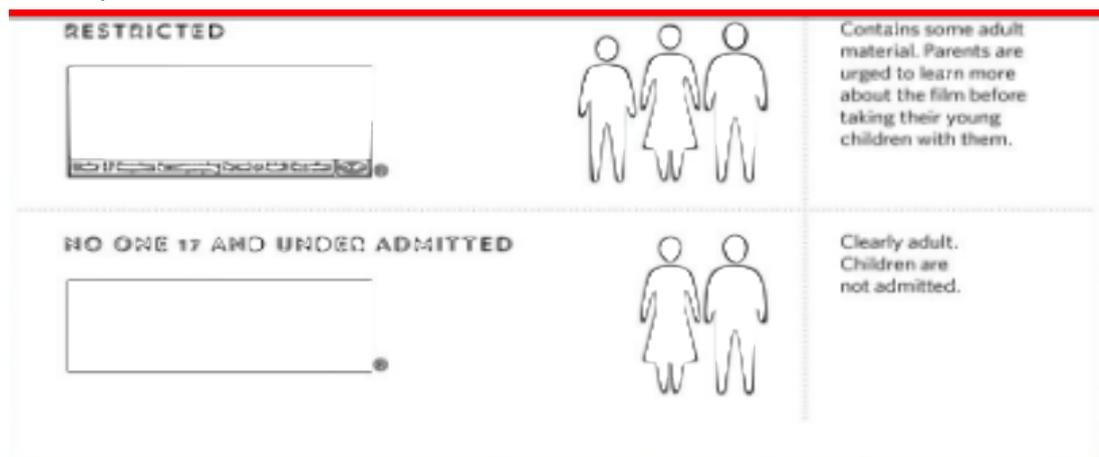


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**AMS/ANT 235.01: Anthropology of American Culture (Spring 2020)**  
T/TH 08:30 AM - 09:50AM, HSSC - room S1321 **(\*please be seated at 8:25)**

**NOTE: Rating "R" - The course content for this class is designed for Mature Audiences over the age of 17 willing to view, discuss and engage with complex, messy and sometimes violent subjects. This may include ideas and/or language which some people might find offensive. Free inquiry and open debate, deliberation and discussion is encouraged and expected.**



**Prof. K. Gibel Mevorach - Office HSSC S2362**

**Office Hours: T/Th 1:00-3:40**

**and individual scheduled meetings times (including FT and Whatsap)**

**Course Description: Guidelines should be read and referred to periodically (\*Prof reserves right to revise this syllabus)**

The aim of this course is to explore issues and themes which shape what and how we think of *American-ness* as a *culturally comprehensible*, though elusive experience and idea. What characteristics and values are particularistic, recognizable and desirable as *American*. Specifically, we will focus on issues which persistently, cumulatively -- and subtly -- inform national conversations and narratives about U.S. American culture and citizenship, democracy and political participation, class consciousness and mobility. These topics necessarily slip engage with discussions about the power of media to shape social attitudes, values, lifestyles and political opinions. Since the election of 2016, national conversations are highly charged. These reflect attitudinal shifts about *prejudice* and *racism*, *class and inequality*, *gender and homophobia*, and *religions and religiosity* - topics which resonate differently among diverse social groups and across generations. These intersecting themes frame the national political culture of the U.S., ground historical perspectives and will be integrated in our course material and class discussions.

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*Please take time to read or listen to news headlines once a day –the local and the global intersect in our classroom, on our campus and in the town.*

**TEXTS for AMS/ANT 235 (available in Bookstore, from Publisher and online book sales; e-Books are acceptable)**

### **The Racial Odyssey of Assimilation**

Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998)

### **The Fact of Racism and the Fiction of Race**

Barbara J. Fields and Karen E. Fields. *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (Verso 2012)

**+ Required listening:**

<https://www.blurbrry.com/thedig/29579310/revisiting-racecraft-with-barbara-and-karen-fields/>

*Sociologist Karen E. Fields and historian Barbara J. Fields discuss their new book Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life with Daniel Denvir*

### **Confronting a Different Politics**

William H. Westermeyer. *Back to America: Identity, Political Culture, and the Tea Party Movement* (University of Nebraska Press, 2019).

### **Cultural Capital and Culinary Discrimination**

S. Margot Finn. *Discriminating Taste: How Class Anxiety Created the American Food Revolution* (Rutgers University Press, 2017).

