HUM 370: American Culture, Honors
Spring 2016, Section 1
San Diego State University

COURSE INFORMATION
Professor: Dr. Felipe Quintanilla
Email: fquintanilla@mail.sdsu.edu
Class Days: Monday & Wednesday
Class Times: 1530–1645
Class Location: GMCS-307
Office Hours: MW 1000-1200 & by appoint.
Office Hours Location: AL 669
Course Overview
This course endeavors to explore the different ways in which this nation and its imagined characters have been perceived, spoken for and/or represented. We will be in great company: hanging with Sandra Cisneros, Quentin Tarantino and the walking dead; road-tripping with Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Tenoch and Julio Zapata; visiting Harold and Kumar’s White Castle and Aristotle and Dante’s desert. From a postwar touch of evil to the easy riding of the late 1960s to the dream-dealers of the dystopic future, we will embark on an itinerary where, while reflecting upon the ever relevant issues of gender, sex, class and race in American culture, we will come to refine our own assumptions vis a vis the concept of the “American dream;” its vices, virtues, the sham, and the saving graces.

Outcomes
• Using vocabulary from cultural studies analysis, the student will identify major trends and representative creators who have shaped the imagining of the American culture/s at different junctures in our cultural past and present.
• The student will recognize varied theoretical approaches to cultural studies analysis.
• Both in class discussion and in written assignments, the student will examine the filmic, historical, and social contexts as well as the form (or aesthetic structure) of the cultural artifacts studied in class.

Enrollment Information
Prerequisite
• Completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.
• Open to Honors program students only.

Adding/Dropping Procedures
It is the student’s responsibility to add/drop class. Please refer to SDSU’s Schedule of Classes for deadlines and procedures.

Texts and materials
Required Materials (@ SDSU Bookstore)
• Alexie, Sherman. The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian.
• Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: My Father Bleeds History.*
• Yang. *American Born Chinese*
• Alire Sáenz. *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe.*
• CourseKey: higher education, classroom engagement software. $25

NB: A number of required films will be made available through the media center reserve at the main SDSU library. Alternatively, these films may also be streamed online from the comfort of your own homes at a minimal additional cost via Amazon.com

NB: All additional readings will be made available electronically via BB.

**Optional Texts**

**Course Assessment and Grading**

**Grade Breakdown**
Mini papers (4*5%) ................................................................. 20%
Mini paper peer responses .................................................... 4%
Final creative project ............................................................ 10%
Participation .......................................................................... 16%
Midterm exam ....................................................................... 20%
Final Exam ........................................................................... 30%

**Assignments**

**Mini Papers (4*5% of the final grade)**
Every student must write a total of 4 mini papers. The entries must consist of original thought pieces on the material covered by the end of the week in question. Each entry, or “one page paper,” must be between 300-500 words long and contain at least 1 image to illustrate the line of argument. The paper should reflect a strong focus on the work/s by one or two of the authors/creators studied in class, as well as, potentially (but not obligatory), trace parallels between these works to texts beyond the course. The argument must be clear, coherent, and well supported while engaging closely with the text/s. The thesis or main idea/s must be clearly stated at the beginning of each post.

No summaries, please; you must assume that your readers (i.e., your classmates and the prof) have already read the primary sources. In sum, each entry should be an original, albeit brief, critical text demonstrating your ability to zero-in into a particular sub-topic related their text/s of choice so as to present an evocative and original observation. Each
post must incorporate at least one scholarly secondary source that is relevant to the chosen topic. Works cited must be formatted according to MLA standards. The number of quotations must be kept at a minimum, and, wherever possible, paraphrasing is encouraged.

*Late paper or commentary submission will be automatically penalized 1% for each day beyond the due date.*

Note: On 4 occasions throughout the semester you must also, additionally, make an intelligent response to a different fellow student from the class. Provide constructive feedback, delve deeper into one of the points your colleague has explored, and/or suggest further direction of inquiry. This response should be between 100-120 words in extension. This latter portion of the journal assignment is worth an additional 4% of the final grade. NB: To get the full credit for this component, you must keep a record of your four responses and submit these responses via Blackboard on the last day of the classes (May 5th).

**Final Creative Project (10% of the final grade)**

For this assignment, you may form (max 2 person) groups in order to put together a creative project based on one of the literary or filmic text as seen in class. (Log onto BB and navigate your way to Assignments/Final Creative Project to form your groups). If you have a very specific vision, you are encouraged to carry out this project on your own! Of course, the work of a two person group higher the stakes.

