

**Senior Capstone Seminar:  
Anthropology of Power**

ANTH 450, Spring 2015  
Tuesday/Friday, 11:45am-1:00pm, Ward 305

David Vine: vine@american.edu; 202-885-2923; call my mobile phone in emergencies  
Office Hours: Hamilton 311, Tuesdays, 1:30-5:30 pm, and by appointment

Each anthropologist must reinvent [anthropology], as a general field, for him or herself, following personal interest and talent where best they may lead.  
-Dell Hymes, *Reinventing Anthropology* (1999[1969]), p. 48.

I will never again play anything that does not have social significance.  
-Max Roach, Interview in *Down Beat* magazine, March 30, 1961.

This capstone seminar is designed to be the culmination of your undergraduate studies in anthropology. Over the course of the semester, you will complete a Senior Capstone Project of your own design. The only requirements for the project are that it must: 1) involve original research; 2) attempt to create new knowledge; 3) be of an anthropological nature (broadly defined) drawing on and using your anthropological training and education; and 4) be of a very high quality in terms of scholarly rigor, impact, and writing or other outcome that is publishable or otherwise ready for public dissemination. The project can take many forms, including a publishable article, a major research paper, a mini-ethnography, a health study, a program evaluation, other work for a non-profit or other organization, a film, a website, a zine, even fiction, and much more.

As you pursue your capstone project, we will read and discuss influential works by anthropologists and others who have investigated how power operates in the world. There will be special attention to the work of anthropologists who have used anthropology to influence progressive social change. By examining various models for making anthropology relevant and useful outside academia, we will consider how you can use your anthropological skills after graduation and follow these examples to contribute to movements for change and social justice. Major seminar topics will include racism, sex and gender, sexuality, class, imperialism, neoliberalism, human rights, medical anthropology, and ethics.

Given the department's and my commitments to public anthropology and social justice, I encourage you to pursue a capstone project that attempts to contribute to ongoing efforts to effect progressive social change. Put another way, I encourage you to pursue a project that stands to have some impact beyond allowing you to pass this class and get your degree. Most of all, however, the seminar asks each participant to engage in a process of, as Hymes suggests above, inventing and reinventing anthropology for oneself.

Structurally, the class will be a discussion-based seminar. As the capstone course for the major, the seminar assumes that student-participants will play a key role in the leadership of classes, maintaining continually active and thoughtful participation throughout the semester. The

classroom will also be a space for passionate, engaged discussion. Everyone will be encouraged to express views freely and to dissent with others, including me, while recognizing the responsibility to respect others' right to express themselves freely. Beginning with the syllabus and throughout the semester, participants will have opportunities to shape the direction of the class, choose subjects of discussion, and improve the course design through regular feedback.

### **PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE**

Careful and thoughtful reading and active participation in class, in addition to written assignments, are the most important elements of this course. I expect advance notice for any classes you will miss, just as I will inform you if I must miss any classes.

Throughout the semester, I will send emails (via Blackboard or directly to your email) to supplement and clarify class discussions and, occasionally, to modify readings or other assignments. I consider these emails to be an important part of the course and required reading. This means that everyone should make sure you will receive such emails and that you read them in a timely manner. Note, however, that I will not change a mandatory reading or assignment without more than 48 hours notice.

If you send me an email and do not get a response within a few days, I apologize in advance. My delay is likely because I have gotten overwhelmed by the large quantity of email that I get on a daily basis. If the issue is pressing, please call me on my mobile phone or talk to me in class.

To help prepare for seminar discussions, see the list of suggestions at the very end of this syllabus in "Suggestions for Academic Reading."

*Because this class stresses active participation in class discussions and respect for all course participants, computers, mobile phones, and other personal electronic devices may **never** be used in the classroom. If there is a good reason to make an exception to this rule (e.g., a learning or disability issue requires such use), please come speak to me. Although I do not encourage the use of e-readers, they may be used in the seminar only if they are used to examine course readings and for no other purposes. If an e-reader is used for other purposes, it will no longer be permitted in the classroom. Thanks for your understanding and assistance.*

Anyone interested in working with a non-profit organization off campus and getting a **Community Service-Learning Program add-on credit** should speak with me right away. For more information, see: <http://www.american.edu/ocl/volunteer/CBLR-How-to-Apply-for-CSLP.cfm>

### **CLASS FACILITATION**

Once during the semester, you and another seminar participant will serve as facilitators to begin a day's discussion. The aim is to 1) briefly summarize and frame the week's readings and, then, 2) to stimulate conversation with one especially provocative and important question that addresses the key substance of the week's readings and what your group thinks we should be

discussing. Groups will have *ten minutes maximum* to present material aimed at spurring constructive conversation. Every member of the group must participate in the presentation.

