

## SYLLABUS FOR AMERICAN STUDIES

**COURSE:** THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE 1301 **SEMESTER CREDIT HOURS:** 3  
**SECTION:** **TR 10:00 – 11:15 / CRN 10386** / Academic Building, Room A431  
\*\*\*This course is offered through the Learners' Community and is linked to  
Reading 1300 / 10:00-11:15 MW / CRN 10385)  
**INSTRUCTOR:** MR. BRANDEN KUZMICK  
**SEMESTER:** FALL 2007  
**OFFICE:** SOUTH-651 **TELEPHONE:** (713) 221-8046 (Voice Mail / 24 hrs.)  
**OFFICE HOURS:** Monday through Thursday, 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (and by appointment)

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The goal of this course is to sharpen your ability to **think**---to think clearly, to think logically, to think critically, and to think effectively. The ability to think well is necessary for developing our skills of writing, reading, speaking, and listening. Thinking effectively is also necessary to solve problems and to make the best choices in our academic, career, and personal lives. Finally, thinking critically is essential for understanding who we are and for determining what kinds of persons we want to become. This course is designed to increase and focus your thinking abilities by using a variety of methods—lectures, class discussions, readings, written assignments, problem-solving activities, and examinations. In the final analysis, however, your success in the course depends on your willingness to commit yourself to developing the thinking potentials that you possess.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

The American Studies curriculum was designed to help students develop an objective understanding of the rights and laws which have evolved, and continue to evolve, from the Bill of Rights. Specific objectives include the following:

1. Examine and discuss actual Supreme Court cases, both as students giving their opinions and as judges who must try to apply the principles of law without prejudice.
2. Explore how the amendments are applied to the legal system today---transfer insight into the Bill of Rights to current events.
3. Discover the history of these rights and learn about the Founding Fathers' struggle to insure that these rights became a part of the U.S. Constitution.
4. Develop a greater appreciation of the importance and the influence of the Bill of Rights in their daily lives.
5. Examine the language of each amendment (and the law) and provide an opportunity for students to put this language into their own terms.
6. Provide opportunities to utilize a variety of strategies during the pre-reading, reading, and post-reading stages of case analysis.
7. Provide a format for students to develop their perspectives on human rights, and

functions and limits of government.

Specific critical thinking/creative thinking objectives include:

1. Analyzing issues / situations
2. Solving problems
3. Generating and applying concepts
4. Designing systematic plans of action
5. Constructing and evaluating arguments
6. Exploring issues from multiple perspectives
7. Applying knowledge to new situations
8. Critically evaluating the logic and validity of information
9. Developing evidence to support views
10. Discussing subjects in an organized way

\*\*\*\*Because critical reading skills are so dependent on critical thinking skills as to be almost inseparable, this course will focus on developing skills in two broad areas: literal comprehension and critical comprehension.

Literal comprehension skills include the following:

1. Understanding words in context (developing college reading vocabularies)
2. Recognizing explicit and implicit main ideas and supporting details
3. Recognizing patterns of organization
4. Applying study skills to reading material

Critical comprehension skills include the following:

1. Recognizing the author's purpose and point of view
2. Recognizing the author's tone
3. Distinguishing between fact and opinion and detecting bias
4. Drawing valid inferences and conclusions
5. Assessing the credibility or objectivity of the writer

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:**

1. Thinking Critically: A Concise Guide, John Chaffee
2. In Our Defense: The Bill of Rights in Action, Ellen Alderman and Carolyn Kennedy
3. You Decide! Applying the Bill of Rights to Real Cases, George Bundy Smith & Alene L. Smith

**MATERIALS NEEDED:**

1. "Just Pockets" portfolio (provided by the instructor)
2. college dictionary
3. white looseleaf paper
4. blue pen, red pen, and a No. 2 pencil
5. fluorescent highlighter (yellow)
6. stapler
7. scissors

# COURSE REQUIREMENTS

## ATTENDANCE / TARDY POLICY:

Students are expected to attend class and arrive on time. There is no way you can expect to learn the material in this course without being present for lectures and class discussions. Arriving on time is a courtesy that you owe your fellow students and your instructor. **Students arriving more than 20 minutes late will be recorded as absent for the day.** Excessive absences (missing more than 4 classes) will result in receiving an F for the course.

