

American Studies Summer Work 2021

Google Code: c6fbuz5

Text Book Link <http://wwnorton.com/ebooklite/give-me-liberty-3e-ch1-4/welcome.asp>



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

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Summer Reading / Creating / Collaborating 2021-2022

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.
**Conversations*: no summer requirement but will give you an intro to “rhetoric”
**Educated*, Westover: a memoir, and a page turner, for the written response (see below)
Horwitz, *A Voyage Long and Strange* (excerpts in pdf form)
Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States* (excerpts pdf)
Schweikert et. al, *A Patriot’s History of the United States* (excerpts pdf)
Loewen, “Memorial Essay” (pdf)

*check out these books during exam week

Assignments:

***Educated*, Westover: Essay**

Critically read and evaluate Tara Westover’s *Educated* (pick up from Learning Commons or school bookroom before leaving for summer). In your response, consider:

How does Westover define education? How does your view of education align with or diverge from Westover’s perspective?

Select pivotal passages (three?) that help develop your argument about education in the novel and read them closely as you respond to the prompt. Show how writer’s craft contributes to the meaning you discover.

[Already read *Educated* and looking for something new? Use *American Dirt* instead (listed in the “Independent Reading” section below) and accompanying prompt. Available at the Fairfield Public Library]

Format: (four-page maximum, Times New Roman, 12pt, 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 8 “The South: DeSoto does Dixie”, Chp 13 “A Tale of Two Rocks”

Step 2: In a single page response, describe the thesis/purpose/aim of this 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, this year or last. (Emulate how Horwitz moves from narrative to commentary and his mode of lifting a facade to reveal an inner truth. For example your site could be a NJ boardwalk, an Appalachian cabin, or a summer scene on Post Rd in Fairfield. Choose something that interests you personally.

Post your blog with accompanying picture on our shared google site page

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 2020. Write what the plaque/inscription would say.

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

"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/zinncoll.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>

Do a Rhetorical Analysis of a Social Media Artifact you find poetic and worthy of analysis:

We'll define "rhetorical analysis" in class but don't be scared off by the term: it just means taking apart any text to explain how the creator's/writer's tactics give it meaning and power over its audience. For this task, find a recent meme, tik tok clip, or other social media creation that you think has poetic beauty or thematic power or both and analyze how it works. For an example, here's a [60 second vignette](#) I found on tik tok, and here's [my rhetorical analysis](#) which I had a lot of fun writing. Use this as a model, but select a text that you find engrossing or meaningful.

Post your link and your analysis on the Classwork Assignment "Social Media Artifact", to be added to a site at a later date.

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'.

OPTIONAL Independent Book Choice:

Select one title from the following list. It is intentionally as diverse a list as possible, in both topic and reading difficulty, so you can find a book that *interests and pushes* you. Spend some time skimming the opening pages of at least a handful of the titles. Sora carries some digital copies ([listed here](#)) and gives good initial descriptions. I highly suggest you use the Amazon 'see inside' feature (not available on phone) that lets you read opening pages so you are sure you have a good fit. You could start your personal library and purchase from Amazon, or use my favorite Fairfield institution: the public library!

As you read, create your own prompt:

Write a Question in this format - "*In [insert book title], what does [insert writer name] reveal about [insert topic that emerged to you] and how did they do it, using [insert aspects of writer's craft, structural elements, forms of argument, cultural references, context, voice, etc].* It doesn't have to be that clunky but I think you get the idea.

[Optional essay to the Optional Assignment:

Answer your Question in a well crafted and organized essay.

This response will be a typed, single-space page to page and a half. Submit to the Assignment in Google Classroom.

Underlying this question, you should be considering why you choose the book you did, and what that choice reveals to you about yourself, and ultimately, what intellectual or emotional takeaway you get from reading it.]

FICTION

Recent:

American Dirt, Cummins (listed as alternate title for summer novel)

Americana, Adichie

The Topeka School, Lerner

Caleb's Crossing, Brooks

The Round House, Erdrich

The Underground Railroad, Whitehead

Station Eleven, Mandel

A Mercy, Morrison

Classic:

Moby Dick, Melville

If Beale Street Could Talk, Baldwin

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, Smith

Native Son, Wright

Wise Blood, O'Connor

The Age of Innocence, Wharton

The Sun Also Rises, Hemingway

Going after Cacciato, O'Brien

Blood Meridian, McCarthy

NON-FICTION

Memoir:

Educated, Tara Westover

The Woman Warrior, Maxine Hong Kingston

This Boy's Life, Tobias Wolff

An American Childhood, Annie Dillard

The Glass Castle, Jeannette Walls

Growing Up, Russell Baker

The Autobiography of Malcolm X

Travel Narrative:

Confederates in the Attic, Tony Horwitz

Road Fever, Tim Cahill

Travels with Charley, John Steinbeck

Coming into the Country, John McPhee

Blue Highways, William Least-Heat Moon

Cultural Criticism:

Bait and Switch, Barbara Ehrenreich

The Fire Next Time, James Baldwin

The Age of American Unreason, Susan Jacoby

Fast Food Nation, Eric Schlosser

The Beauty Myth, Naomi Wolf

What Made Maddy Run, Fagan

Media and Technology:

Alone Together, Sherry Turkle

Hamlet's Blackberry, William Powers

The Glass Cage, Nicholas Carr

Rise of the Robots, Martin Ford

Environment and Nature:

The Soul of an Octopus, Montgomery

Braiding Sweetgrass, Kimmerer

Walden, Henry David Thoreau

The End of Night, Paul Bogard

Last Child in the Woods, Richard Louv

Into the Wild, Krakauer

Wilderness Essays, John Muir

General Non-Fiction:

The Wordy Shipmates, Vowell

Sapiens, A Brief History . . ., Harari (history)

1491, Charles Mann (history)
Lincoln at Gettysburg, Garry Wills (history)
Alexander Hamilton, Chernow (history)
1776, McCullough (history)
Leadership in Turbulent Times, Goodwin (history)
Team of Rivals, Goodwin (history)
Cod, Mark Kurlansky (history)
The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks, Rebecca Skloot (science/medicine)
The Omnivore's Dilemma, Michael Pollan (food)
Mother Tongue, Bill Bryson (language)
Our Magnificent Bastard Tongue, John McWhorter I (language)
Outliers or *Blink*, Malcolm Gladwell (sociology/psychology)
In Cold Blood, Truman Capote (true crime)
What's so Great about America, D'Souza (politics)
The Conscience of a Conservative, Flake (politics)
Making the Grades, Todd Farley (education system)
Savage Inequalities, Jonathan Kozol (education system)
Excellent Sheep, William Deresiewicz (education system)