**\*\* Supplements ADD TO Syllabus CALENDAR:**

**\*\* Attendance required: Thursday 4 April '19 at 4:00pm**

**Film Screenings** There are 3 feature films which supplement reading Matthew Frye Jacobson. And then, in April, we will have one more required film accompanying S. Margot Finn. Below are the film dates scheduled for group screening. Two films are out-of-class screenings with room reservation – please reserve this time on your calendar:

**8:15 Thurs 30 Jan** “The Jazz Singer,” Dir Alan Crosland, 1927 (88 min)

**Mon 11 Feb 4:15** “Gentleman’s Agreement” Dir Elia Kazan, 1947 (138 min)

**On your own: to be seen by 8 March**

“Vendetta” Dir Nicholas Meyer, 1999 (117 min).

**Mon 27 April 4:15** “Sideways” Dir Alexander Payne, 2004

Documentaries are also scheduled during class time or as an independent assignment – all films require some reflection point in your journals (related to the readings and class discussion; these are not film reviews).

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**Class Format – please be seated and ready at 8:25**

Classes will begin with introductory comments and move into a general discussion of the assigned readings.

1. Each individual student shall come to class -- with reading notes -- fully prepared to summarize the key points of the assigned readings and to relate them to previous class discussions.

2. In order to facilitate an informative class discussion, each student shall come prepared to discuss specific passages in the assigned: Always consider the following: *What questions are at the center of the text and what points is the author presenting to the reader? What did you learn? Why is the new information or perspective significant? Are you familiar with the information, analysis, and perspectives? What linkages can you make with previously read material (be attentive to acknowledgments, bibliographies and references).*

*\*Discussion of assigned films will usually be assimilated within class discussion.*

**Expect to invest 2-3 hours preparation for each class meeting – time management is essential. Forming a reading-discussion group outside class is quite useful (recommended: pencil in assignments on your calendar for better time management).**

**Course Requirements**

This course aims to sharpen skills of critical reading and thinking in order to isolate and evaluate methods used to elicit the information presented in a text as well as the ideas and interpretations which the authors present. This course does not include any exams -- however both weekly writing and active participation in class discussion are expected and will be graded. (Weekly journal entries will be graded after Spring Break -- this gives you time to get used to writing thoughtful entries). In order to facilitate this process, students will be expected to adhere to the following requirements:

1. **Attendance (5%).** There is an automatic credit for attendance. Consecutive absences and/or irregular attendance will have a negative impact on the final grade. If you are absent, you are responsible for finding out what you missed from classmates.
2. Please do notify me by email when you have missed a class and include your plan to catch up. Class begins on time at 8:30 am (please be seated by 8:25)-- (SET YOUR ALARM: if you wake up late, better to arrive tardy than not at all). If you have an unexpected scheduling conflict, please notify me by email as soon as possible.

- Several related commercial films and documentaries are scheduled for in-class and out-of-class screening as supplementary texts which help dramatize events and highlight processes about which we are reading. In addition to being attentive to visual representations of aspects of “*American culture*,” please consider various messages which seem to be explicitly and/or subtly conveyed to different audiences. Comments on films can be integrated into your weekly reading journal or as separate entries.

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- Please note all films on your calendar so you may plan ahead accordingly (all films will be on reserve in AV Center).

3. **Reading Journal (40%).** Every student must outline the reading assignment – these “reading notes” are the core of the Reading Journal. As you type up reading journal entries, you may incorporate comments on the readings. The first priority is acquiring new information and broadening your knowledge base about the past in order to reflect on the present.
  - a. **Dated** outlines and comments are entries – they represent a conversation with the text, the author and class discussions.
  - b. **Questions** to consider each week: what opinions or preconceptions did you have and did they change based on new information or the author’s analysis? how did your preconceptions change? are there points of identity between your life experience and the material you’ve read or viewed? how does the representation contribute to a sense of "Americanness?" You may choose any writing style(s) and outline format with which you feel comfortable. Journal entries are to be typed and an entry should be made at least once a week.
    - i. The first half of the semester, expect to write 5-8 pages a week (Jacobson;) – these will be primarily answering assigned questions; may include reading notes.
    - ii. Journal entries for will be submitted as one overall reflection essay (references to pp expected).
4. \* Revisions to writing schedule will be made as necessary.

