL** presentation on a topic of their choice from the reading list for the week they will choose to present OR a current event that relates DIRECTLY to what we are discussing that week (i.e., a combination of the two). Do NOT just summarize your source. Instead, present it critically. Presentations need NOT present personal opinions but rather critical commentary on the author(s)’ arguments (argument analysis). Students are encouraged to discuss their presentation topics for feedback during office hours before their presentation.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

WEEKLY READING RESPONSES (RR) (15%):

In preparation for class discussion every week, you are asked to bring to class a one-page **CRITICAL** response (**single-spaced**) to **ONE** of the weekly readings specifically. I will NOT accept RRs more than one page long or not single-spaced. This is not an arbitrary limitation. It aims at controlled writing. Consider your (almost) weekly responses a reflective, explorative “journal” on the issues we will be discussing ranging from the very personal (e.g., who do I think I am as an American?) to the broader, more cultural, social, political issues (e.g., how does social class affect perceptions of racial identity?) that will give you ideas about your papers and final project (you can develop any of these RRs into a longer paper).

Your response **cannot** be a summary of the essay/article/text. As you choose your weekly topics keep in mind that you are **not** responsible for addressing the whole text as you cannot say anything

meaningful in one page about any text in its entirety. Necessarily, you must be very selective and pick one small detail/aspect of the text (a short passage or a quote for a close reading, a recurring theme, etc.).

The objectives for this writing assignment are the following: 1) it helps you to KEEP UP with the reading(s); 2) it motivates you to THINK/REFLECT about the reading BEFORE you come to class; 3) it helps you PARTICIPATE in discussion since you will be prepared to do so; 4) it allows you to GET CREDIT for the work you have done even if you don't get a chance to participate on a particular meeting; 5) Most importantly, the class places a lot of emphasis on reflection, critical thinking as well as clear and controlled expression/writing. Thus, the reading responses are a great **weekly critical thinking and writing exercise** that will eventually help you with the conception and writing of your papers (you are strongly encouraged to develop any of the reading responses into a paper/final research project although not required as topics will also be provided for you). It helps with argument structure, analysis, and support as well as clear, concise, and persuasive expression. You will receive extensive feedback and tentative grades on your first 5 RRs. You will receive final grades on the last 5 RRs. In order to receive full credit, you will need to complete all 10 RRS. MAKE SURE YOU SAVE EVERYTHING YOU TURN IN AND RECEIVE BACK WITH COMMENTS/ FEEDBACK.

MIDTERM PAPER (15%):

You are required to write a short midterm paper (5-6 pages, double-spaced) (see class calendar for due date). The papers will go through several drafts and you will receive comments during one-on-one conferences. More details will be given to you as we approach closer to the days due. ALWAYS keep a hard copy of the papers you turn in (with so many computer problems, it is not a bad idea to use google docs or email yourselves important documents/papers in case you need to retrieve them and resubmit).

3. FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT (10-12 Pages) (30%)

Building on class readings and discussions as well as your personal interests, you will be asked to choose your own final research project that will involve academic research in order to articulate your own ideas about one aspect /variation of the organizing theme of our class: how one comes into American identity/what it means to be an American today. Personal testimonies, interviews, artistic/literary representations, etc. can be used in order to frame your topic. You will be asked to submit a written proposal that will include your topic, methodologies, proposed annotated bibliography, and an outline. You will be asked to make a 5-10 minute class presentation about the progress of your project. Your project will go through several drafts and you will receive comments during one-on-one conferences and peer-editing sessions. (More details will follow).

Papers must be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins and fonts no larger than size 12. ALWAYS include the following information with **everything** you turn in: class number/title, your name, date, and **assignment title**:

MDGK 1998: Studies in American Diversity

Name

Date

Paper #1, draft #2

*With the increasingly astonishing incidence of personal or family illness -- even death-- that invariably occurs around due dates, my policy is to let you know that in such cases I will ask for written verification. Still, in case of extraordinary circumstances that prevent you from meeting a deadline, you should contact me before the due date. Under such extreme circumstances no more than ONE extension will be given. In fairness to other students who work hard to turn their work in time, papers late for more than a week will not be accepted (unless otherwise agreed on). Late papers will be downgraded depending on the length of lateness.

