

GENA2292 American Themes Through Creative Expression

2022-23 Term 2 | Thursdays 2:30-4:15 PM | UCA 111

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This course investigates topics and themes significant to the United States' cultural horizons from a variety of artistic perspectives. We'll explore the paradox of creative expression -- observing what art does to the world, how it generates and produces its own context, and how cultural expression brings into being the very situations to which, at one and the same time, it reacts to.

By engaging critically with works ranging from sculpture, painting, photography, print, music, and cinematography; to radio, television and newer forms of digital art; we will see how cultural analysis is essential in understanding America's economic, political, and social life.

Moving through America's early beginnings, to its industrial revolution to present day, we will grapple with how cultural objects reflect, inform, produce, and alter our individual and communal senses of history.

Course objectives:

- I. Understand several of the dominant ideas and themes in American creative expression and trace their development
- II. Consider how these ideas relate to broader historical events within and outside of the U.S., drawing connections across borders
- III. Analyze creative works both formally and historically
- IV. Explore how creative expression and interpretation are bound up in historical ideologies, exploring their effects on aesthetic thinking, tastes, and judgments
- V. Critically engage with primary and secondary sources to further develop their own ideas and analyses
- VI. Communicate their ideas and analyses cogently in classroom discussion and through writing

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic/Content	Assignment
Unit 1: Early Beginnings			
1	Jan 12	Intro to the Course / Foundations I: Pre-Columbian Era to Early Republic [pre-1492-1780] (AL)	Watch the video “How to do visual (formal) analysis in art history” by Smarthistory. Refer to Week 1 PPT for what key terms to focus on.
2	Jan 19	Intro to Formal Analysis (SP) / Writing Workshop I: Communicating Ideas & Structuring Your Response Papers	Blackboard Post due Feb 1 @5PM
3	Feb 2	American Landscape (SP)	Packet
Unit 2: Modernity and the Industrial Revolution			
4	Feb 9	Foundations II: Early Republic to Reconstruction [1780-1877] (AL)	
5	Feb 16	Modernity & The Urban Underbelly [1890-1930] (SP)	Packet
6	Feb 23	Art of The Great Migration (SP)	Packet
7	March 2	Gender and Sexuality I (AL)	Packet
8	March 16	Midterm / Gender and Sexuality II (AL)	Debate Prep
Unit 3: Late 20th Century to Present			
9	March 23	Gender and Sexuality Debate / Writing Workshop II: Engaging with Secondary Sources (AL)	Listen to the assigned songs for next week. Budget ~1 hour for this.
10	March 30	American Musical Theater History	
11	April 6	Public Health and Medicine (AL)	Debate Prep
12	April 13	Immigration (AL)	Packet
13	April 20	Student Presentations	

Teaching model

Students are expected to attend class in-person at UCA 111. Starting in Week 3, the first half of class will consist of student discussion or debate over materials from the previous lecture. The second half of class will consist of new lecture material from instructors.

Note that there will be no lecture during Weeks 13, though we expect that students will be present for the entire class period.

Assessment Scheme

Attendance – 10%

Participation – 15%

Response Papers (3) – 5% each, 15% total

Blackboard Discussion Posts + Position Papers – 10%

Midterm Exam – 25%

Final Project – 25%

Attendance – We will take attendance at every class meeting.

If you are to be absent or tardy with a legitimate excuse (sickness, family emergency, essential appointment, etc.), please email both instructors as soon as possible.

Students who miss all or part of a class are responsible for emailing us or a classmate to ask for materials and a quick class summary to catch up.

Participation – To receive full participation marks, students should share ideas, even when they are not fully developed. See [Class Participation Guidelines](#) for more details on participation expectations.

