

FS 100 (Q)
AMERICAN SPACES

Fall 1997
Valparaiso University
Tuesday, Thursday 2:50-4:05
MUH 110

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T, R 1-2 & BY APPT.



Course Description

This course will study the idea of America as a social, political and mythic construct. The metaphor of space, in cities, the countryside, etc., will guide the course through a variety of topics, such as the 60s, strip malls, conspiracy theories, small towns, city planning, automotive plants and theme parks.

Freshman Seminar Concept

Welcome to the Freshman Seminar! You are about to embark on a unique learning experience. Understand that the course you have enrolled in is a seminar, that is it is a gathering of people for the purpose of learning, teaching, critically discussing and debating the topical components of the course. What are the goals of the Freshman Seminar?

- 1) To develop in students, through instruction and tutorial assistance, the habit of good writing (skill in organization, an instinct for persuasive argumentative writing, observation of the basic rules of grammar and syntax, and an awareness of different forms of writing).
- 2) To develop in students the ability to communicate their ideas orally in an organized and effective manner.
- 3) To provide a seminar atmosphere conducive to discussion and to develop in students the ability to articulate and defend their ideas in an open classroom setting.
- 4) To develop in students the skills of critical analysis and textual interpretation.
- 5) To equip students with the arts of critical thinking, attentive listening, and intelligent speaking.

The Seminar Leader

Throughout the course of the semester I will assign discussion leaders for various classes. As a discussion leader you will be responsible NOT for lecturing, but for leading and facilitating discussion, asking questions and getting the opinions of the other seminar members.

Texts (Required)

The following texts are available at the bookstore:

- 1) *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century*. John F. Kasson. 1978. New York: Hill & Wang.
- 2) *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. Mike Davis. 1992. New York: Vintage.
- 3) *America*. Jean Baudrillard. 1988. London: Verso.
- 4) *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America*. Stephen M. Fjellman. 1992. Boulder: Westview.

The following supplemental reader will be available for purchase from Lori Underhill, Huegli Hall 132..

- 1) Supplemental Reader
 - a) Derrida at the Little Bighorn (A Mystory Sample). In Gregory Ulmer, 1989 *Teletheory: Grammatology in the Age of Video*. New York: Routledge. Pages 209-243.
 - b) Becoming Nomad (Critique of Baudrillard's *America*). In Caren Kaplan, 1996 *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*. Durham: Duke University Press. Pages 67-85.
 - c) Can Coney Come Back? *New York Times*, OP-ED, August 9, 1997, page 19.
 - d) Coney Island: The Technology of the Fantastic. In Rem Koolhaas, 1994 *Delirious New York*. New York: Monacelli Press. Pages 28-79.
 - e) The Machines of Everyday Life. Unpublished, Not for Quotation except in class papers. Scott A. Lukas, 1997. Pages 1-52.

Field Trip

It is my intention to schedule a field trip to Six Flags Great America for Saturday, September 6. It will be optional, but I would like all of you to attend if possible. More information will be available shortly. I need to know who will be going on the trip by the second class meeting.

Course Requirements and Grading

The 200 possible points will be based on:

Oral Presentations

- Informative, 10 points
- Persuasive, 15 points

Participation, 30 points

Final Examination, 35 points

Papers

Short Autobiography, 1 page, 10 points

(Write an autobiographical account based on the following premise: the following 2-3 "American Spaces" are significant sites for me for the following reasons.....How do you relate to these places? Do you have negative feelings for them? What do they say about you?)

Comparative Study, 6-8 pages, 25 points

(The assignment is to write a comparative, analytic study of two "American Spaces" of the same nature. A logical choice might be a comparison of two different theme parks or two shopping malls. Be sure that your two chosen spaces are not so similar that a comparative analysis would yield no information, i.e. a study of two different K-Marts may not prove to be academically insightful.)