OFFICE HOURS:

I will have office hours on T/TH 3:00-5:30 pm & by appointment. You are strongly encouraged to come and see me with any questions you may have about the readings and/or the assignments. Feel free to e-mail me (my preferred way of communication) or call me, if you have any questions.

ACADEMIC HONESTY / PLAGIARISM:

Academic dishonesty will be treated as an extremely serious matter, with serious consequences that can range from receiving no credit for assignments to failing the class to expulsion. It is never permissible to turn in any work that has been copied from another student or copied from a source (including Internet sources) without properly acknowledging the source. It is your responsibility to make sure that your work meets the standard of academic honesty set forth in the "LMU Honor Code and Process"

(see http://www.lmu.edu/about/services/registrar/Bulletin/Bulletins_in_PDF_Format.htm.)

If you have any doubts about quoting correctly your sources, you can consult any Writer's Manual (available on line too) or talk to me.

TECHNOLOGY and EMAIL COMMUNICATION:

MYLMU Connect: Aside from the books that you can purchase through the LMU bookstore or any other retailer you choose, additional required and recommended reading materials will be posted on MYLMU Connect class site. MYLMU Connect is also your source to find class notes and presentations and all handouts given in class.

Lion Email Account: I often communicate with the whole class using campus email systems, so it is essential that you regularly check your lion.lmu.edu account or forward your lion account email to your preferred email address.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES: Please turn off and put out of sight ALL electronic devices during class-time including laptops and ipads. The interruptions and/or distractions they cause disrupt class and interfere with the learning process. Use of laptops is not necessary. Class notes/ class presentations are posted on MYLMU Connect. Please, use a notebook to take down your own notes. Class time is meant for reflection and discussion.

EXPECTATIONS FOR CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR:

RESPECT FOR SELF AND OTHERS: As an LMU Lion, by the *Lion's Code*, you are pledged to join the discourse of the academy with honesty of voice and integrity of scholarship and to show respect for staff, professors, and other students. Behavior appropriate for the success of the class is expected at all times. Please, be in class on time. Do not disturb / disrupt other students' learning experience by coming to class late or leaving early, walking in and out, not having your textbook with you, using electronic devices, etc. Be courteous during discussions. Please, use common sense as to what behavior is appropriate and expected. If in doubt, ask me or refer to the LMU *Community Standards* (see link under 2. for the Student Conduct Code, Section IV. D.).

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS: Students with special needs who require reasonable modifications, special assistance, or accommodations in this course should promptly direct their request to the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office. Any student who currently has a documented disability (ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Learning, Physical, or Psychiatric) needing academic accommodations should contact the DSS Office (Daum Hall 2nd floor, 310-338-4216) as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please visit www.lmu.edu/dss for additional information.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS: To report an emergency or suspicious activity, contact the LMU Department of Public Safety by phone (x222 or 310-338-2893) or at the nearest emergency call box. In the event of an evacuation, follow the evacuation signage throughout the building to the

designated safe refuge area where you will receive further instruction from Public Safety or a Building Captain. For more safety information and preparedness tips, visit <http://www.lmu.edu/emergency>.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE at LMU /OVERALL ASSESSMENT:

In keeping with the larger context of LMU's mission about academic excellence, the encouragement of lifelong learning, the education of the whole person, and the promotion of faith and justice, critical thinking, academic and moral reflection as well as articulate expression are at the core of this class. Students are expected to be careful and critical readers, engaged learners. They are expected to write and speak with precision and clarity about important issues such as ethics and social justice. Students are expected to assimilate class presentations on complex topics such as academic, literary, and cultural discourse, control primary texts (i.e., read carefully and understand the content), raise their own questions that reflect critical engagement with the class overall.