Begin by *briefly* summarizing the major arguments of each of the week's readings. Next, go beyond summarizing to offer one critical question about the texts and topics at hand that provides a lively springboard for discussion and critical thinking. The question should be a major question raised by the majority of the texts assigned for that week. Think about how best to engage the class. Be thoughtful, be creative, and don't be afraid to take risks. It may help to have backup questions to probe and prompt deeper discussion, but *do not* read an unfocused list of questions. Remember, too, that your goal is to generate energetic conversation, not to dominate the conversation. Likewise, *do not* use your presentation merely to summarize the material, offer a perfunctory powerpoint, tell us what you liked and didn't like, or provide biographical material about authors. I highly, highly recommend practicing your presentation as a group. You may use visuals and other supplementary materials that you believe will help make for effective facilitation. If you have any technological requirements, you should arrive early to class to allow sufficient time for set-up.

### WRITING REQUIREMENTS AND HELP WITH WRITING

All writing assignments must be turned in on paper (i.e., *not electronically*) at the beginning of the class on which they are due, unless indicated otherwise. If there is a legitimate reason why you must turn in a paper late, please contact me *more than 24 hours before* the due date to explain the problem and make other arrangements. All written assignments must be double spaced, with 12-pt. font, 1-inch margins on all sides, and include page numbers and your name on each page. Assignments must also comply with generally accepted rules of writing, style, and proper academic citation. For guidance, see:

American Anthropological Association style guide:

[http://www.aaanet.org/publications/style\\_guide.pdf](http://www.aaanet.org/publications/style_guide.pdf)

*Chicago Manual of Style* (available online through the library):

[http://american.summon.serialssolutions.com/search?s.cmd=addFacetValueFilters%28ContentTy  
pe%2CNewspaper+Article%3At%29&q=chicago+manual+of+style](http://american.summon.serialssolutions.com/search?s.cmd=addFacetValueFilters%28ContentType%2CNewspaper+Article%3At%29&q=chicago+manual+of+style)

*The MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing* and *The Little, Brown Handbook* are also good resources for questions of writing, style, grammar, and other conventions.

For help with your writing beyond the classroom, please take advantage of these resources and feel free to see me:

*AU Writing Center*

Bender Library Commons; 885-2991 for appointments

<http://www.american.edu/cas/writing/index.cfm>

*AU Academic Support Center Writing Lab*

MGC 243; information and appointments:

<http://www.american.edu/ocl/asac/Writing-Lab-About-Us.cfm>.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

By registering for this class and at the university, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code (<http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code.htm> or see the “Student Handbook and Planner”). You are responsible for familiarizing yourself and complying with all its standards of academic conduct, including those related to plagiarism. I take plagiarism and academic dishonesty very seriously, and I am required to report cases to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, whose policy is to fail students for the course. Please read the university's Academic Integrity Code closely, and be sure to ask me if you have any questions.<sup>1</sup>

*Special Note:* In addition to plagiarizing others, it is possible to plagiarize oneself when using your own previously written material without proper citation. To avoid self-plagiarism and related academic dishonesty, you must cite any and all material that you have written for any purposes other than this class. If you want to use material written for another class in this course, you must ask for advance permission to do so.

### **MY RESPONSIBILITIES**

I pledge to the best of my ability to make this as enriching and exciting an academic experience as possible for everyone; to come prepared to lead engaging class sessions; to create a safe and nurturing academic environment in the classroom that encourages the free exchange of ideas; to remain open to—and encourage—all dissent, critique, suggestions about the class, and other feedback; to adapt the course as appropriate in response to feedback; to meet personally with course participants during my office hours and at other times by appointment or otherwise to discuss any aspect of the course; to read carefully and return all written assignments in a timely fashion; and to be fair in my evaluation and grading.