Experiential Account, 1-2 pages, 10 points

(An experiential account should concisely deal with your quotidian, i.e. everyday, experiences at a specific place of popular culture. For purposes of a study I will conduct in class, I would like you to limit your accounts to appropriate topics: theme parks, shopping malls, city blocks, walking through cities or travel/tourist sites. Generally told from a first-person perspective, the experiential account attempts to create specific moods or modes of evocation in the reader. It is a narrative in which place moves through the author and emerges at the site of writing itself.)

Field Study, 6-8 pages, 25 points

(For those of you involved in the field trip I would like you to produce an ethnographic account of your experiences at Great America. I will later provide you with some specific observational and methodological issues you should consider. For those not able to attend the trip you may produce a field study based on a different ethnographic experience with a space or spaces. Please clear alternate topics with me in advance.)

Mystory, 4-5 pages, 15 points

(I have given you a description and sample of a mystory in the supplemental reader. It is a genre whose author attempts to combine personal, public and disciplinary knowledge in a narrative which is inherently autobiography--it is a "my story"--yet it is also informative in various ways--"history" or "herstory"--it reserves room for doubt, be it epistemological, personal or both--"mystery"--in a form that comes to be a sort of "blurred genre." Again, I limit the topic to specific travel stories or ideas about travel you have collected. It may combine a number of different fields--past, present and future--yet it should be primarily autobiographical. Being the most experimental of your writings, I will conduct a seminar discussion in preparation for this assignment.)

Imaginary Road Trip Journal, 6-8 pages, 25 points

(I would like you to use this journal as a way of summarizing and reflecting on the various spaces we will visit during the term--personal, geographic, discursive. Your second tutorial will be used to present your preliminary ideas related to the journal. At the time of that tutorial please come

prepared with a graphic "map" of the spaces--again, not necessarily meaning geographic ones--you intend to visit on your road trip. For the final journal, write a travel narrative--we will see some samples--which describes your personal road trip through this country. As an organizing principle, you may consult Baudrillard's ethereal approach to spaces like deserts and major cities as a way of thinking about the overall tenor of your journal.)

Your grade will be calculated on the following scale:

200-180.....	A
160-179.....	B
140-159.....	C
120-139.....	D
<120.....	F

Attendance

Social scientists often use the term “reflexivity” to describe that condition in which an individual begins to reflect on her/his own person. I would like all of us to take a reflexive approach to this class, and in so doing we should ask how we relate to the materials we will read and view throughout the term.

Attendance is mandatory. **Here is the policy.** Everyone has one free absence, one day you may miss during the semester without penalty; thereafter, each class you miss will result in a 4 point deduction from your total course points. In addition, each miss after the fourth will result in a 6 point deduction per miss. The only exception to this policy is the case of legitimate medical and sports-related absences. All such legitimate absences must be verified with me in writing.

Late Papers & Missing Exams

The habit of turning in late papers is a terrible way to begin your college career. I penalize late papers heavily, as it is your requirement as a student in this institution of higher learning to complete assignments on time. Papers are due on the date listed, that means turning them in in class. If you fail to do so, a paper turned in later on that due date will be penalized by 5 points. Turning in papers after the date due (the next day or thereafter) will result in a 10 point deduction per day late. Additionally, I do not give make-up examinations. Missing an exam day will therefore result in a score of 0 on that particular day, no exceptions except, again, in the case of legitimate medical and sports-related absences. All such legitimate absences must be verified with me in writing.

Tutorials

A required component of the course is 2 scheduled tutorials with the instructor. These must be completed by the dates indicated on the syllabus. Please arrange meeting times with the instructor. Failure to complete tutorials may result in a course deduction of up to one letter grade.

Films

We will view a number of films throughout the semester. Please make sure that you are in class to watch them. They will not be available for outside of class viewing. There will be no exception made to this policy.