GRADING STANDARDS

A Outstanding

Student has exceeded expectations and achieved mastery of the subject

- Participation: The student consistently makes important and creative contributions to the learning environment of the seminar. Questions and comments demonstrate that the student has thoroughly prepared the assigned material and is familiar with the issues involved. Questions help move the discussion forward. The student offers insightful comments that engage the rest of the class as well.
- Writing: The student has achieved mastery of the topic of the assignment. In the case where s/he chooses their own topic, it shows deep reflection and originality of thought. The writing is well organized in structure, shows clear grasp of the concepts involved and a superior ability to articulate ideas and reflections. Research is thorough and well documented. Writing itself shows mastery of style. Language is varied in pattern, sophisticated in vocabulary and complex in structure and thought. There are no spelling or punctuation errors and it is thoroughly edited and proofread.

B Good

Student has met all expectations and accomplished above average work

- Participation: The student actively contributes to the learning environment of the class. Comments demonstrate that s/he is familiar with the assigned material. Questions seek information or clarification alone.
- Writing: The student demonstrates a clear understanding of the topic/subject matter. Work is generally organized in an effective way and the writing is competent. Research is good and documented. There are no spelling or punctuation errors and it is edited and proofread.

C Satisfactory

Student has met most expectations and demonstrated a general comprehension of the subject

- Participation: The student volunteers occasional comments in class discussions but is primarily a passive listener. The student contributes to small groups discussions. Comments do not show reflection on the texts and ideas discussed.
- Writing: The student demonstrates only a general understanding of the topic/subject matter. Work shows some evidence of initial research. Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are present. Writing needs to be improved by better organization of ideas, more nuanced thought and expression, more thorough uses of research sources, wider word choice, more complex sentence structure, overall editing and proofreading.

D Poor /Pass

Student has met few expectations and has not shown an understanding of the subject.

- Participation: The student shows only minimal evidence of having studied the required material. The student makes no active contributions to discussions.
- Writing: It shows poor organization of ideas. Work illustrates only minimal evidence of having read and studied the required material. There are significant errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling. No editing or proofreading.

F Failing

Student has not met expectations and has shown little effort to understand and engage with the material.

**CLASS CALENDAR
STUDIES IN AMERICAN DIVERSITY
MDGK 1998: Growing up American: Who do I say I am?
SPRING 2017**

Week 1	T 1/10	Introduction to the course-requirements Challenging cultural myths and assumptions
	TH 1/12	<p>Personal Identities: Who do I say I am? <u>Read:</u> T. Jefferson “Declaration of Independence (684-87); RR#1 due: “I am an American...” The Declaration of Independence lays the foundational values of American society and identity: “<i>We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.</i>” Comparing such principles with contemporary values and practices, how would you describe what it means to you to be American today?</p>
Week 2	T 1/17	<p>Created Equal: The melting pot and the myth of equality from T. Jefferson’s “Notes on the State of Virginia”(532-37); George M. Frederickson “Models of American Ethnic Relations” (565-75); V. Parillo “Causes of Prejudice” (504-16); <u>Presentations:</u> _____</p>
	TH 1/19	<p>“We Are All Immigrants” / Assimilation or Multiculturalism <u>Read:</u> R. Takaki “A Different Mirror” (538-55); Arturo Madrid “Diversity and its Discontents” (175-83); from <i>The Closing of the American Mind</i> (introduction 25-43); RR#2 due <u>Presentations:</u> _____</p>
Week 3	T 1/24	<p><u>Read:</u> <i>Middlesex</i> –book one and two (pages 3-211) <u>Presentations:</u> _____</p>