The final product may be as simple as:
- A short story or creative essay
- A chapter from your very own American graphic novel
- A Youtube video in the form of a audio/visual poem
- A Youtube video in the form of a witty breakdown of a work as seen in class
- A short or documentary (to be uploaded to Youtube as well)

You may make use of as many resources as you see fit (cell phones, camcorders, DSLRs, animation, puppets, photographs, voice over narration, interpretative dance etc.). However, for collaborative video, I do encourage you to make use of the free online resource, WeVideo.

Each group must also provide a 400-500 word (double spaced, times new roman, 12 font size) description, justification and discussion of the development of the project, the form, the content and relevance of the interpretation to the original text.

Due date: Work must be uploaded to class journal by the evening of Aug 10th.

**Participation (16%)**

Participation will be evaluated in function of two separate components: 1) your in-class CourseKey responses (8%) and, 2) your Blackboard prompt write-ups (8%)

**Midterm Exam (20%) & Final Exam (30%)**

The form of the midterm and final exam will entail short answer questions based on the material covered up until the respective dates; thus, before sitting down to do these com-
ponents, make sure you have completed all the readings, screened all of the assigned films and class lectures, and studied all of your class notes. You will have 1 hour and three hours, respectively, to carry out these components. In each case, respond in full and complete sentences (and in single bullet points where required) to the best of your ability.

**Grade Scale**

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<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
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<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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**Grade Expectations**

In order to earn an A in this course, students have to comply with the following criteria:

- excellent and consistent preparation;
- active and thoughtful participation in individual and group activities;
- outstanding ability to move easily from theory to application; that is, to apply the concepts, terms and strategies studied in class;
- high levels of competency during exams, quizzes, online discussions and written assignments

**If you miss class…**

Communicate with another classmate to keep up. In other words, it is on you to make sure you come prepared to dive right into the next class. You have 3 absences to use for unexpected events. Any absences beyond that will have an effect on your grade. An A might magically turn into an A- or B+ and so on.

NB: Attendance will be taken via the CourseKey software, so please make sure to always have a personal charged device at the beginning of every class.
If you go past your allotted number of absences, a letter from your advisor or from the Dean’s office will be required in order to be exempted. Otherwise you are good!

Please take the time to jot down the names and contact info of 2 classmates:
Name__________________ email__________________ phone (Optional): _____________
Name__________________ email__________________ phone (Optional): _____________

Due dates for Graded assignments
Exams: If you missed an exam you will be able to take a make up only if you have a document excuse of an extraordinary circumstance, otherwise you will receive a 0 for the exam.

Course Structure and Conduct

Structure of the course
- Lecture-discussion (M/W)
- You will be tasked with work at an individual basis as well as in limited group activities
- Technology Utilized in the Course: Blackboard, Youtube and other online tools.

Estimated time commitment
4-6 hours of independent reading and screening of films outside of the classroom.

Netiquette
Netiquette is online etiquette. It is important that all participants in online courses be aware of proper online behavior and respect each other. Use appropriate language for an educational environment:
1. Use complete sentences
2. Use proper spelling and grammar
3. Avoid slang and uncommon abbreviations
4. Do not use obscene or threatening language

Remember that the University values diversity and encourages discourse. Be respectful of differences while engaging in online discussions. For more information about Netiquette, see The Core Rules for Netiquette by Virginia Shea.

Interacting with
I'll try to respond within 24-48 hours to emails sent me from within Blackboard. For quick questions, the turnaround time may be much shorter. (If Blackboard is not working or for non-course-related communications, write to me using my outside email address: fquintanilla@mail.sdsu.edu)
For questions that involve, say, the clarification of a philosophical concept, you may want to call me in my office at (619) 594-5177. Email is to be preferred. My regular office hours are MW 10 AM-12PM Pacific Time.

**Usage and Style of Email Messages**

Learning how to write polite, professional, and well-worded e-mail messages is considered an integral part of a university education. I will respond to e-mail messages between 24 and 48 hours after you send an email (except for weekends/holidays). No class summaries will be available via email. Below see a guide sheet to help with this kind of email.

*Style standards for email messaging*

Be sure to choose an appropriate subject heading that describes the content of your email. Begin your message with:
- “Dear Professor/Dr. Quintanilla,” (neutral)
- “Dear Profe Q.,” (very informal yet polite)*

In the main body of the text, summarize your question, concern, or information.

End your message with: “Attentively,” (neutral, professional)
- “Sincerely,” (neutral, professional)
- “Thank you for your consideration,” (very formal)
- “Greetings,” (professional but friendly)
- “Warm regards,” (professional but friendly)

Then sign your name.

