GENA2292 American Themes Through Creative Expression

2025-2026 Term 1 | UCA Room 312, Thursday 10:30AM-12:15PM

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Office location: Fung King Hey Building, Room 311
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 history and trace their development over time
2. Consider how artistic trends relate to broader historical events within and outside of the United States
3. Analyze creative works both formally and historically
4. Understand the historical, social, and political perspectives associated with media, with specific emphasis on underrepresented narratives in history
5. Apply these skills to make a comparative analysis about various artwork

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic/Content
Unit 1: Early America (1783-1900)		
1	September 4	Foundations of the Course: Intro to the Syllabus, Tools of Formal Analysis, and Columbus to the Rebels (CC)
2	September 11	A Budding Nation: American Revolution, Founding Fathers, and Early National America (AC)
3	September 18	Black Identity in the United States: Civil War, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow (CC)
4	September 25	From Gold Mountain to Exclusion: Chinese Americans in the 1850s and onwards (AC)
Unit 2: Modern America (1900-1989)		

5	October 2	World War I: Changing Ideas About Gender and Sexuality (into the 1920s) (CC)
6	October 9	The Rescue Attempt: Great Depression & The New Deal (CC)
7	October 16	**No Class: (Recommended) Office Hours in UCA 312 Midterm Essay Due on October 19**
8	October 23	Citizens Behind Barbed Wire: WWII and the Paradox of Japanese Internment (AC)
9	October 30	Towards a Dream: American Civil Rights Movement (AC)
Unit 3: Post-Modern America (1989-Present)		
10	November 6	**No Class: Congregation**
11	November 13	White Flight, Maps, Gentrification, & an Investigation of American Cities (AC)
12	November 20	United States Foreign Policy: Conflicts in the Middle East (CC)
13	November 27	Social Upheaval: Protests, Cultural Products of Contemporary Revolution, and Connecting Past to Present (AC & CC)
14	December 4	**No Class: Final Essay Due**

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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 Essay: Students will write a 1,200–1,600 word formal analysis of an artwork chosen from a preselected set of media created before 1939. In their essay, they should examine which historical, social, and/or political perspectives the work represents, as well as which perspectives are left out or excluded

Final Essay: Write a 2000–2500 word formal analysis comparing two artworks (at least one not covered in class), analyzing the similarities and differences of the represented (and excluded) historical, social, and/or political perspectives.

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 without prior approval from instructors will be penalized half a grade for each day past the deadline.

Academic honesty*:* The University places the highest importance on academic honesty and follows zero tolerance policy for suspected violations. 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 academic bodies as necessary. We will proceed with CUHK's AI Approach #2 in this course, meaning use on assignments is only permitted with explicit prior permission from instructors.