- **-- JOURNAL ENTRIES ARE TO BE DATED AND formatted with page numbers CONSECUTIVELY. Format page numbering with your name p. 1 ...until the last page for the semester)**

- UPLOAD your journal to Pioneer Web by Sat 1:00pm
- **Note:** Your journal focus is first of all a record of reading notes –a road map of the reading assignment. As time progresses, your reading notes may include comments and reflections as an *addition* (not instead of the notes) should be directed by the author; these are opportunities to explore new ideas and to bracket your inclination to either agree or disagree. N.B. I will be evaluating the *cumulative quality of the content* of your entries.

**Guideline for journal grading:** Excellent = A & A- (very good summary or outline + comments which link earlier readings, visual material & class discussion); Good = B+ & B (good summaries or outline with some integrated comments); Competent = B- (adequate summaries or outlines)]

**Active Participation in Class Discussions – be an active learner (10%):** Class discussion represents an *exchange of ideas* -- it is a conversation among peers – the goal is not consensus.

Shared perspectives as well as differences of opinion further our own understanding of a topic. Critical thinking and an engaging exchange of ideas depend on listening carefully to another person's perspective and responding respectfully. The focus should be specifically on what and why there are points of agreement or disagreement -- how is one interpretation different and in what ways should it be valued as more or less persuasive? Personal experience is important, but you may draw on it as an additional resource -- not a substitute -- for evidence

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from the texts we will be reading. In other words, your arguments need to be situated within the context of the readings. These may be supplemented with outside sources.

**Leading Discussion (20%):** *Come prepared to lead class discussion on the reading assignment.*

Plan to ***specifically*** address the following questions:

- (a) What are the main points – identify key passages?
- (b) How do main points/key passages you identified compliment goals set out in the introduction to the book?
- (c) what is the significance to the author’s project?
- (d) What is the logic behind the author’s discussion?
- (e) What should we remember from the chapters and why?
- (f) How does the reading relate to previous readings? events in the news?.

**Evaluation Paper (25%):** A 4-5 page paper summarizing what you have learned about this entity commonly referred to as *American culture* including its relevance in your own life experiences and general body of knowledge.

1. This is not a soul-searching exercise – it is “connecting the dots” exercise: an opportunity to review and think about what you’ve learned overall during the semester. End of the semester is when your class notes, reading notes, notes on films & documentaries as well as supplementary material (hand-outs, guest lecturers, current events etc) and, of course, journal entries become important resources.
2. *Review & Reflect* on the information and analyses which you have encountered comment on their significance to lived experiences which shape your understandings of *Americanness* as process and perspective (immigration & assimilation; racial & national identities; class consciousness and other group-based collective identity; socializing values in different institutional contexts; socio-political perspectives).

\*\* After you print out PWeb journals, please note feedback and address questions or comments that you have not addressed earlier. These should appear in an “Addendum” and reference the page number to which your remarks refer.

**Your evaluation paper and journal entries & addendum are due on by 4pm MON 13 May 2019 -- without exception. SUBMIT ALL THE MATERIAL INSIDE A PRE-STAMPED SELF-ADDRESSED OPEN ENVELOPE - do not seal envelope! Envelopes should be placed in the box on counter in Carnegie Academic Support Office.**

**Policy on Extensions: a request for extension is not automatically given; extensions are not granted for overdue written work before the extension was requested.**

- **Recording Policy** is posted on PWeb. Note that there should be *no expectation of privacy while in the recordable space of the classroom*. As a result, please realize that collateral private conversations and behavior occurring in recordable spaces may end up being recorded and

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disseminated, even when those conversations or behavior occur before or after events, during breaks. Therefore, voluntary participation in this class is deemed to be consent within the meaning of applicable law in The State of Iowa to the recordings and disseminations authorized by this policy.

- **Accommodations**

If formal accommodations need to be made to meet your specific learning or physical abilities, please meet with me as soon as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations. For additional help with disability services, please contact John Hirschman, *Coordinator of Disability Resources*, at [hirschma@grinnell.edu](mailto:hirschma@grinnell.edu). (x3089) to provide documentation of your needs. We will work together to ensure this class is as accessible and inclusive as possible.