### **LEARNING AND LIFE RESOURCES**

If you encounter any difficulty this semester for any reason that affects your participation in the course, please don't hesitate to speak with me. In addition to the department's assistance, the university offers a variety of learning and life resources. See: <https://my.american.edu/content.cfm?load=includes/help.cfm> or the following:

Academic Support Center: 885-3360, MGC 243, [www.american.edu/ocl/asc](http://www.american.edu/ocl/asc).

Counseling Center: 885-3500, MGC 214, [www.american.edu/ocl/counseling](http://www.american.edu/ocl/counseling).

Disability Support Services: 885-3315 (V/TDD), MGC 206, [www.american.edu/ocl/dss](http://www.american.edu/ocl/dss).

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Manson, Academic Affairs Administrator, College of Arts and Sciences, American University, Washington, DC, email communications, January 8, 2008, January 8, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> See “Guideline of a General Education Syllabus,” online document, available at

*If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please notify me in a timely manner with a letter from the Academic Support Center or Disability Support Services so that we can address your needs.*

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender & Ally Resource Center: 885-3347, MGC 201, [www.american.edu/ocl/glbta](http://www.american.edu/ocl/glbta).

International Student and Scholar Services: 885-3340/50, Butler 410, [www.american.edu/ocl/iss](http://www.american.edu/ocl/iss).

Judicial Affairs and Mediation Services: 885-3328, Butler 408, [www.american.edu/ocl/jams](http://www.american.edu/ocl/jams).

Multicultural Affairs: 885-3651, MGC 204, [www.american.edu/ocl/oma](http://www.american.edu/ocl/oma).

New Student Programs: 885-3303/74, Butler 407, [www.american.edu/ocl/orientation](http://www.american.edu/ocl/orientation).

Student Health Center: 885-3380, McCabe Hall 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, [www.american.edu/healthcenter](http://www.american.edu/healthcenter).

### **CLASS SCHEDULE**

All readings are due on Tuesdays (the first date indicated for each week), although we likely will continue our discussions on Fridays (the second date indicated). All assignments, except where explicitly indicated, are due on Fridays in class. All required readings will be available on Blackboard, on 2-hour reserve in the library, on the internet, or in class. I have listed texts in the suggested reading order.

### **Notes for where to find texts**

B=Book

BBc=Blackboard "Course Reserves"

BBo=Blackboard "Other Readings"

*If you cannot find a reading on Blackboard or if a link does not work, please do the following: 1) Look again on Blackboard (perhaps looking for the title or an editor's name or looking in another folder); 2) Use your research skills to try to find the text elsewhere; and 3) Email the reading or a link to the rest of the class if you find it and let me know immediately if you cannot.*

### **JANUARY 13, 16: INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME**

*Due: Carefully review the syllabus and compile a list of questions, comments, concerns, and suggestions for the syllabus and the semester.*

American Anthropological Association. Code of Ethics. Arlington, VA, 2012.

[http://www.aaanet.org/coe/Code\\_of\\_Ethics.pdf](http://www.aaanet.org/coe/Code_of_Ethics.pdf)

Forte, Max. "How to Protect Yourself from an Anthropologist: A Code of Ethics from the Bottom Up (2.0)." Zero Anthropology, September 21, 2008.

<http://zeroanthropology.net/2008/09/09/how-to-protect-yourself-from-an-anthropologist-a-code-of-ethics-from-the-bottom-up/>

King, Martin Luther, Jr. "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence, Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam," speech, Riverside Church, New York, April 4, 1967. <http://www.commondreams.org/views04/0115-13.htm> or listen at: [http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=10021](http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=10021)

### **JANUARY 20, 23: POWER AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL ETHICS**

*Due: One page of notes brainstorming possible capstone ideas.*

Wolf, Eric R. "Distinguished Lecture: Facing Power – Old Insights, New Questions." *American Anthropologist* 92, no. 3 (1990): 586-596.