Response Papers – During the thematic weeks (Weeks 4-12), the instructors will upload a document with works related to the topic of that week's lesson. Students will be required to submit 3 response papers (1-2 pages double spaced, 300 words minimum) for one to two of these works. We intend this as an exercise for students to practice using the ideas and strategies of the course to analyze a new work of art. Questions that can guide their response may include:

- 1) What is happening in this work? What do I see? What do I read? What is my first reaction to the work?
- 2) Can I situate this work within a historical context? Based on what we've covered in class, what sort of events were happening when this work was made? Does the work make reference to any of these things? Does my understanding of the work's context change my answer to (1)?
- 3) How does the content of work relate to thematic ideas we've talked about in the course? Is this work trying to say anything? Does it contradict anything I've learned? Expand on anything?

- 4) Does the work or its ideas relate to any different contexts? Does it relate to your own life? To Hong Kong?
- 5) What questions do you still have about the work?

Each response paper will make up 5% of the final grade.

For the **first two response papers**, you may reference our lectures and other sources that provide historical context. Avoid referencing sources that include other scholars' analysis of the creative work. We want to read about **your** observations.

For the **third response paper**, you will engage with one to two secondary sources that include other scholars' analysis. The goal is not to summarize their points, but rather to expand outside of their interpretation in a meaningful way. What you end up doing in your response paper may be similar to one of more of the following:

- 1) You have found evidence from your own observations that contradicts the secondary source.
- 2) You have found additional evidence from your own observations that back up the secondary source's claim.
- 3) You put two separate but related secondary sources in conversation.

Students may decide which thematic weeks they would like to submit a response paper for. We recommend submitting at least one paper before midterm so that we can give you feedback before you submit the others. All response papers must be submitted via Blackboard at 12 PM before Thursday's lesson in order to count for that week. Students may use content or ideas from their response papers for their Blackboard comments in the same week.

Students have the option to submit a 4th response paper. The grade of the 4th paper will replace the lowest grade of the paper of the same type.

Midterm Exam — There will be a 45-minute exam at the start of class on March 16. It will be an open note exam and will assess students' ability to synthesize and apply the content and skills they've learned in the first half of the course. The type of thinking we will be doing during in-class discussions will be invaluable for preparing for this exam, so do not think that you can prepare by only watching the lectures.

Final Project — More details to be announced. The final project will not take the form of a traditional research paper but will allow students to synthesize ideas from the course in a creative way.

Class Policies

Respect: Everyone deserves a chance to learn in an environment where they feel safe and respected. We do not tolerate disrespect of any kind in our classroom. Lively conversations and robust disagreements about the course content, however, are warmly encouraged.

Tardiness Policy: Please arrive to class within the first 5 minutes of the start time. This will minimize disruptions. It will also allow us to start class on time and end on time. If you have a compelling reason for why you cannot be punctual, please communicate this with us.

Late submission: Late submission of assignments will be penalized half a grade for each day late.

Electronics: Students should refrain from using electronics for purposes other than note-taking during class time. We are happy to make accommodations for students with documented needs; just reach out to us.

Academic honesty: The University places very high importance on honesty in academic work and follows a policy of zero tolerance toward academic dishonesty. You may review its policies [here](#). Students will be required to submit midterm exams and final projects to VeriGuide. We will report plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty to the relevant bodies as necessary.

Teaching Feedback: Students will be asked to complete course evaluations for GENA2292 at the end of the term. If you have any comments or suggestions for the course, please feel free to email us or come talk to us in person. We are always interested in hearing what you think and want to help you get the most out of your experience in this course!

Accommodations: It is our goal to create a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please meet with us outside of class so we can explore potential options. Students with disabilities or those that may have a disability may also wish to work with the SEN Service of the Office of Student Affairs to discuss a range of options to removing barriers in learning in and out of this course, including official accommodations. Please visit their website for contact details and additional information: <https://www2.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/sens/en-GB/>.

Sick Policy: Students who are close contacts or test positive for COVID-19 should notify us via email and submit a medical record if possible. Do not come to class until you test negative. We will share a recording for the days you miss, as long as you give us prior notice. In case of other illnesses, notify us and submit a doctor's note.