American Studies
Summer Work 2025-2026
Google Code: hvkrgahz



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

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Summer Reading / Creating / Collaborating 2025-2026

All assignments have posting locations in Google Classroom. You can decide the order you wish to complete the assignments, but meet these deadlines:

July 15: - 2 assignments complete
August 5: - 2 additional assignments complete
August 27: - 2 remaining assignments complete (6 total)

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 (check out these books during exam week):

- *Educated*, Tara Westover: 2018 memoir
- *Give Me Liberty*: first three chapters--*assessed in the opening week of class.*
  Chapter 1 https://ilearn.gavilan.edu/courses/2300/files/63079
  Chapter 2 https://ilearn.gavilan.edu/courses/2300/files/63072?module_item_id=41453
  Chapter 3 https://ilearn.gavilan.edu/courses/2300/files/63088?module_item_id=41457
  Chapter 4 https://ilearn.gavilan.edu/courses/2300/files/63071?module_item_id=41460

AP Language and Composition Assignments:

Essay for Tara Westover's *Educated*

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

What aspect of *Educated* relates to your life? Using some of the situations or characters in the memoir that parallel (or contrast) your life, reflect on the broad question: What does this book reveal to me about myself and my country?

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

Format: (four-page maximum, Times New Roman, 12pt, double-spaced, MLA format) *"Submit" to the Google Classroom assignment.*

Rhetorical Analysis of a Social Media Artifact:

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, TikTok 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 Mr. Pollex found on TikTok, and here's his rhetorical analysis which he had a lot of fun writing. As another example, here's a student piece from last year.

Post your link and your analysis on the Classwork Assignment "Social Media Artifact", on a page you create (with your name). Please make sure the link to the source works. You may have to download your social media artifact and move it to your .net drive to get it to post properly on the Google Classroom.

A Film Critique/Close Reading: of 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/streaming show that expresses an insight or argument about life/culture. Follow this link for an example of a professional writer decoding the imagery of "overexposure" and "eyes" in the Michael Bay film *The Island*. Explain the artistry in the still image you chose (in terms of the overall film), and what its creators are attempting to portray about our culture.

Write this as if it's for an online film criticism site and you are a 'film critic'. (A "critique" in this sense means an insightful analysis/evaluation, not that you are criticizing the film.) Write for an audience that is educated, and 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.)

AP U.S. History Assignments:

***A Voyage Long and Strange*: Emulation**

Step 1: Read the Prologue, Chp 1 "1492:", Chp 13 "A Tale of Two Rocks"
Step 2: In a single page, single-spaced 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. *Submit that page as a doc to its Classroom Assignment.*
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. (Around a half page, single-spaced response, with accompanying image.)
Post your blog with accompanying picture to a page you create on the shared Google Site.

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. *Post this page to the assignment in the Classwork Tab*
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 2022. Write what the plaque/inscription would say.
Post Steps 2 and 3 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/zinncol1.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: (roughly page 6 to page 19) *Patriot's History*