American Identities
AM ST 100
Fall 2006
Tu-Th 4-5:15

Judith E. Smith
W-5-58
287-6774
Office hours:
Tuesday 9-11, 5:15-6; Thursday 9-11, 2-3:45, and by appointment
Email: judith.smith@umb.edu

Course assistant: Stephanie Kartalopoulos
Email: stephkarto@yahoo.com

Course Description:
What is an “American identity”? American Identities will explore how diverse American identities are shaped and reshaped, defined from the outside and from the inside, in the fifty year period from WWII to the present. This course is designed to introduce students to the variety of methods and approaches which constitute American Studies; it was developed collectively by the UMASS-Boston American Studies program faculty, and as such reflects the concerns and specialties of all the members of the department. Through learning to carefully “read” accounts produced by novelists, documentary film makers, singer/songwriters, political activists, journalists, historians, and sociologists, we will explore family, class, racial, ethnic, identities in relationship to regional, national, and transnational patterns of labor, migration, and community formation. Students will be expected to attend class and regularly participate as together we attempt to broaden our understanding of how "American identities" are made and remade,

This course counts toward the University's diversity requirement.

Course Goals:

--to introduce students to American Studies methods: historical and literary analysis, analysis of media, analysis of historical dynamics of racial, ethnic, gender and class formation

--to help students learn to evaluate different sources of information and evidence in studying American society from 1945 to the present: historical scholarship, biography, autobiography, oral history, various forms of cultural expression (fiction, film, music, television), non-fiction writing, including journalism

--to help students learn to see the ways in which historical events, social and economic change, and social movements help to shape and are reflected in changing personal identities and family experience, stories and memories.

Required texts:
Philip Roth, Goodbye, Columbus (1960)
Ron Kovic, Born on the Fourth of July (1976)
Bharati Mukherjee, Jasmine (1989)

All of the above texts are available in the UMass bookstore and on reserve in Healey Library. There will also be a additional photocopied handouts, for which there will be a fee of $5.00

Description of Course requirements:

Your final grade will be based on two components: a Family History which counts 65% of your grade, and your attendance and participation, which count for 35% of your grade.

I. Family History

This project consists of two parts (listed below) totaling about 20 pages. It is to be turned in and graded three times (due dates are noted in the syllabus) over the course of the semester. The first two grades are estimates of the final grade based on what you have turned in at that point; the third grade counts for 65% of the term grade and will be based on the quality of the final product, not on the average of earlier grades.

Part 1. A multi-generation time line covering the periods of the course (1945 to present)
Your time line should include three kinds of dates:
--national events, covered in the class readings and discussions, focusing on those which are relevant to explain your family's experience
--cultural events, including the publication and broadcast dates for the class readings, films, television excerpts, and listening assignments
--family events, major turning points or events in the life of the family of your choosing

Part 2. A written narrative of a family of your choosing. This can be based on your own family, but it can also be that of a friend, neighbor, relative, classmate, professor, etc.
When choosing a family to write about, consider who is available for you to interview--that is how you will be getting important information for your history. You'll need to have someone you can call back or see again for new questions that occur to you as the semester unfolds, or as you want to respond to comments from the professor.

Your history/narrative should focus on the key events that altered the lives of each generation. Your job is not simply to be the family story teller but to be the historian --to find connections between the family's history and the cultural, political, social events that most influenced the formation of their “American identities,” and to trace the changes of some major aspect of your family’s experience over time.
Recent immigrants will need to address the process of change over time in their country of origin as well as the awareness of American culture and economics that encouraged them and/ or their families to immigrate.

The American Studies Program has a collection of family histories from a wide variety of students born here and outside the US that you can consult.

The family/community history will be passed in three times. Each time you pass in your history, you will be bringing it further forward in time, so that the first part will cover from 1945-1960 (due Thursday October 19); the second will add on 1960-1975 (Due Thursday November 16), and the third will add on from 1975-1990 (or the present) (Due Tuesday December 12, the last day of class). You are expected to revise the first two sections of the history after you turn them in, based on comments by the instructor.