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\*\* READINGS and films LISTED BY DATE (BELOW) ARE to be prepared for FOR IN-CLASS DISCUSSION and the focus of journal writing for the corresponding week (chapter + corresponding footnotes/endnotes)

## The Racial Odyssey of Assimilation

### WEEK 1

Pre-Assignment

- (A) Watch AND Read transcript of *Race: Power of an Illusion Part 2 & Part 3* on Database Films on Demand
- (B) “The Story We Tell”: Race —*The Power of an Illusion*
- (C) “The House We Live In: Race” —*The Power of an Illusion*
- (D) Browse the online companion to *Race: Power of an Illusion*  
[http://www.pbs.org/race/000\\_General/000\\_00-Home.htm](http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm)
- (E) (C) Watch and Listen very carefully; *take notes* for easy reference in class discussion - Barbara Fields & Ta-Nehisi Coates in Conversation *Racecraft*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFPwkOwaweo>

21 Tues – [Ambitious morning – please be seated and ready by 8:25]

Introductions and review of 1<sup>st</sup> assignment

**Packet Handout in class** Langston Hughes, *Cora Unashamed*

[http://www.columbia.edu/itc/english/f1124y-001/resources/cora\\_pbs.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/english/f1124y-001/resources/cora_pbs.pdf)

- Distribution of Syllabus AND a copy of 1776 Declaration of Independence:  
[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html)
- Paul Robeson Ballad for Americans (1939)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-Le6XEY5qA>
- Let America Be America Again by Langston Hughes (1938)  
<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/let-america-be-america-again/>
- 

Thurs 23 Jan

**In Class \*\* Peter Jennings. The Century: Innocence and Rebellion** 43:00

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jwfk-ywLQds>

**READING** Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998) (Read pp ix-90)

(include page numbers as reference for careful notes – goal: address the following questions with knowledgeably)

The Formation of Generic Whiteness - the vocabulary of *ethnicity* erased the *racial* transformation of immigrants from Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. seeing?

**BRING reading notes/outline to class** pp. ix-x “Note on Usage,” Intro **and** Chapt 1 (pp. 1-38) “Free white persons in the Republic, (1790-1840 the racial logic of citizenship)” (AND Notes pp.283-289) **and** Chapt 2 pp. 39-90 “Anglo-Saxons and Others, 1840-1924”: *the discourse of "immigration restriction" versus the discourse of "naturalization"*

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 **Journal Prompt** How does excavating archaic ways of seeing *races* shed light on current attitudes towards race and citizenship on the one hand, and whiteness and privilege on the other hand? What is the political history of *whiteness*? What is the relationship between *perception* and *conception*? What are the socio-political, legislative, economic and cultural processes which radically alter ways of thinking and seeing (these translate into ways of experiencing the world).

## WEEK 2

**Tues 28 Jan**

**Chapt 3** pp. 91-135, "Becoming Caucasian 1924-1965" (from white to Caucasian; from alien to citizen)

Answer the following questions for discussion in class and **Journal**: who is identified as white? How is whiteness perceived? How is whiteness performed? What is the relationship between whiteness and Anglo-American Protestants? between whiteness, degrees of whiteness and immigrant status? How are people of African descent represented as *American*?

**Thurs 30 Jan CLASS WILL BEGIN AT 8:15**

**FILM "THE JAZZ SINGER"**

## WEEK 3

**Tues 4 Feb**

**Jacobson Chapt 4** pp.136-170, "The Instability of Race." (an archaeology of 1877: race as conceptual and perceptual categories)

*In class (Kanopy) Chinese in the Frontier West: An American Story*

**Thurs 6 Feb**

**Chapter 5** "Looking Jewish, Seeing Jews" (what happens when difference is cast as 'race?')

**Mon 10 Feb 4:15 film Gentleman's Agreement" dir Elia Kazan, 1947 (138 min) –**

The film will be on reserve and a room will be set up; you really are responsible for watching the entire film (some scenes are squirmy but this film received the Oscar and had a big impact for a long time. Therefore this is one of those tedious assignments which need to be undertaken with self-discipline) – for those with a paid subscription, the film is available on Amazon Prime.