If you would like to add additional lines or observations to your message, you can write “PS” o “Pdta.” after your signature and then add whatever you would like to add.

**Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. You can also learn more about the services provided by visiting the Student Disability Services website. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

**Student Services**

A complete list of all academic support services is available on the Academic Success section of the SDSU Student Affairs website.
For help with improving your writing ability, the staff at the SDSU Writing Center is available in person and online. Counseling and Psychological Services offers confidential counseling services by licensed psychologists, counselors, and social workers. More info can be found at their website or by contacting (619) 594-5220 or psycserv@mail.sdsu.edu.

Exam and Midterm Instructions
REMINDER: The best browser for Blackboard is Firefox. There are known problems with using other browsers to take tests and quizzes in Blackboard. Download Firefox for free: http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/

Suggestions for successful completion
Choose the best answer, then click the little arrow on the bottom right to advance to the next question. Test must be completed the first time it is launched. Do not resize or refresh the browser window while taking the exam. Be aware that going onto another browser tab or window will close out the exam. In other words, do not change screens during the assessment. You can't go backwards. If you attempt to do so the exam will crash. Be sure of each answer before submitting it and moving on. If you have trouble for some reason email me (_____@mail.sdsu.edu) immediately with an explanation of what happened. I will view your exam attempt. Please avoid having to do this by following all the previous instructions. Upon completion of the exam click on "Save and Submit" and check your score. Then go to "My Grades" to be certain the score has been recorded. If your score has not been recorded in "My Grades" you must contact me immediately via email.

Academic Honesty
SDSU respects the intellectual property of others and we ask our faculty & students to do the same. The University adheres to a strict policy regarding cheating and plagiarism. These activities will not be tolerated in this class. Become familiar with the policy (http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/conduct1.html). Any cheating or plagiarism will result in failing this class and a disciplinary review by Student Affairs. It is best to assume that any material (e.g., graphic, html coding, text, video, or sound) on the Web is copyrighted unless specific permission is given to copy it under a Creative Commons License. More information about the use of copywritten material in education as part of the TEACH Act and Copyright Fair Use Guidelines. Whenever possible, you should attribute the original author of any work used under these provisions. Examples of Plagiarism include but are not limited to:

- Using sources verbatim or paraphrasing without giving proper attribution (this can include phrases, sentences, paragraphs and/or pages of work)
- Copying and pasting work from an online or offline source directly and calling it your own
- Using information you find from an online or offline source without giving the author credit
- Replacing words or phrases from another source and inserting your own words or phrases
Submitting a piece of work you did for one class to another class

If you have questions on what is plagiarism, please consult the policy (http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/conduct1.html) and this helpful guide from the Library: (http://infodome.sdsu.edu/infolit/exploratorium/Standard_5/plagiarism.pdf)

Turnitin
Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. You may submit your papers in such a way that no identifying information about you is included. Another option is that you may request, in writing, that your papers not be submitted to Turnitin.com. However, if you choose this option you will be required to provide documentation to substantiate that the papers are your original work and do not include any plagiarized material.

Technical Support for Blackboard
Student support for Blackboard is provided by the Student Computing Center, located on the 2nd floor of Love Library. They can be reached at 619-594-3189 or scc@rohan.sdsu.edu

Weekly schedule

Week 1 Introduction

     Jan 20
     Introduction
     CourseKey Intro
     MLA format & Research tips.
     Screening: Scenes from Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle.
     (Leiner, 2004)

Week 2- Native American Narratives

     Jan 25 & 20
     Excerpt: Cabeza de Vaca. Shipwrecks.
     John Burnett's Story of the Trail of Tears.
     -“Indians claim Italy by right of discovery.”
     -The Walking Dead.
Week 3 - Native American Narratives

Feb 1 & 3

Soundtrack: Contemporary Native American Music

Week 4 A History Violence and the Fixed Game

Feb 8 & 10
-Douglass, Frederick. Excerpt: *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass* (1845).

Read: Meeropol’s Strange Fruit. 
NPR
Look at images collected in [withoutsanctuary.org](http://withoutsanctuary.org)

Screening: *Django Unchained*. Dir. Quentin Tarantino.

