

FD99
PMB

**SO 480 S.T.
AMERICAN CULTURE
Fall, 1999**

**Jim Christiana, SM
735-4880**

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Our focus this semester will be on cultural patterns and developments in the U.S. from its origin as a nation up to the present. We will be investigating the basic beliefs and values of the American people with special emphasis on how America has understood its unique position in the world. We will also be looking at the most recent *cultural war* debates and access the extent to which Americans are becoming polarized over such issues as family values; education; abortion; and sexuality.

II. TEXTS

James Hunter, **Culture Wars**

Additional readings will be placed on library reserve throughout the semester.

III. COURSE STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS

I hope to structure this course as both lecture and seminar. Students will be encouraged to share their thoughts, reflections, and questions about American culture.

Half of the course grade will be based on a series of in-class exams; the remainder of the grade will come from brief reflection essays that students will be asked to share in small groups.

Students are expected to attend class on a regular basis, to keep up with all readings and assignments, and to be prepared to participate in our ongoing conversation about American culture. Students who have accumulated more than three (unexcused) absences will begin to have points deducted from their overall course grade. Given the seminar dimension of this class it is extremely important that students be present on the days their essays are due. It is totally up to the discretion of the instructor to determine under what circumstances (and with what penalties) to grant makeup exams or to accept late assignments.

WEEK

(TENTATIVE) COURSE OUTLINE

I---III

An archaeological invitation

Perspectives on the concept of culture
{with emphasis on the Am. context}
READ: Hunter, PART I (p. 4-- p. 64)

IV---VII

An overview of some historical patterns in Am. culture
The defining and transformation of a nation
READ: Hunter, PART II and III (p. 67-- p. 158)

VIII---REMAINDER

The Am. people today
--American Exceptionalism
--Multiculturalism
--Common Moral Visions?
--Basic Issues and Problems
READ: TBA