**Tues 11 Feb** Visit Burling Library East 4th floor

**\*\* Journal entry:**

2-person Team assignment -- (you really are expected to browse and discover *together*)

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- Browse carefully & write comment thoughtfully on your findings from the following 2 magazines: *The Atlantic* (1877), and *Harper's Monthly Magazine* (1877) [\*news, maps, satire, advertisements, illustrations, format etc]
- \* Careful: be attentive to the diverse range of social groups who are included as well as to your own disruption of expectations, associations and stereotypes

### Thurs 13 Feb

#### (Jacobson Chapt 6 & 7) Bring your library reflections/findings to class

Chapt 6 "The Crucible of Empire" (imperialism and the transformation of racial lines into color lines)

Chapt 7 "Naturalization and the Courts" (the legal construction of whiteness) – you will recognize some information from documentary *Race: Power of an Illusion*

Discussion: what are race classifications? How many races categories were there in 1790? 1880? 1990? 2000?

### Tues 13 Feb

IN CLASS -- The Brotherhood of Man (1946)

-- <http://www.printmag.com/daily-heller/when-green-equaled-racist/>

-- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KLg1DTGT-I>

The Brotherhood of Man (1946)

"10:35 min animated film makes the point that dissimilarities between people are not basic but result from superficial environmental influences. Based on the pamphlet 'RACES OF MANKIND' by Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish. SPONSOR: United Auto Workers. PRODUCTION CO.: United Productions of America. DIRECTOR: Robert Cannon."

- Exercise – you have to walk someone through the steps of applying for permanent residency and another person for citizenship
- See ☺ <http://www.uscis.gov/> Look up and be prepared to report in class on current guidelines for application for green cards (permanent residency) and naturalization (application for citizenship); who can apply? What prerequisites and requirements are needed to submit application? What is the timeline for completing the process? Who do you know, personally, who has applied and received either permanent residency or citizenship? Ask them about their process. If they were naturalized, ask about the naturalization ceremony).
- 

### WEEK 5

#### Tues 18 Feb

#### READ Chpt 8-Epilogue

Chapt 8 "The Dawning of Civil Rights Era" pp. 246-273

"Epilogue: Ethnic Revival and the Denial of White Privilege" pp. 274-280 (ATTN: this chapter comments on attitudes 20 years ago – in what ways does it still resonate or not resonate with your individual experiences ("I/me"))?

#### Thurs 20 Feb

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(JSTOR) William M. Brewer. "Poor Whites and Negroes in the South Since the Civil War." *The Journal of Negro History* Vol. 15, No. 1 (Jan., 1930), pp. 26-37

## WEEK 6

### Tues 25 Feb

Barbara Fields and Karen Fields, *Racecraft* ... "Introduction" pp. 13-24 AND Chapter 1 "Tour of Racecraft" pp.25-74. List each of the Stops on the *Racecraft Tour* with 3-4 sentence description of significance of each stop (careful reading required – you may want to work collaboratively);

[https://www.ted.com/talks/damon\\_davis\\_courage\\_is\\_contagious](https://www.ted.com/talks/damon_davis_courage_is_contagious)

### Thurs 27 Feb – No Class Meeting

**Independently or organize yourselves as a class to watch together dir. Nicholas Meyer, *Vendetta*, 1999 (on library reserve and free on Amazon Prime)**

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/04/01/new-orleans-apologize-lynching-italians-among-worst-american-history/>

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/an-overdue-apology-to-italian-americans-11554761121>

\*\* Journal – reflection on Brewer and The New Orleans lynching: what lessons do these materials cumulatively offer people in 2020? What pedagogical insights do they offer millennials in 2020?

## WEEK 7

### **The Fact of Racism and the Fiction of Race**

**3 March – No Class Meeting 5 March – No Class Meetings (a week to catch up and digest material: listening and reading assignments)**

#### The Listening assignment

*Journalist Daniel Denvir talks to the sister scholars about the book; how Ta-Nehisi Coates' primordialist view of white racism spells defeat; that racism serves the interest of capitalist class war, and endless debates over Rachel Dolezal distract us from that fact; and a whole ton more.*

<https://www.blubrry.com/thedig/29579310/revisiting-racecraft-with-barbara-and-karen-fields/>

#### The Reading Assignment

Barbara J. Fields and Karen E. Fields *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (Verso 2012)

- Chapter 2 "Individual Stories America's Collective Past" pp 74-94 – write a 1-2 sentence summary of each of the stories and their significance
- Chpt 3 Outline "Of Rogues and Geldings" pp 95-110