D'Andrade, Roy. "Objectivity and Militancy: A Debate." *Current Anthropology* 3, no. 6 (1995): 399-440. BBo

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. "Objectivity and Militancy: A Debate." *Current Anthropology* 3, no. 6 (1995): 399-440. [Be sure to read comments to both articles, too.] BBo

### **JANUARY 27, 30: U.S. FOREIGN POLICY AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

*January 26, 7pm, MGC 200: "Stealing a Nation": A Film Screening and Panel*  
*January 27, class meets in SIS Founders' Room for special event that ends at 2pm. See also:*  
<https://www.facebook.com/events/494677767327805/?fref=ts>

*Due January 27: Informal meeting with me by the end of office hours.*

*Due January 30: Approximately five-paragraph Capstone Project Proposal, plus Calendar. The proposal should describe in about one paragraph each: 1) research focus and central research question asked; 2) research site(s); 3) methods to be used; 4) ethical concerns; 5) project significance and planned final products. The calendar should outline steps you will take on a week-by-week basis to complete the capstone and should include class deadlines listed below.*

Vine, David. *Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Overseas Harm America and the World*. New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt, forthcoming. Introduction and Conclusion. BBo

### **FEBRUARY 3, 6: REVIEWING MAJOR THEORIES OF POWER**

*Due: Revised capstone project proposal.*

*Note: The readings below are short but challenging. Read them especially carefully.*

Marx, Karl. *Selected Writings*. Lawrence H. Simon, ed. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1994. 160 ("The feudal system of industry...")-165 ("...the pawnbroker, etc."), 211 (from

second full sentence through sentence ending "...of production" nine sentences from the end of the page). BBc

Weber, Max. In *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*. Ed. Charles Lemert. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004. 115-116 (read first section in "Class, Status, Power") BBo

DuBois, In W.E.B. *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*. Ed. Charles Lemert. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993. 177-182. BBo

Cooper, Anna Julia. In Lemert 1993, 193-199. BBo

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. In Lemert 1993, 186-87 (first two paragraphs), 189-193. BBo

Gramsci, Antonio. Selections. 249 (last paragraph); 261 (first full paragraph); 328 (second full paragraph); 333 (last paragraph)-334 (end of first sentence); (for a summary, see the glossary, 422-424). BBc

Foucault, Michel. Selections from *Discipline and Punish*. 170-173 ("...all gazes would be turned"); 194. BBc

Bourdieu, Pierre. "Structures, Habitus, Practices." In *The Logic of Practice*. Trans. Richard Nice. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1980, 52-56, 64 ("Only in...")-65 BBo

Lorde, Audre. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." In *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*. Ed. Charles Lemert. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013, 333-334. BBo

### **FEBRUARY 10, 13: RELIGION, DRONES, POWER**

*Due: Preliminary 1-2 pp. project bibliography listing key pieces of literature and other resources for your project primarily from outside the seminar, but also from seminar readings.*

***February 10, 3-4:30pm, Gianni Lounge, MGC: "Journey into Europe: Islam, Immigration, and Empire, A Lecture by Ambassador Akbar Ahmed"***

Ahmed, Akbar. *The Thistle and the Drone: How America's War on Terror Became a Global War on Tribal Islam*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2013. Chap. 1. BBc

***February 13-15, Lavender Languages Conference: Please attend at least one panel.***

### **FEBRUARY 17, 20: LANGUAGE, SEXUALITY, POWER**

*Due: Revised bibliography.*

Leap, William L., and Denis M. Provencher. "Language Matters: An Introduction." *Journal of Homosexuality* 58 (2011): 709-18. BBo

Leap, William L., and Heiko Motschenbacher. "Launching a New Phase in Language and Sexuality Studies." *Journal of Language and Sexuality* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–14. BBo

Anzaldúa, Gloria. "The New Mestiza." In *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*, ed. Charles Lemert, 626-632. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993. BBo

### **FEBRUARY 24, 27: SEX, GENDER, POWER**

*Due: Preliminary power relations map sketching out major structures and sources of power (local, regional, and global) that are shaping your topic. Highlight particularly important power relations and power inequalities.*

Sanday, Peggy R. *Fraternity Gang Rape: Sex, Brotherhood and Privilege on Campus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: New York University Press, 2007. 1-21, 33-48. BBc

And consult the following:

<http://www.theeagleonline.com/article/2014/06/leaked-emails-discussing-violence-sexual-assault-drugs-thrust-au-into-national-spotlight>

<http://www.theeagleonline.com/article/2014/06/new-eagle-summit-programming-and-sg-task-force-set-to-tackle-sexual-assault-on-campus>

<http://www.theeagleonline.com/article/2014/11/au-helps-carry-that-weight-2f6d>

<https://www.facebook.com/sasvAU>

### **MARCH 3, 6: RACE, POWER, EXCLUSION**

*Due: Three-minute oral update describing research and other work completed to date, work still to be completed, and major questions and concerns.*

Reading(s) on police brutality and #BlackLivesMatter TBA. One or more of the below may be assigned and are good key texts regardless.