Soundtrack: Billie Holiday + Big Bill Broonzey. + Louis Armstrong. + Tupac + Lamar + Drake

Week 5 The House on Mango Street

Feb 15 & 17
Cisneros. *The House on Mango Street.*

Week 6 The House on Mango Street

Feb 22 & 24
Cisneros. *The House on Mango Street.*

Week 7 Post War Blues

Feb 29
Spiegelman, Art. *Maus*. Ch 1-3

March 2
Spiegelman, Art. *Maus*. Ch 4-6

Screening: *Touch of Evil*. Dir. Orson Welles (1958)

**Week 8**

Post War Optimism.

March 7 & 9
-Raphaelson, S. *The Day of Atonement*.

-Screening in class: *Singin’ in the Rain*.

**Two our of four mini papers March 7, 2016 at 11:59PM**

**Week 9**

Midterm and the Loss of American Innocence

March 14
**Midterm (Online)**

March 16
Screening at home: *Easy Rider*. Dir. Dennis Hopper (1969)  

**Week 10**

*Do the Right Thing*. Post/racial America?

March 21 & 23
Screening at home: *Do the Right Thing*. Dir. Spike Lee (1989)  
Scenes from *Bamboozled*. Dir. Spike Lee.

**This week you will be required to screen a video lecture.**  
**You will not be required to attend class.**  
**There will be no office hours this week.**

**Week 11**

Spring recess  
March 28-April 1

**Week 12**

*American Born Chinese*

April 4 & 6  
Yang. *American Born Chinese*

Screening: *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle*. Leiner
(2004)
Scenes from: *Fresh off the Boat.*

**Week 13**
Queering the American Dream

April 11 & 13
*Alire Sáenz. Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe.* (Chap 1-15)

Screening: *Boyhood.* Dir. Linklater (2014)

**Week 14**
Trans-American Dreams

April 18 & 20
*Alire Sáenz. Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe.* (Chap 16-end)

Screening: *Y tu mamá también.* Dir. Alfonso Cuarón. (2001)

**Week 15**
Trans-American Dreams

April 25 & 27
Screening: *Sleep Dealer.* Dir. Alex Rivera

**Two remaining Mini Posts are due at end of April 25th (11:59PM)**

**Week 16**
Exam Prep & Student Creative Project Presentations

May 2 & 4

**May 5th - Last day of classes**

**Week 17**
May 6-12 FINALS WEEK

**Final Exam. (Online)**
TBA
*Instructor retains the right to adjust the course design throughout the term.*

Any major changes to the course syllabus will be announced in class, communicated to all students electronically, and incorporated into an updated and posted version of the syllabus.

CourseKey Student Engagement App:
1st Course - $25.00
Additional Courses - $5.00

REGISTRATION EMAIL INSTRUCTIONS:
This course will be using CourseKey (www.thecoursekey.com) - a higher education, classroom engagement software that is designed to boost attendance, increase lecture interaction, and facilitate peer-2-peer learning. The app combines features that help the professor more efficiently manage the class and allows students to connect more effectively outside of class.
You will be able to use the iOS application or any smart device (smartphone, tablet, laptops, etc.) with a web browser. If you do not have a smart device please contact the support team at support@thecoursekey.com so that arrangements can be made to accommodate you.

- App Store Link: CourseKey – Student iOS App

You can visit the CourseKey Youtube channel for the Student Quick Start Guide which outlines how you will register for a student account, as well as providing a brief overview to get you registered for the class. The first day of class we will go over the integration of the software and how attendance and participation will be graded.

Please follow these instructions to create your account and register for the course through the application. If you require assistance you can find the CourseKey support team from 9:00 am - 5:00 pm PST, M-F in the Zahn Innovation Center (EBA-419).

Step 1: Create Account
To sign up use the following link to create your account: https://portal.thecoursekey.com/signup
- You will then be able to create an account, entering your first and last name.
- Enter your email that you can access (you will receive a confirmation link).
- Enter a secure password that you will remember and re-enter it.
- Select your campus/school and then enter SCHOOL ISSUED ID – This is your REDID
- Click on the link to read the terms of service and privacy policy and after reading click the box.
- Click “SIGN UP” and you will receive an email shortly after with a verification link.
  - If you don't receive an email, check your spam or junk folders and make sure to add CourseKey to your inbox.
• Click on the verification link in the email and then click “VALIDATE” to activate your CourseKey account.

**Step 2: Register for the Course**

To register for the class, simply log in at: [https://portal.thecoursekey.com/login](https://portal.thecoursekey.com/login)

• Once logged in, click “**Add a Course**” and type “**ck150us**” and you will see the class.
  o You can also search for the professor name and class through the search option.
• Click “Yes” to add the class and you are now ready to participate in the lecture.