### Journal week 7 due 8 March –

**2 page reflection: what did you learn from the Denvir – Authors' interview/conversation? How did their discussion clarify the reading?**

## WEEK 8

### Tues 10 March

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Read Chapt 4 "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America" pp111-p.148  
Chpt 6 What One Cannot Remember Mistakenly pp 171-192

**Bring chapter outlines to class:** *what are the key points of chapter 4 and chapter 6? This should be fairly straightforward where the chapters have sub-headings*

### Thurs 12 March

Conclusion: Racecraft and Inequality pp 261-290

TBD – how does this first half of the semester correlate to current political events? What insights can you take away which help historicize March 2020

## SPRING BREAK

### WEEK 9 March

William H. Westermeyer. *Back to America: Identity, Political Culture, and the Tea Party Movement* (Univ of Nebraska, 2019)

### Tues 31

- (1) Read the CBS News link and then be sure to skim "Complete Poll on Who They Are (PDF)" And the "Complete Poll on What They Believe (PDF)"  
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/tea-party-supporters-who-they-are-and-what-they-believe/>
- (2) Westermeyer, *Back to America* - Acknowledgments and Introduction pp. vii-18
- (3) "Crashing The Tea Party (Political Documentary) | Real Stories"  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0Yv5b7y\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0Yv5b7y_c)
- (4) \*\* Recommended:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2019/may/11/us-pundit-ben-shapiro-apologises-bbc-andrew-neil-interview>  
<https://www.radiotimes.com/news/2019-12-02/who-is-andrew-neil/>

### Thurs 2 April - CONVOCATION – REQUIRED ATTENDANCE

#### Scientific Racism and American Cultural Politics

**(1)** Watch: "W.E.B. Du Bois and the Challenge to Scientific Racism" Evelyn Hammonds. UMBC lecture 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqIQNoSCDvo>

**(2)** Watch: "Science, Pseudo-science, Canon and Belief" Simons Institute Evelyn Hammonds, *only first 28 minutes* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0x3i1CyeIo>

\*\* Journal notes for Week 7

– Take your time with Evelyn Hammonds' lectures;  
For each lecture, write 2-paragraph reflection on what you learned  
AND

For each lecture write 2 questions which you would like Prof Hammonds to address or to speak at greater length.

### WEEK 10

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**Tues 7 April** Westermeyer. *Back to America* Chapters 1-2 (pp 19-89)

**Thurs 9 April** Westermeyer. *Back to America* Chapter 3-4 (pp 89-143)

#### WEEK 11

**Tues 14 April** Westermeyer. *Back to America* Chapter 5 & Conclusion

**Thurs 16 April** *Who's Afraid of the Tea Party?* Class discussion about resentment, political organizing, how to speak to political opponents, what is the direction of the country to date?

**WEEK 12** S. Margot Finn. *Discriminating Taste: How Class Anxiety Created the American Food Revolution* (Rutgers University Press, 2017).

**Tues 21 April**

Finn *Discriminating Taste* Introduction and Chapter 1 (pp 1-48)

**Thurs 23 April**

Finn *Discriminating Taste* Chapters 2 and 3 (pp 49-124)

#### WEEK 13

***Required - Save the afternoon MONDAY 27 April - 4:30 pm Class Movie - dir Alexander Payne "Sideways" (2004)***

**Tues 28 April**

Finn *Discriminating Taste* Chapters 5-6 (pp. 157-187)

**Thurs 30 April**

Finn *Discriminating Taste* Conclusion – Confronting the Soft Bigotry of taste  
In Class: screening *People Like Us* – Parts 1 & 2 ( 8:30-9:30)

#### WEEK 14

**Tues 5 May**

In Class: screening *People Like Us* – Parts 3 & 4 (8:30-9:30)

**Thurs 7 May**

*LAST DAY – WE MADE IT THROUGH THE SEMESTER!! ☺*

Bring a paragraph to read in class which acknowledges what you learned working with your peers and what you hope they learned from you.

**Evaluation paper (do not forget to upload to Pioneer Web) and print-out of returned journal entries are due noon Mon 15 May 2018 SUBMIT ALL THE MATERIAL INSIDE A PRE-STAMPED SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE! Stamped Envelopes with your mailing**

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**address should be placed in box in Carnegie Academic Support Office. This submitted material will be graded and returned by mail.**