Alexander, Michelle. "Preface" and "Introduction." In *The New Jim Crow*. New York: New Press, 2012, xiii-xiv, 1-19. BBc

Marx, Anthony. *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of South Africa, the United States, and Brazil*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Preface, chaps. 1, 11. BBc

Goodman, Alan, Yolanda T. Moses, and Joseph L. Jones. *Race: Are We So Different?* Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. 1-6 [chapter 1]. BBc

McIntosh, Peggy. "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. Wellesley, MA: 1988. BBo

*For more on various forms of privilege, see also:* McIntosh, Peggy. "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies." Wellesley College Center for Research on Women Working Paper no. 189. Wellesley, MA: 1988. BBo

**MARCH 10, 13: SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS**

**MARCH 17, 20: UNDERSTANDING STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE**

*Due: Three-minute oral update describing research and other work completed to date, work still to be completed, and major questions and concerns.*

Farmer, Paul. Partner to the Poor: A Paul Farmer Reader. Ed. Haun Saussy. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010. Chaps. 16, 17. Optional: Chap. 10. BBc

**MARCH 24, 27: CRITICAL MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

*Due: Four-page-minimum draft analyzing the significance to your capstone of history and political economy over a geographically broad terrain.*

Singer, Merrill, Freddie Valentin, Hans Baer, and Zhingke Jia. "Why Does Juan Garcia Have a Drinking Problem? The Perspective of Critical Medical Anthropology." *Medical Anthropology* 14, no. 2 (1992): 77-108.

**MARCH 31, APRIL 3: ARCHAEOLOGY OF POWER: COLORADO COALFIELD STRIKE**

*Due: Preliminary outline indicating the major sections and parts of the project's final product.*

McGuire, Randall H., and Karin Larkin. "Unearthing Class War." *The Archaeology of Class War: The Colorado Coalfield Strike of 1913-1914*. Eds. Karin Larkin and Randall H. McGuire. Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2009. 1-28. BBc

Review Colorado Coal Field War Project website: <http://www.du.edu/ludlow/>

**APRIL 7, 10: FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE GUATEMALAN GENOCIDE**

*Due: Revised power relations map and four-page-minimum draft analyzing the significance to your capstone of human agency and at least three forms of socially constructed difference, including gender, ethnicity and race, class, sexuality, religion, or nationality.*

Sanford, Victoria. "On the Frontlines: Forensic Anthropology." *A Companion to Latin American Anthropology*, ed. Deborah Poole, 485-502. Oxford: Blackwell. BBo

Snow, Clyde C., et al. "Hidden in Plain Sight: X.X. burials and the Desaparecidos in the Department of Guatemala 1977-1986." *Statistical Methods for Human Rights*, ed. Jana Asher, David Banks, Fritz J. Scheuren, 89-116. New York: Springer, 2008. BBc

**APRIL 14, 17: IMPERIALISM AND NEOLIBERALISM**

*Due: Revised outline.*

Harvey, David. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. 26-86, 137-152, 156-161, 180-182 rest of 137-182 recommended). BBc

**APRIL 21, 24: Capstone Drafts Writing Workshops**

*Due April 21: Two copies of capstone project draft. Read Orwell below for writing guidance and inspiration.*

Orwell, George. "Politics and the English Language." 1946. BBo

**APRIL 28, MAY 1: Capstone Writing Workshop**

**CAPSTONE PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS**

10 minutes maximum

**May 5, 11:45 AM-2:15 PM:**

**CAPSTONE PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS**

10 minutes maximum

***DUE MAY 6, 9:00 AM, IN MY MAILBOX, HAMILTON 1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR:***

*Capstone Project Final Product, including max. 800-word Executive Summary or Op-ed or other summary for public dissemination. Written projects should be a minimum of 20 pages. Projects that are not written (in part or in whole) must include at least seven pages of writing critically discussing the capstone's findings and aims as well as an 800-word summary of some kind.*

