American Studies Summer Work 2026

Google Code: gz7grfyt



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

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Summer Reading / Creating / Collaborating 2026-2027

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.*
  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

- **Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent*, Wilkerson, for the written response (see below).
  ***check out these books during exam week**

Assignments:

***Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent*, Wilkerson: Essay**

Critically read and evaluate Isabel Wilkerson's *Caste* (pick up your copy from the school bookroom before leaving for summer). In your response, consider:
- Where do you think you fit in America's "caste?" In your community, in the State of Connecticut, in America, in your school, in your family, etc.
- What are your thoughts about Wilkerson's argument in the book and how she crafted it? Can you draw from observations and/or experiences that support, refute, or qualify her argument?
- Is this a history book? Why or why not?

Select and use pivotal passages that help develop your claims about the book for support.

Format: (four-page maximum, Times New Roman, 12pt, double-spaced, MLA format) "Submit" to the Google Classroom assignment and bring in a hard copy on the first day of class.

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

Step 1: Read the Prologue, Chp 2 "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.)

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 2026. Write what the plaque/inscription would say.

"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?

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