You may arrange for an extension of one of first two due dates up until 5 days before the due date (you have to plan ahead, taking account when work is due for other courses etc.) After that point, extensions will NOT be granted and late papers will be marked down. Meeting this schedule is critical for producing a successful family history project. **There are no extensions for the final version of the family history project.**

Remember: this summary is your first guide to the course requirements. There will be extensive discussion of the family history/timeline projects, including two in-class workshops. Make sure that you attend these workshops and consult the handouts you will receive on the family history/timeline project.

**Criteria for grading the final family history project**

1) how well does your timeline correlate national, cultural, and family events
2) how well does your narrative make connections between what was going on outside and inside your family history; how well have you analyzed and interpreted your family's story within a broader political, social, and cultural context?
3) Have you used corroborating evidence and is all evidence properly cited (from the interviews, from Out of Many, from additional readings or handouts)? You are expected to make specific references to course materials or supplemental sources to create the historic framework for each section of the family history. If you use course materials, you must give author, title, and page number. If you use supplemental sources, please provide a full bibliographic reference at the end of the paper (this includes citations to internet sources, which must be identified as commercial or educational.)
4) Is the narrative written clearly and is the argument persuasive and convincing? Does it provide details and descriptions that make different periods and places come alive? Has the writer responded to comments and suggestions on the earlier sections?

**II. Attendance/participation**

35% of your grade will be determined by your attendance and participation in class. This part of your grade will be calculated according to the final criteria:
1. This course relies heavily on student participation. ATTENDANCE COUNTS. Since much important material is presented in class, I must deduct 1/2 grade for each absence above three. For instance, if you miss a total of four classes, your class grade would be lowered from a B+ to a B, and so forth. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you have missed. You are required to go to see the graduate assistant to arrange to photocopy notes, find out about assignments and announcements, and so forth. It is a good idea to exchange phone numbers with at least two other members of the class! Being prepared for class and thoughtfully participating in class discussions will be taken into account in this part of your grade (10%).

2. Your participation grade will also take into account written answers to study questions following an assigned reading in American Identitites, or handed out individually, over the course of the semester, to respond to the reading, listening, and watching assignments. These study question are intended to guide your reading to questions relevant to this course, to prepare you for and to focus class discussions, and to give you practice in the kind of cultural analysis you will be doing in your final projects. Study question answers will comment on assigned texts, make links between texts, make connections between texts and the assigned chapters from Out of Many.

Your completed assignments will constitute an important record of your work in the class. These will be graded as credit or no credit based on how fully you answer the questions. Ten sets of answers to study question are required for this part of your participation grade. To be evaluated for credit, study questions must be turned in within one week of the class discussion of the material. Please turn in the written answers to ten study question which have received credit as a kind of portfolio record of your work on the assigned materials by the last day of class (20%). The portfolio must include written responses to study questions for the three books (Goodbye Columbus; Born on the Fourth of July; and Jasmine).

I will also pass out in class worksheets, viewing guides for you to use in making observations of television shown in class; for music heard in class; for taking notes on documentaries shown in class.

3) Each student will prepare a short (3-5 minutes) ORAL PRESENTATION on one of the important cultural producers (the "authors" of songs, fiction and non-fiction), social and political activists, organizations, or events in our period. Topics will be assigned the first week of class, and the dates on which the presentations are due are listed on the syllabus. Use the worksheet for oral presentations to help you prepare for your presentation: this will be turned in after you present. If you use the Internet as a source, use the full citation for the internet cite on the worksheet, pair the internet source with at least other kind of source, and comment on the difference between the internet and another printed source (book or article). THE INTERNET MUST NOT BE YOUR ONLY SOURCE. The presentations are scheduled to help introduce material for class discussions, so it is absolutely vital to be prepared and present on the day your presentation is scheduled. (5%) We will assign two people to each ask question after each presentation.
Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Week 1-2: Introduction, Family and Historical Memory

Tuesday Sept 5: Course overview, meeting each other

Hand out:
Cindy Rodriguez, “Census Finds a World of Difference,” (on the 2000 census)
Cecilia Rose Avila oral account (1992)
Other Avila family generation accounts (1992)

Thursday Sept 7: Family Stories
Discuss (this means discuss the readings you have read to prepare for class)
Rodriguez handout
Avila handout prior generations
In class: Make time line for Avila family

