American Studies Senior Essay Seminar
AMST 493

Fall 2015 – Spring 2016
Time: Wednesdays, 3:30 – 5:20pm (not every week; see schedule below for specific dates)
Location: WLH 001
Office Hours: Wednesdays, by appointment

Najwa Mayer
najwa.mayer@yale.edu

COURSE INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this seminar is to guide you through the research and writing of your senior essay project. For many, this may be your first extended research project. Undertaking such a project is exciting; it might also seem, at times, a daunting process. The senior essay seminar is designed as a space of support. It will provide you with concrete deadlines to help facilitate the various stages of production at a manageable pace. Additionally, this seminar will be a respectful and rigorous opportunity for peer feedback as well as discussions about research methods, sources, composition, and best practices.

While this seminar is an essential component of the senior essay, your primary working relationship is with your faculty advisor. You need to identify your faculty advisor right away and meet with him/her regularly to discuss your project and to determine a timeline for progress and completion. Your faculty advisor will provide expert consultation on issues specific to your subject matter and research. After you submit your final manuscript, your faculty advisor and an outside reader will be responsible for grading your project. Further information is available on the American Studies website: http://americanstudies.yale.edu/senior-year

While all senior projects require an essay component, you may also choose to present your research in another format (i.e. film/video, theatre, new media, visual arts, music, etc.). If you plan to pursue this option, please make sure to consult with your faculty advisor immediately. You should also let me know as soon as possible so that we can establish a plan for you that considers the specificities of your alternate project format.

REQUIREMENTS

Reading: We will be reading selections from the following text, which is available at various booksellers and the Yale Library as well as free PDF online.
  ○ How to Write a BA Thesis; Charles Lipson

Attendance and participation: Attendance and active participation in scheduled seminar meetings are mandatory. You should come prepared to engage with texts, assignments, and one another.

Peer groups: Throughout the semester, you will be asked to share your work with, and critique the work of, your colleagues. You are expected to provide thoughtful and respectful feedback to each member of your peer-editing group.

Meeting with Yale subject librarian: Each student will need to schedule at least one individual meeting with David Gary, Kaplanoff Librarian for American History, to discuss the ways in which Yale’s library
resources can support your project. After our in-library session (Sept. 16), you should email david.gary@yale.edu for an appointment. Please contact David by Monday, Sept. 21 to schedule your meeting.

**Meeting with me:** You are required to meet with me individually at least twice during the semester to discuss and assess how your research and writing are progressing.

**Presentations:** Toward the end of the semester, you will be asked to prepare a presentation on your work-in-progress. At the end of the year, you will all present reflections on your completed projects in a public colloquium.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- *The Craft of Research;* Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams 
- *The Chicago Manual of Style;* University of Chicago Press Staff: 
  [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/contents.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/contents.html)
- *Subject Guide: U.S. History & American Studies Web Guide;* Yale University Library: 
  [http://guides.library.yale.edu/ushistory](http://guides.library.yale.edu/ushistory)
- *Yale College Writing Center:* Tutors and readers at the Writing Center are available by appointment. Please make use of this resource!
- *Citation Tools:* Various programs are available to facilitate compiling and citing resources, including Endnote and Zotero. Explore such tools at: [http://www.library.yale.edu/cite/](http://www.library.yale.edu/cite/)
- *Past senior essays:* Senior essays from previous years are kept on file in the American Studies undergraduate office, HGS 232. Please drop in and speak with undergraduate registrar Jean Cherniavsky in order to reference such examples.

**EVALUATION**

Your participation will not be assessed on a letter scale (A, B, C); rather, I will write an individualized evaluation of your work in the seminar that your advisor and second reader will incorporate into your final assessment. Your essay will be evaluated according to the following criteria: strength of argument, effective treatment of primary and secondary source materials, organization and clarity, and technical proficiency (e.g., citations). Your advisor and second reader will be expected to offer extended written comments on your work.

**DEADLINES**

**Submission Instructions:** Your prospectus must be delivered to: 1. the American Studies undergraduate office (hard copy); 2. your faculty advisor (ask if electronic and/or hard copy is preferred); and 3. me (via classes*v2 dropbox).

Your bibliography and drafts must be delivered to: 1. your advisor (ask if electronic or hard copy) and 2. me (via classes*v2 dropbox).

Your final manuscript should only be submitted to the American Studies office, not to your advisor. You will submit two hard copies to the American Studies undergraduate office by 1:00pm on the day of the deadline. In addition, you will submit an electronic copy of the essay (as PDF) by the same time to Jean
Cherniavsky (jean.cherniavsky@yale.edu), so that your essay may be included in the departmental archive.

- Thursday, September 17: Prospectus and prospectus form due by 3:00pm
- September/October: Meet individually with librarian David Gary
- Friday, October 16: Annotated bibliography due by 1:00pm
- Friday, December 4: Draft 15-20pgs due by 1:00pm
- Friday, March 4: Full Draft due by 1:00pm
- Friday, April 8: Final Manuscript due by 1:00pm

**Prospectus and Prospectus Form:** The prospectus is a one- to two-page document outlining the aims, scope, and methodology of the project. The prospectus should include a preliminary bibliography of primary and secondary resources. You must include a completed prospectus form with the prospectus. **You must have a faculty advisor in order to submit the prospectus form.** Before submitting your prospectus and prospectus form, please meet with your essay advisor for her/his approval and signature.