	TH 1/26	<u>Read:</u> cont. <i>Middlesex</i> –book three (pages 215-270 ONLY) Presentations: _____ RR# 3 due
Week 4	T 1/31	Race Matters B. Goyette “How Racism Created America's Chinatowns” (1-10); from Erika Lee <i>The Making of Asian America</i> (introduction 1-11); Karan Majahan “The Two Asian Americas” (np); Anna Quindlen “The Mosaic vs the Myth” (161-62) Presentations: _____
	TH 2/2	MLK’s dream 50 years later <u>Read:</u> Martin Luther King Jr. “I have a Dream”; Cornell West from <i>Race Matters</i> (1-8); Toni Morrison, “A Return to Citizenship” Presentations: _____ RR#4 due
Week 5	T 2/7	<u>Watch:</u> film <i>Crash</i> (NO new reading)
	TH 2/9	cont. film and discussion on Race Matters readings from w. 4 Presentations: _____ RR#5 due
Week 6	T 2/14	White privilege: how can we talk about it? <u>Read:</u> Critical Race Theory Overview (1-9)
	TH 2/16	<u>Read:</u> cont. Critical Race Theory overview and white privilege articles A. Johnson “Where White Privilege Came From” (1-5); R. Jensen “How White Privilege Shapes the US” (1-3) M. Robertson “A Newer White Consciousness” (1); P. McIntosh “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” (1-6); Ian F. Haney-Lopez “The Social Construction of Race” (191-203); Gene Nichol “Educating for Privilege” (395-97); “Macklemore and The Politics of Rap” Presentations: _____ RR#6 due
Week 7	T 2/21	Free Speech/Hate Speech and Political Correctness <u>Read:</u> J. Chait “Not a Very P.C. thing to Say” and B. Goyette’s “What J. Chait Does not Understand about Identity Politics” (1-12) <u>Watch:</u> film <i>Dear White People</i>
	TH 2/23	cont. film /discussion Presentations: _____ RR#7 due / CONFERENCES
		*mid-term deficiencies due
Week 8	T 2/28	EMOTIONAL vs CRITICAL REASONING

Read: “The Coddling of The American Mind”; “White Liberals and Racism”

Presentations: _____

CONFERENCES

TH 3/2 **midterm paper due**
cont. discussion;
Presentations: _____
NO RR due

Week 9 **T 3/7-9** **SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS**

Week 10 **T 3/14** Read: *The Bluest Eye*
Presentations: _____

TH 3/16 Read: K. Pyke “What is Internalized Self-Oppression?”
Presentations: _____
RR#8 due

* 3/17 last day to withdraw or apply for Credit/No Credit grading if applicable

Week 11 **T 3/21** **Bridging the Cultures/Biracial Identities**
Intersectionality and the New Face of America
Read: *The girl who fell from the sky*
Presentations: _____

TH 3/23 Read: Melissa Algranati “Being Another” (570-75);
Caroline Hwang “The Good Daughter” (73-75); Joycin C. Shih
“Chyna and Me” (517-23); Gloria Anzaldua “How to Tame a Wild
Tongue” (575-82); Sandip Roy-Chowdhury “Interpreter of the
Second Generation (53-56);
Presentations: _____
RR#9 due

Week 12 **T 3/28** Read: R. Martinez “The Crossing” (604-13)
Watch: film: A Better Life

TH 3/30 Watch: “Coca Cola 2014 Superbowl Commercial”
Read: Richard Rodriguez “Notes from a Changing America” (165-
68); “Coca Cola, Islamophobia and Consumerism”; “Are US
corporations the most progressive institutions in America?”
Presentations: _____

Week 13 **T 4/4** **Class and Money Matters/Consumerism and American**
Identity
Watch: Robert Reich’s documentary *Inequality for all*
NO new reading

TH 4/6 cont. / discuss the documentary
Read: Annie Downey “Is there Life after Welfare?” (352-53);
Bethlyn Madison Webster “Stamps” (384-85); Brenda Della Casa

“What it Feels Like to Be on Welfare” (2); Linda Tirado “This Why Poor People’s Bad Decisions Make Perfect Sense” (2); Dennis Powers “I Am the New Working Poor and I’m not Alone” (2);
Presentations: _____

RR#10 due

Week 14 **T 4/11**

What can one person do?

Read: P. Gorski “Consumerism as Racial and Economic Injustice”

Presentations: _____

TH 4/13

NO CLASS – EASTER BREAK

Week 15

T 4/18

**Wrap up course/ class presentations of final project proposal
Conferences**

TH 4/20

**Class presentations of final project proposal
Conferences**

Week 16

T 4/25

Writing Week/ Conferences - NO CLASS

TH 4/27

in class peer-editing / Conferences

EXAM WEEK 5/1-5:

NO FINAL EXAM

FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT and copies of the discussion board posts are DUE on TUESDAY 5/2 in my office in UH 3752 IN PERSON between 4:30-5:30 pm.
NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

I hope you will find the class rewarding.