Week 2-3 WWII Citizenship, Race, Racialization from the outside

Tuesday Sept 12 Historical memory
discuss:
Stephanie Coontz, "What We Really Miss About the 1950s" 1997, in AM ID, 17-28

Thursday Sept 14:
Read: Out of Many Ch "World War II", sections "Arsenal for Democracy" 750-753 and
"The Home Front" 754-759

Tuesday Sept. 19 finish Rabbit in the Moon
Discuss film
Discuss Mine Okubo, from Citizen 13660 (1946) in AM ID 56-64
Discuss Maria Fleming Tymoczko, "War Babies" (2000) in AMID 48-55

Week 3-7 1945-1960 WWII to the Cold War, Cities and Suburbs

Thurs Sept 21
read for class and discuss: Out of Many Ch "The Cold War": sections "Policy of Containment," 784-788"Cold War at Home" 791-795 "Cold War Culture" 795-801

Week 4-5 Postwar Migrations and Suburbanizations
Tues Sept 26
Discuss May, "Containment at Home" (1988) AM ID 66-70
Discuss Chafe, "Civil Rights Revolution, 1945-1960," AM ID 78-83
   Report: Paul Robeson
   Report: Rachel Carson
   Report: Levitt and Levittown

Thurs Sept 28:
Read Out of Many ch "Civil Rights Revolution" section "Origins of the Movement" 848-853; start reading Philip Roth Goodbye Columbus
   Report: Muddy Waters
   Report: Howlin Wolf
   Report: Bill Broonzey
listen: Postwar Chicago Blues (some lyrics in AM ID 90-92)
Bill Broonzey, When Will They Call me a Man," (recorded 1928, Published 1955)
Bo Diddley, I’m a man" (1955)
Muddy Waters, Just make Love to me (1954)
Howlin Wolf, Smokestack lightning, (1956)

Tues Oct 3
Discuss: Philip Roth, Goodbye Columbus (1960) (Required reading questions)
Read Out of Many ch "America at Mid-Century" sections "American Society at Mid-Century," 814-821 "Youth Culture" 821-824 "Mass Culture and its Discontents" 824-828
   Report: Alfred Kinsey and the Kinsey Reports

Thurs Oct 5
Finish discussing Roth, Goodbye Columbus (1960); Find references in Out of Many to what Roth is describing
FIRST WORKSHOP ON TIME LINE/FAMILY HISTORY PROJECT; Family History worksheet due
Bonus: Bring in a photo of someone in your family project when he/she was the same age as you are now

Week 6-7 Postwar Transformation of Family Lives: Media Representations of Domesticity, Family Lives

Tues Oct 10
[Ask if any one in your family project learned to read on Dick and Jane readers]
   report: Dick and Jane readers
Discuss: Alice Childress, excerpts from Like One of the Family (1956) AM ID 84-89
Discuss Betty Friedan, "The Problem That Has No Name" from The Feminine Mystique (1963) AM ID 71-77
Report: Hugh Hefner and the origins of *Playboy* (1953)
Report: Lucille Ball up to her appearance in *I Love Lucy*
Report: Jackie Gleason up to the *Honeymooners*

**Thurs Oct 12**

Watch: *I Remember Mama* "Mama's Bad Day" (1952)
*I Remember Mama* was on TV from 1949-1956, one of the first family situation comedies on television, and by 1950, the highest ranked family serial, with almost 40% of the broadcast audience)
Watch: *I Love Lucy*, "Job Switching" (Sept 15, 1952);
(*I Love Lucy* was on television from October 15, 1951 to September 24, 1961)

Watch: excerpt from *The Honeymooners* (April 18, 1953)
(Jackie Gleason and Art Carney began doing the comic bit that turned into *The Honeymooners* on TV in 1950. After the first Alice, Pert Kelton, was blacklisted, Audrey Meadows took over the part when Gleason moved to CBS with his own show in 1952, where *The Honeymooners* were one of his regular skits. Only in 1955-56, the *Honeymooners* was on TV as a regular half hour sitcom)

**Tues Oct 17**

Discussion" between Postwar Blues singers, Roth's Neil, Roth's Brenda, Childress's Mildred, Friedan, Lucille Ball's Lucy Ricardo, Gleason's Ralph and Alice on their competing dreams and nightmares of family life and domesticity