**Annotated Bibliography:** This document should list a number (at least 10 but your advisor should specify a standard for your project needs) of secondary sources that will play an important role in your writing. For annotations, you should include summaries of how each work’s argument or content intersects with your proposed project, and the ways in which you expect to make use of it. Avoid the book report model; rather, take time to assemble a thoughtful overview of the main pieces of scholarship with which you expect to engage. This document is for your own future use; thus you may organize it as you please – as long as you demonstrate a relatively thorough and engaged overview of sources that you’ve examined and expect to rely on in a substantial way.

**Drafts:** At the draft stages, it is understood that you may have gaps or incompletions. Still, the drafts should demonstrate that you are moving toward the final revision stage. Immediately after submitting the full draft, you should set-up an appointment with your faculty advisor to discuss what revisions your draft will require. Know that your advisors may request drafts beyond the two required by the seminar.

**Final Manuscript:** A revised and finalized document. Traditional essays must be 60 pages in length. Those pursuing alternative project formats are required to submit a manuscript of at least 20 pages.

**SEMINAR SCHEDULE**

**Prospectus and prospectus form due on Thursday, September 17 by 3:00pm**

Wednesday, September 16: Research and Sources, Part I—Resources at Yale
Hands-on seminar with American Studies subject librarian David Gary. After this session, email David at david.gary@yale.edu by Monday, September 21 to schedule an individual appointment with him.

**Reading:** Lipson, chapters 3-4 (optional: read chapters 1-2)

Wednesday, September 30: Research and Sources, Part II—Multidisciplinary Approaches
Visual research strategies: art history and image reading. Two-part seminar held in the Yale University Art Gallery

Reading: Lipson, chapters 5-7
Assignment: Submit 2-3 annotated bibliographic entries, using the Purdue Online Writing Lab on Annotated Bibliographies (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/1/) as a guide. Upload to the classesv2 dropbox by Tuesday, Sept 29 at 11:59pm

Wednesday, October 14: Research and Sources, Part III—Human Subject Research
Interview methodologies and ethical human subject research.
Reading: Lipson, chapters 8-10
Assignment: Bring a draft of your annotated bibliography (as much as you’ve completed) for workshopping.

**Annotated bibliography due on Friday, October 16 by 1:00pm

Wednesday, November 4: Arguments and Organization / the “American Studies” Project
Effective thesis, framing, and organization strategies
Reading: Lipson, chapter 11 (optional/as needed: chapters 12-15)
Assignment: Post and bring an outline for your project. Include a paragraph or two that addresses the following: What questions will you explore in this project? What is at stake in these questions? What sources, primary and secondary, will be useful? What are your concerns or challenges? * Upload to the classesv2 dropbox by Tuesday, November 3 at 11:59pm and bring copies for your peer group.

Wednesday, November 11: Drafting
Share and edit within peer groups
Assignment: Prepare 2-4 draft pages to workshop. Upload to the classesv2 dropbox by Tuesday, November 10 at 11:59pm and bring copies for your peer group.

Wednesday, November 18: Drafting, continued
Share and edit within peer groups
Assignment: Prepare 5-7 draft pages to workshop. Upload to the classesv2 dropbox by Tuesday, November 17 at 11:59pm and bring copies for your peer group.

Wednesday, December 2: Presentation of Findings/Progress
In-class presentations (3-5 minutes) on research, findings, and writing thus far
Assignment: Prepare in-class presentation

**15-20pg draft due on Friday, December 4 by 1:00pm

Wednesday, January 20: Welcome Back and Schedules to Finish
Setting expectations for the seminar, for peer groups, and for yourself
Assignment: Update your project outline. Upload to the classesv2 dropbox by Tuesday, January 19 at 11:59pm and bring copies for your peer group.

Wednesday, February 3: Peer Group Workshop—Assessing Research and Analysis
Assignment: Prepare 5-10 pages as well as guiding questions for your peer group to workshop. Upload to the classesv2 dropbox by Tuesday, February 2 at 11:59pm and bring copies for your peer group.

Wednesday, February 17: Peer Group Workshop—Theoretical Frameworks
Assignment: Prepare another 5-10 pages as well as guiding questions for your peer group to workshop. Upload to the classesv2 dropbox by Tuesday, February 16 at 11:59pm and bring copies for your peer group.

Wednesday, March 2: Peer Group Workshop—Conclusions
Assignment: Prepare another 5-10 pages (ideally, your concluding pages) as well as guiding questions for your peer group to workshop. Upload to the classesv2 dropbox by Tuesday, March 1 at 11:59pm and bring copies for your peer group.

**Full drafts due on Friday, March 4 by 1:00pm**

Wednesday, March 30: Peer Group Workshop—Revising for Content and Overall Organization
Assignment: Bring 5-10 pages from a trouble area that needs revising/rewriting. Upload to the classesv2 dropbox by Tuesday, March 29 at 11:59pm and bring copies for your peer group.

**Final manuscripts due on Friday, April 8 by 1:00pm**

Wednesday, April 20: American Studies Senior Essay Colloquium
A public presentation and celebration of your projects. Date is tentative.