

Course Goals

- ✓ Learn how to think like an American Studies scholar
- ✓ Create a classroom community that fosters intellectual growth based on respect and civility
- ✓ Develop critical speaking, viewing, reading, thinking, note-taking, and library research skills that are applicable to life both within and outside of the university
- ✓ Question "common sense" or "dominant" understandings of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, class, and popular culture

Essential Questions

- What does it mean "to think like an American Studies scholar"?
- What evidence indicates that identities are *socially constructed*?
- How do identities constitute lived realities and shared communities?
- How do prejudice and institutional discrimination shape certain individuals and groups *life chances* and impact their access to resources, rights, and privileges?
- To whom do the rights and freedoms outlined in the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution of the United States* belong?
- Do Americans have a responsibility to "exercise" their rights and freedoms? Should they push for greater liberties?
- How have Americans, through social movements, affected political change – what were their goals, strategies, successes, and failures?
- Is American history a history of social progress? Is social progress inevitable?
- How does popular culture shape and reflect American cultural ideals and values?
- How do popular representations of a group affect how members of that group see themselves and how others see them?
- How are popular representations of a group related to the group's access to political representation – to quote Richard Dyer, "to their right to the rights [America] claims to ensure its citizens"?