Getting Help

Remember that university is more than a product, the getting of one's degree, but it is also a process. To be successful you may find the need to sharpen certain skills or talk to specific persons in order to get academic assistance. Take advantage of the numerous resources on campus. Always feel free to call me at the office, during or outside of office hours. Also, some places to keep in mind include, The VU Writing Center. They are available at extension 5216, and they have a fine web site which may assist you in paper writing (<http://www.valpo.edu/writctr/>). They are located in Schnabel 28. The Academic Computing Center is also to be found in Schnabel. There you can consult representatives who may guide you in your research and computer-related needs (extension 5678 is the help line). Consider too the friendly people on the first floor of Huegli where you will find the Arts & Sciences Support Office as well as the offices of the Deans of Arts & Sciences. Use all of these and other campus resources, professors, staff and organizations to make yours the best of all possible educations.

Honor Code

Please review and understand the Honor Code of Valparaiso University in the *Academic Guide and Student Handbook*. By enrolling in this course you agree to abide by and uphold the honor code. All of your written assignments should be turned in with the code ("I have neither given or received, nor have I tolerated others' use of unauthorized aid") written in full along with your signature. Unauthorized aid is defined in this course as one or more of the following: plagiarism in any written form, allowing another person to complete assignments for you, completing another person's assignment, dishonesty and/or cheating on an examination, multiple submission of the same written work in different courses, signing the attendance sheet for another person who has missed class on that day. All violations of the Valparaiso University Honor Code will be strictly pursued in accordance with our university policy.

Course Schedule

Tuesday, August 26	Introduction
Thursday, August 28	What Is "America?" Baudrillard 1-11 DUE: Autobiography
Tuesday, September 02	Baudrillard 13-73
Thursday, September 04	The American Expositions FILM: <i>Come to the Fairs</i>
Saturday, September 06	Field Trip
Tuesday, September 09	Fjellman Cpts. 1-3 Discussion: Field Trip
Thursday, September 11	Coney Island Kasson 3-28 FILM: <i>Coney Island, The American Experience</i>
Tuesday, September 16	Kasson 29-86 DUE: Experiential Account
Thursday, September 18	Kasson 87-112
Tuesday, September 23	Koolhaas (all); OP-ED pieces DUE: Field Study
Thursday, September 25	FILM: <i>Amusement Parks: Pursuit of Fun</i>
Tuesday, September 30	Disney Fjellman Cpt. 19; Lukas (all)
Thursday, October 02	Informative Presentations (will involve Fjellman Cpts. 4-18)
Tuesday, October 07	Informative Presentations
Thursday, October 09	FILM: <i>Walt Disney Vacation Planner</i>
Tuesday, October 14	Discussion: "What Is Disney?" DUE: Comparative Study TUTORIAL #1 MUST BE COMPLETED
Thursday, October 16	NO CLASS, Fall Break

Tuesday, October 21	Persuasive Presentations
Thursday, October 23	Persuasive Presentations
Tuesday, October 28	Astral America Baudrillard 121-128 Film: <i>Fargo</i>
Thursday, October 30	<i>Fargo</i> continued
Tuesday, November 04	Planning America Davis Prologue & Cpt. 4
Thursday, November 06	America & The Individual Davis Cpt. 5 DUE: Mystory (see Ulmer for sample) FILM: <i>Easy Rider</i>
Tuesday, November 11	<i>Easy Rider</i> Continued Davis Cpt. 3 Discussion: Individual & Society
Thursday, November 13	City of Quartz (Discussion) Baudrillard 75-105; Kaplan
Tuesday, November 18	America and Social Organization FILM: <i>Roger & Me</i>
Thursday, November 20	America and Social Organization Baudrillard 107-118 FILM: <i>Roger and Me</i> (continued) TUTORIAL #2 MUST BE COMPLETED
Thanksgiving Break: Nov. 22-29	
Tuesday, December 02	Social Issues/American Problems (Discussion) Davis Cpt. 7
Thursday, December 04	Futures DUE: Imaginary Road Trip Journal Discussion/FILM: TBA
Tuesday, December 09	Futures TBA
Thursday, December 11	Wrap-Up & Final Review

The Final Exam is scheduled for **Wednesday**,

December 17 from 3:30-5:30 p.m. at our normal meeting location (MUH 110). It will be primarily an essay and short answer examination.