

GENA2292 American Themes Through Creative Expression

2024-2025 Term 2 | UCA Room 111, Thursday 2:30-4:15 PM

Instructors:

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Office location: Fung King Hey Building, Room 314

Office hours: By appointment. Email us!

This course investigates topics and themes significant to United States culture, history, and society from a variety of perspectives. We will engage critically with different forms of creative expression, including literature, visual arts, and performing arts.

After completing this course, students should be able to:

1. Understand several of the dominant ideas and themes in American creative expression and trace their development
2. Consider how these ideas relate to broader historical events within and outside of the U.S.
3. Analyze creative works both formally and historically
4. Apply these skills to make sense of art that they encounter in their own lives

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic/Content
Unit 1: Early America (1783-1900)		
1	Jan 9	Foundations — Intro to the Syllabus, Tools of Formal Analysis; Columbus to the Rebels (AB)
2	Jan 16	American Revolution and Founding Documents (United States Constitution, Federalism, How Elections Work) (CC)
3	Jan 23	Civil War and Reconstruction (AB)
4	Jan 30	Lunar New Year. No class. 新年快樂！
5	Feb 6	Gilded Age and Jim Crow (CC)
6	Feb 13	Modernity and Anti-Modernity (AB)

Unit 2: Modern America (1900-1989)		
7	Feb 20	In-Class Debate (CC)
8	Feb 27	World War I, Gender, and Sexuality (into the 1920s) (AB)
9	March 6	Midterm Paper Due. No Class.
10	March 13	Great Depression, New Deal, Harlem Renaissance (CC)
11	March 20	WWII and the Cold War (AB)
Unit 3: Post-Modern America (1989-Present)		
12	March 27	Late-Stage Capitalist Hellscape (Andy Warhol, Pop Art, and Blurred Lines) (AB)
13	April 3	Social Upheaval: Black Lives Matter, Me Too, and the Cultural Products of Contemporary Revolution (Rap Beef) (CC)
14	April 10	Reactionary Politics and Media (Trump, Chappell Roan, Memes, SNL) (CC)
15	April 17	Final Projects Due Gallery Walk

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Grading Scheme:

Participation — 20%

Midterm Paper — 40%

Final Paper —40%

Attendance: There will be Blackboard discussion due at the beginning and end of every class. These in-class assignments will serve as our roll call, and will be marked on completion. Please Be sure you are arriving at class on time every day, or else your lack of a timely Blackboard post will indicate your absence.

If you are to be absent or tardy with a legitimate excuse, please email both instructors as soon as possible. If you are missing class due to sickness, please include a copy of your doctor's note.

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, you must attend class on time every week, complete all weekly homework discussion boards, prepare for and participate in the in-class debate, and actively engage with in-class discussions and group activities.

Midterm Exam: Students will write a 1200-1600 word formal analysis on a piece of Hong Kong art, connecting specific details of the artwork to larger commentaries on culture and society in Hong Kong. Students must photograph themselves with the piece of artwork to encourage in-person observation.

Final Project: Students will select a living American artist as the basis for their final project. They will then have two options: 1) Write a 1200-1600 word formal analysis of 2-3 pieces of the artist's work, connecting the artwork to the artist's historical and cultural context. 2) Create an original artwork inspired by the living artist and write a 1000-1200 word artist's statement on how the artist's formal choices inspired them and how their own piece connects to their historical and cultural context.

Class Policies

Class preparedness: Students should come to class every day with a laptop/tablet AND pen and paper for class activities. Failure to bring all of these materials will prevent you from receiving full participation for the day.

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

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. No use of AI for any purpose (including, but not limited to, idea generation, drafting, and proofreading) will be permitted for this class.