**Thurs Oct 19**

**Family History Part 1 1945-1960 DUE**

View excerpts from documentary on race on television: Marlon Riggs, *Color Adjustment* (1994) 89 min.
Race on television in the 1950s handout]

**Weeks 8-12**


**Tues Oct 24**

Read and discuss Out of the Many, Ch "The Civil Rights Revolution," sections "No Easy Road to freedom," 853-860"The Movement at High tide" 860-871
Discuss: M.L. King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (1963) and Malcolm X, "Message to the Grassroots" (1963) AM ID 114-125
Report: Rosa Parks
Report: Daisy Bates
Report: Fannie Lou Hammer
Listen: Songs of the Civil Rights movement AMID 126-9
Thurs Oct 26
Second Workshop on TIMELINE/FAMILY HISTORY PROJECT
Read Ch "War Abroad, War At Home" sections "Vietnam, America's Longest War" 882-886 and "A Generation in Conflict" 886-892
Begin reading Ron Kovic, Born on the Fourth of July

Tues Oct 31
Finish reading: Kovic, Born on the Fourth of July (1976) (required reading questions)
Report: Bill Couterie, how Dear America was made

Thurs Nov 2
Discuss Dear America and Born on the Fourth of July
Discuss Chris Appy, "American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam" (1993) AM ID 138-142
Report: Ron Kovic up to 1976
Report: Jerry Lembke and The Spitting Image

Tues Nov 7
Finish discussing Born on the Fourth of July
Report: Vietnam Veterans Against the War VVAW
Report: Joiner Center
Report: John Kerry up to 1975

Thurs Nov 9
Discuss: Stokely Carmichael, from Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America (1967)
Report: Mohammed Ali up to 1967
Report: Stokely Carmichael up to 1967
Listen: soul music (selections played in class) lyrics AM ID 166-169
Report: James Brown
Report: Aretha Franklin
Report: Angela Davis

Tues Nov 14:
Read Ch "War Abroad, War at Home" section "Politics of Identity" 900-908
Discuss: Sara Evans, “Sources of the Second Wave: The rebirth of feminism,” (2201) AM ID 174-185
Reports on Pauli Murray up to 1970
Report: Caesar Chavez

Thurs Nov 16

Discuss Sylvia “Rey” Rivera, "The Drag Queen" (1992), AMID 226-232; Damian Martin, "The Fighting Irishman" (1992) AM ID 218-225
Discuss : oral histories “Busing in Boston” from Voices of freedom (1990) handout

Family History Part 2, 1960-1975 due


Tues Nov 21 Deindustrialization and its Social Effects: Transnational American identities

Discuss Out of Many ch "The Conservative Ascendancy" sections "The Overextended Society" 924-930
Report on Michael Moore
Report on PATCO Strike
Watch Roger and Me: first 40 minutes, last 5-10 minutes of Roger and Me

Thanksgiving Nov 23 (Start reading Jasmine)

Tues Nov 28
Discuss Out of Many ch "The Conservative Ascendancy" section "Best of Times, Worst of Times" 943-947
Discuss Eric Alterman, "The Promise of Bruce Springsteen" (1999) AM ID 249-253
Listen: Music about work in Post-Industrial America,” excerpts from Bruce Springsteen Nebraska (1982) Shelley Thumnder, "Working Girl" (1989) and Cannibus and Biz markie, "Shove This Jay-Oh-Bee" (199) AM ID 254-263

Thurs Nov 30
Read Out of Many Ch Towards a Transnational America" section "Changing American Communities" 966-972"New Age of Anxiety" 972-978
Discuss Bharati Mukherjee, Jasmine (1989).
Report on Bharati Mulherjee

Tues Dec 5
Discuss Jasmine (required reading questions)
**Thurs Dec 7**
Discuss Kristin L. Luker, from *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (1984) AMID 272-280

Collectively make time line for cultural events

**Tuesday Dec 12**
Discuss: what change do they see in family over time, reflecting on family histories?
How have cultural changes shaped family; shaped who we are?
Who counts as an American; has this changed over time
--discuss sources for family history; things people wouldn’t talk about
--challenge to any am history text
--what makes you an American, what is am identity; what shapes your identity from the outside, from the inside?

FINAL DUE DATE FOR FAMILY HISTORY !!!!!!