**SEMINAR OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the semester, my objective is that each of us will be able to:

- Work cooperatively and constructively with other seminar participants, building a rich, thoughtful, and supportive learning environment;
- Share a completed Senior Capstone Project about which one feels proud;
- Publicly present the main findings of a completed Senior Capstone Project;
- Define for oneself what anthropology is and should be;

- Articulate major skills, approaches, and perspectives gained as an anthropology major;
- Understand a variety of ways anthropologists have studied how power operates;
- Understand a variety of ways anthropologists have used anthropological skills to effect change in the world;
- Summarize and constructively critique complicated writing in a succinct form;
- Say that one's writing has improved;
- Speak more effectively in public and more effectively communicate original ideas to others.

### **EVALUATION (AND, UNFORTUNATELY, GRADING)**

I expect your full participation in all aspects of class sessions and the completion of all assignments. My evaluation and (what I hope you will find to be) constructive feedback on your work will primarily come in the form of written comments returned to you on your assignments. Although I wish all our classes could be pass/fail, AU requires me to assign final grades. I will do so primarily based on seminar participation (33%), the quality of and energy devoted to all assignments prior to the final capstone (33%), and the quality of the final capstone (34%). Improvement over the course of the semester and effort will also be factored into my evaluation in addition to the prior elements. I will also consider a formal self-assessment that you will complete to review your participation in the seminar and suggest your own grade.

I will ultimately assign grades in accordance with the following distributions and AU guidelines:

- A: Superior, original, thoughtful work in completion of all course requirements;
- B: Very good work in completion of course requirements;
- C: Satisfactory work in completion of course requirements;
- D: Unsatisfactory or incomplete work in course requirements and/or a failure to meet minimum attendance requirements;
- F: Failure to meet minimum course standards for assignments, participation, attendance.<sup>2</sup>

For the final capstone projects, I will assign grades in accordance with the following guidelines:

- A: Excellent, publishable or near publishable work showing effort and originality well above expectations;
- A-: Very strong and thoughtful work showing considerable effort and originality;
- B+: Good, fulfilling all the requirements of the assignment, but not going much farther;
- B and below: Did not fulfill all the requirements of the assignment and/or showed less effort than expected in the course.

If you have worries, concerns, or questions about grading as the semester unfolds, please come speak with me or ask me to discuss grading in class.

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<sup>2</sup> See "Guideline of a General Education Syllabus," online document, available at <http://www.american.edu/academics/gened/faculty.htm>.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR ACADEMIC READING

Underlining/highlighting and detailed note-taking are essential parts of reading assigned academic texts. Another useful way to ensure that you read carefully and are well prepared for class (and for academia generally) is to answer most or all of the following questions for each assigned text. I strongly suggest writing out the answers and any other thoughts inspired by a reading. These notes will later help you write papers, prepare for exams, and employ your readings in future classes and other academic work.

### *Suggested Questions to Ask of Each Reading*

- 1) What is(are) the main argument(s) or thesis(es) of the work? What was the author's goal or aim in writing? What was the author trying to accomplish?
- 2) What evidence does the author provide to support the main argument? What research methods did the author employ to collect evidence? What other key authors or theories does the author build upon, advance, and/or critique?
- 3) Are you convinced by the author's argument? Why or why not? How is the text helpful? What, if anything, is missing from the analysis, discussion, or the presentation of data? How is the text problematic, weak, or even dangerous? How could it be strengthened or improved (perhaps linked to the work of others)? Don't just critique! Think critically about how an analysis can be usefully improved and built upon.
- 4) What is the significance of the text—both for academic thought and the larger world? Might it help us understand related issues?
- 5) What questions does the reading raise for you? What other thoughts, ideas, or inspiration? What parallels do you draw with other ideas or writing? Where does the work take your mind? Write down any notes, thoughts, or glimmers, no matter where they might take you. They will likely be helpful later.

**And keep the notes!** They will be incredibly helpful for future papers, other classes, comprehensive exams, dissertations and theses, and teaching (to this day, I use notes from my college classes).

Many also find that maintaining an organized bibliography using Endnote or another computer software program greatly assists future research and writing.