

American Studies Summer Work 2018



Thomas Hart Benton's *The Sources of Country Music*
1975

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Google Classroom Code: y9uxj5o

Summer Reading / Creating / Collaborating 2018

Objectives:

- Instill a critical thinking approach to society and culture
- Develop a collaborative learning community for American Studies
- Expand creativity and freedom of expression

Overarching Question:

- What is the idea of America?

Required Reading:

- *Give Me Liberty*: first three chapters--assessed in the opening week of class.*
- Walls, *Glass Castle**
- McCullough, *The American Spirit*--assessed with a "Your Speech" emulation in opening weeks.*
- Horwitz, *A Voyage Long and Strange* (excerpts)*
- Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (excerpts)
- Schweikert et. al, *A Patriot's History of the United States* (excerpts)
- Loewen, "Memorial Essay"

*check out these books during exam week

Assignments:

The Glass Castle: Essay

Critically read and evaluate Jeannette Walls' *The Glass Castle* (available through the LMC or school bookroom). In your response, consider:

To what extent does Walls' story reflect the American Dream? What claim is she making about American culture and to what extent do you agree?

Select pivotal passages that help support the meaning of your findings and read them closely as you respond to the prompt. Show how writer's craft contributes to the meaning you discover.

Format: (four-page maximum, Times New Roman, 11pt, double-spaced, MLA format)

"Submit" to the Google Classroom assignment and bring in hard copy on first day of class.

A Voyage Long and Strange: Emulation

Step 1: Read the Prologue, Chp 9 "The Conquistadors Last Stand", Chp 13 "A Tale of Two Rocks" and another chapter (or more) of your choice.

Step 2: In a single page response, describe the thesis/purpose/aim of his book. Choose a passage or two that best illustrates Horwitz' purpose, analyzing how your selection is central to the argument of the text.

Step 3: Write a Horwitz inspired fragment from one of your summer journeys. (Emulate how Horwitz moves from narrative to commentary and his mode of lifting a facade to reveal an inner truth. Your site could be a NJ boardwalk, an Appalachian cabin, or a summer scene on Post Rd in Fairfield.

Post your blog with accompanying picture on our shared .net google site: 'VLS Emulation'

A New Memorial: response to Loewen

Step 1 - Read James Loewen's analysis about monuments depicting historical events across the United States. Identify 5 key points you discovered from these readings.

Step 2 - In and around the Fairfield community (although you can do this in any part of the United States if you are traveling this summer); photograph/record 5 (+5 per member if working with partners) historic monuments on public display. What does each monument communicate to the public at large? Discover what evidence you believe should each of the monuments you studied also include. Simply, what other parts of the history should be known?

Step 3 - If you were given the task of designing a monument that was to be erected at Sherman Green or Town Hall, describe in detail what that monument should be in 2018. Write what the plaque/inscription would say.

Post your work on our shared .net google site: 'A New Memorial'

Give Me Liberty: A scene in an original play.

Craft a multi-role original skit using key characters from multiple readings. (This could be a small group task, with each student contributing one voice.) Imagine a potential relationship between anachronistic characters and a likely topic (i.e. John Winthrop and Anne Hutchinson and Rex Walls discuss Utopia) based on pivotal similarities or differences of character and motivation and place in a setting and scenario of your choice.

- Import character(s) from 1st 3 chapters of *Give me Liberty*
- Can also use fictional characters from any/all lit, or one of our writers (from the required reading)
- The scene must reveal key philosophical insights into central topics and be long enough to flesh out characters i.e. "a page of dialogue per group member" (although some characters can certainly say more than others) as a rough guide

Post your scene on our shared google site: 'Give Me Liberty'.

"A People's History" vs. "A Patriot's History: " Zinn vs. Schweikert et. al.: Investigate Bias.

Step 1: Read the excerpts and in a brief response of one page, describe the greatest differences (use specifics) between these two versions of history and explain how the same facts can be evaluated so differently. What are the different motives of the writers, and are both legitimate in your opinion? Explain.

Step 2: What major news story over the summer interests you? Choose one story and find a contrast of opinions from credible news organizations (i.e. Peggy Noonan *WSJ* vs. Maureen Dowd *NYT*). This should be two arguments presenting differing views on the same story.

Cut and paste both stories (with links) into a google doc. In a single page response at the end, investigate: how do the same facts lead to different conclusions? Where does the truth lie?

Post your document to our shared .net site-- 'Investigate Bias'.

Differing Perspectives

A. Read Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States Chapter 1 Columbus, the Indians and Human Progress*. <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/zinncoll1.html>

B. Read Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen's A Patriot's History of the United States Introduction and Columbus material in Chapter 1 found in the following link
<http://ready4itall.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/A-Patriots-History-of-the-US-Ytsewolf.pdf>

Create a “Fake News” Story:

How is fake news made? Read the following exposé--

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/18/us/fake-news-hillary-clinton-cameron-harris.html>

Invent a topic that you think would “sell” to a group of your choice (beyond liberal or conservative, consider other groups: Nascar fans, Opera goers, Elon Musk fanatics, etc.

Create: the story, the visual, and even create a “web-hosting” site that would appear legitimate to your audience.

Post your fake news on the ~~internet~~ our shared .net site: ‘Fake News’.

A Film Blog: a summer film release (or streaming TV show)

Choose a film or tv series you see over the summer that you think has interesting societal relevance. Take a screenshot from this film/show that you think expresses an insight or argument about life/culture. Explain the artistry in the image (in terms of the overall film), and what its creators are attempting to portray about our culture. Write this as if it was a blog post and you are a ‘film critic’. Your audience is educated, literate, some are members of the Academy . . . they know of your show but they may not have seen it (so some intense summary is needed.) *Post on our .net site: ‘Film Blog’.*