**IF YOU ARE ABSENT, YOU MUST COMMUNICATE WITH ME BY LEAVING A MESSAGE ON MY VOICE MAIL (713-221-8046). YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY WORK ASSIGNED DURING YOUR ABSENCE. CONTACT A STUDENT IN THE CLASS IN ORDER TO FIND OUT WHAT WORK WAS COMPLETED IN CLASS AND WHAT HOMEWORK WAS ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT CLASS.**

## READING:

It is essential that you complete the assigned readings before the classes in which they will be discussed. You cannot expect to keep up with the course development or intelligently contribute to the class discussions if you haven't completed the readings.

## CLASS PARTICIPATION:

The aim of this course is to develop your interest and ability to think. Thinking and reflection are essential for our survival and for our development as mature, aware human beings. The best way for you to develop and sharpen your capacity to think is for you to be actively involved in the classes. This means not only being attentive in class, but also participating in the class discussions. Thoughtful participation in class will be an important consideration in the final grade you receive in the course.

## HOMEWORK:

Homework is an important part of the course in terms of learning and also your grade. Homework is due the class after it is assigned.

**ALL ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED ON OR BEFORE THEIR DUE DATE; LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR A GRADE.**

**INSTEAD, THE THREE LOWEST GRADES WILL BE DROPPED AT THE END OF THE TERM BEFORE FINAL AVERAGES ARE CALCULATED.**

## **GRADING POLICY:**

Your grades will be determined by the following formula:

Class and Homework Assignments	60%
Quizzes	20%
Final Exam	10%
Class Participation and Attendance	10%

## **GRADING SCALE:**

A =	90	—	100 %
B =	80	—	89
C =	70	—	79
D =	65	—	69
F =	0	—	64

## **UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:**

All students are subject to university-wide policies set forth in the Catalog and Student Handbook, including the **Academic Honesty Policy** (Policy Statement 03.A.19).

### **Academic Honesty Violations**

The most common academic honesty violations are cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes, but is not limited to:

- Submitting material that is not one's own.
- Using information or devices that are not allowed by the faculty member.
- Obtaining and/or using unauthorized material.
- Fabricating information.
- Violating procedures prescribed to protect the integrity of a test, or other evaluation exercise.
- Collaborating with others on assignments without the faculty member's consent.
- Cooperating with or helping another student to cheat.
- Having another person take an examination in the student's place.

- Altering exam answers and requesting that the exam be re-graded.
- Communicating with any person during an exam, other than the faculty member or exam proctor.

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

- Directly quoting the words of others without using quotation marks or indented format to identify them.
- Using sources of information (published or unpublished) without identifying them.
- Paraphrasing materials or ideas of others without identifying the sources.

### **PAYMENT DATES FOR Fall 2007 SEMESTER:**

<b>August 18, 2007</b>	<b>Last day to make payment for Regular Registration (2:00 p.m.) or classes will be dropped.</b>
<b>September 12, 2007</b>	<b>Last day to pay for Late Registration (including late fee). Payment must be received by 6:00 p.m. or classes will be dropped.</b>

### **DROPPING A CLASS:**

If you wish to drop any or all of your classes, you are responsible for doing so online --- after receiving prior approval from an academic advisor--- by the deadlines published in the Academic Calendar. A class dropped through the official Day of Record (September 4<sup>th</sup> for the Fall 2007 Semester) will not appear on your transcript; one dropped after the Day of Record and up to the published drop deadline --- the last day to withdraw from a course or October 25<sup>th</sup> for the Fall 2007 semester) --- will appear with a grade of “W”. **PLEASE NOTE:** Learners Community (LC) students must meet with an LC academic advisor/counselor for approval regarding a schedule change or drop.

### **STATEMENT OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS:**

“UH-D adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities should register with Disabled Student Services and contact their instructor(s) in a timely manner to arrange for appropriate accommodations.