Comparative Studies 367.01 - The American Identity in the World

Course Objectives
As an intermediate writing course, this class will focus in part on improving your critical reading & writing skills. The writings you will do for the class will be critical responses to the readings, films and class discussions, which will revolve around the topic of "American Identity." Over the quarter, we will look at the nature of this identity, how it can be defined, and the ways in which we, ourselves, are shaped by it. This will necessitate a look at the broader theories on identity, the various ways in which the concept of "culture" is defined, and how human nature, along with its relationship to the world, is determined. Within this larger context, we will then read both autobiographical and fictional writings by "Americans" in order to question how these ideas on American identity shape (and are shaped by) individuals. While the writers chosen for the assigned readings are meant to serve as examples of individual perspectives, it is also important that we consider our own perspectives in our discussions of the nature of the America experience.

Required Texts
Jonah's Gourd Vine, Zora Neale Hurston
Ceremony, Leslie Marmon Silko
Woman Warrior, Maxine Hong Kingston
Cat's Cradle, Kurt Vonnegut
Course Packet

Recommended: The Everyday Writer, Andrea Lunsford (if you do not already have a reference guide for writing, I strongly urge you to invest in one - it is well worth the money)

Course Requirements
The grading for the course will be as follows:

Weekly Notes:	20%	Final Research Paper:	30%
Essay One:	15%	Bibliography:	5%
Essay Two:	15%	Participation & attendance:	15%

Participation and Attendance:
Participation and attendance will be an important part of this class. You will be expected to complete the readings and be prepared to discuss them in class. The attendance policy is in accordance with university policy. Only excused, documented absences will allow for past due work to be made up. Late work will not otherwise be accepted! Each unexcused absence over two will lower your final grade by 1/3 (i.e. A- to B+). You will also be responsible for leading at least one class discussion over the quarter.

Weekly Notes:
You will be required to hand in weekly notes every Monday. These notes should average 2 pages, typed and double-spaced, and deal with the reading assignments for the week as well as with the ongoing class discussion. These notes are not to be a mere summary of the texts, but a critical analysis of the readings. I will respond to your notes on a weekly basis, and a 'ghost' grade will be assigned. At the end of the quarter, you will have the opportunity to hand in revisions of any five of these notes for a new cumulative grade. The final grade for the notes will be a combination of the 'ghost' grades and the new cumulative grade.

Short Essays:
There will be two short essays, due Oct 19th and Nov 9th, which will deal with the readings, films and class discussion up to that point. You will have the freedom to choose which aspect of this material you wish to focus on, but the paper must deal with at least two of the readings and/or films. The papers each have a minimum requirement of 3 pages, typed and double- spaced. You will have one opportunity to revise these essays for a new grade.

Final Paper:
The final paper does include a research component. This means that in addition to the class readings, your paper should also incorporate outside sources. Toward the end of the quarter, we will discuss your individual paper topic. At a separate individual conference, you will be expected to have a bibliography, or list of possible sources, and a general focus for the content of the paper. The paper will have a minimum requirement of seven pages, typed & double-spaced, and will be due on Friday, Dec 4th.

Some End Notes
I want to remind you of the fact that the Writing Center offers free and confidential individual writing tutorials. This is an excellent service, and I recommend that you take advantage of it. The tutors at the center work with a wide range of writers, and the center is not just for 'poor' writers. While they will not work as proofreaders, they can help you in any other aspect of your writing.

If you have a disability and need special arrangements for this class, please meet with me after class or during my office hours. You should also make sure that you are registered with the Office for Disability Services.

Course Schedule
You will be notified at least one class period in advance of any changes to this schedule. An asterisk (*) indicates that the reading is to be found in the course packet. Remember that weekly notes are due at the beginning of class every Monday unless I indicate otherwise.

Wed Sept 23 Introduction

Mon Sept 28 Due: * Daniel & Peck "Culture/Contexture: An Introduction"
* Daniel "Crushed Glass, or, Is There a Counterpoint to Culture?"
* Lloyd, "Race under Representation"

Wed Sept 30 Due: Jonah's Gourd Vine (vii-64)

Mon Oct 5 Due: Jonah's Gourd Vine (64-202)

Wed Oct 7 Due: * Brown, "De Beast Within: The Role of Nature in Jonah's Gourd Vine"
* Speisman, "Voodoo as symbol in Jonah's Gourd Vine"
* Moss, "Creating a Community: Literacy Events in African-American Churches"

Mon Oct 12 Due: Ceremony (1-116)
* Lesser, "The Right Not to Assimilate"

Wed Oct 14 Due: Ceremony (116-178)

Mon Oct 19	Due: Ceremony (178-262) Essay One Due
Wed Oct 21	Due: The Woman Warrior (1-53)
Mon Oct 26	Due: The Woman Warrior (55-160) * Seyhan, "Ethnic Selves/Ethnic Signs"
Wed Oct 28	Due: The Woman Warrior (160-209)
Mon Nov 2	Due: Cat's Cradle (11-130)
Wed Nov 4	Due: Cat's Cradle (130-191)
Mon Nov 9	Due: * Myers, "The Elusive Self and the Intimidating Other" * Butrym, "For Suffering Humanity" Essay Two Due
Wed Nov 11	No Class - Veteran's Day
Mon Nov 16	Due: Emerson, "The Transcendentalist" Huston, "The Conceptual Crisis in the Modern West" Descartes, excerpts from Discourse on Method Hume, excerpts
Wed Nov 18	Due: * Toumey, "Scientific Symbols & Cultural Meanings" * Goldman, excerpts from Einstein's God (9-15, 25-36, 65-82)
Mon Nov 23	Due: * Capra, excerpts from The Tao of Physics (3-39)
Wed Nov 25	Individual Conferences Bibliography of Sources Due
Mon Nov 30	Due: * Updike, excerpts from Roger's Version (3-29, 75-91)
Wed Dec 2	Course Wrap-Up & Evaluations

Final Paper Due by 3:30 on Friday, December 4