

American Culture Program, Spring 2023 - S4

AMCP 2272 and AMCP 3322

Everybody's working for the weekend.

Loverboy, 1981

Greetings!

Our names are Connor Kenaston and Julio Rodriguez, and we'll be your professors for the American Culture Program. We both use he/him/his pronouns. Our in-person class sessions will be on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 1:15 - 4:15pm in Leggett 620.

Because of the immersive nature of the American Culture Program, we will occasionally meet at other times and locations. You do not need to have prior experience studying labor, leisure, or music to be successful in the American Culture Program!

How can you reach me?

The best way to contact us is through email: ckenaston@randolphcollege.edu or jrodriguez@randolphcollege.edu. We will do our best to respond in a timely manner. Please send a follow-up if it has been over 48 hours and we haven't responded. We try to unplug over the weekend so emails sent then will likely not receive responses until Monday.

When can you meet with us?

We're generally happy to chat or answer questions during or after class. You can also schedule an appointment with either of us, just send us an email with your availability! Dr. Kenaston's office is in Smith 306 and Dr. Rodriguez's is in Leggett 601.

What is this program about?

The theme for this year's American Culture Program is "Working for the Weekend: An Exploration of Labor, Leisure, and Music in the United States." We will examine how people in the past have shifted the balance between labor and leisure. We will also consider how this struggle has continued into the present. Why did so many people quit their jobs during the pandemic? And what is behind the current unionization drive in industries ranging from Starbucks to Minor League Baseball? We will learn from readings, film viewings, class discussions, guest speakers, and all-expenses-paid travel. For our big trip, we will travel to Nashville and Memphis to learn about how music and labor activism have contributed to the long and ongoing struggle for racial and economic justice. To riff on Langston Hughes, we will reflect on how we, too, can sing a new America.

You will learn to...

- synthesize and explain key concepts regarding work and leisure
- critically analyze sources and stories about the past
- communicate scholarly information and support arguments with evidence
- reflect on your own relationship to work and what you want for your life

Collective Statement

On the first day, students and faculty of the American Culture Program will create a set of principles that will guide how we will be together as a class. These principles will be inserted here.

What books do you need?

You do not need to purchase any books for this class. We will be reading two books: James Cone's classic *Spirituals and the Blues* and Sarah Jaffee's *Work Won't Love You Back*. We know that buying books can be expensive and hard for folks operating on tight budgets so we have decided to purchase both books for you. If you want to listen, you may purchase a recording of *Work Won't Love You Back* online via [Audible](#). All other required readings, listenings, and viewings will be linked or on Moodle. If you want to have those read aloud to you, you can use extensions such as [Read Aloud](#) to convert text to audio.

How can we make our classroom inclusive?

Together, we can create an inclusive and democratic learning community where all of us can thrive. Each of us have different backgrounds and life experiences, and we come from and represent different communities. We do not shed these identities and experiences when we enter the classroom, nor should we. This diversity enriches our class and our discussions. In these conversations and in all our interactions, we will lead with respect and maintain a posture of ant-racism and liberation. And when we fail, we will acknowledge and rectify the situation and strive to do better.

Access Services

We have tried to design this course so that everyone can participate fully, but we may not have thought of everything. Please let us know if you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course. If you have (or think you might have) a learning difference or disability, please meet with the Coordinator of Access Services, Larvail Jones (ljones@randolphcollege.edu) to request an official accommodation. If you have already

been approved for an accommodation, please meet with us early in the semester so we can develop an implementation plan.

Sexual Misconduct Reporting

As faculty, one of our responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. We want you to feel able to share information related to your life experiences in classroom discussions, written work, and student hours, and we will keep information you share confidential to the greatest extent possible. However, we are also mandated reporters. This means that we are legally required to share information regarding sexual misconduct or information about a crime that may have occurred with the College's Title IX Coordinator, Tamara Kosic (tkosic@randolphcollege.edu). Health Center and Counseling Center staff are not mandated reporters. As such, they are not required to share information about sexual misconduct with the college. [Randolph's Title IX website](#) has additional resources and reporting options.

Covid-19

Our classroom follows Randolph's [Covid Policies](#). If you'd feel more comfortable wearing a mask, please do so! And as always, please stay home if you're sick.

Randolph's Commitment to Equity and Belonging

You belong at Randolph, and you belong in this class. The Randolph College community "stands against any form of discrimination based on race, sex, gender, age, disability, ethnicity or religious belief or any act that demeans another." For the complete Equity and Belonging Community Commitment Statement, see this [college-wide policies document](#).

What are our expectations of you?

The American Culture Program is discussion-oriented. Consequently your attendance at every class is essential. If you are present, prepared, and actively engage in discussion, you will do better individually and will create a better learning environment for everyone. You will be best prepared to actively engage if you get enough sleep and if you have notes ready to describe the assigned readings/listenings, debate their ideas, and ask questions.

Academic Integrity

This will be a collaborative learning environment. You will often work with colleagues as partners or in small groups, and we encourage you to offer constructive feedback on each other's work. To give credit where it's due and to help others track your evidence, please cite your sources with a consistent style guide (e.g., [Chicago Style](#)). We trust you to uphold the [Randolph College Honor Pledge](#) and not copy someone else's work or ideas without attribution (even if you do so in your own words). Please reach out if you have any questions about citations or academic integrity.

Missing Class

Because this is an experiential and discussion-based program, your attendance is vital. If you are unable to attend class, please send us a courtesy email. While there's no real substitute for attending class, we will do our best to help you get back on track. If you are unable to join us in the classroom but would like to attend virtually, email us ahead of time and we will do our best to accommodate.

Late Work

In this fast-paced course, deadlines function as guardrails to help you keep you on track. Journal entries have a 48-hour grace period where you may submit the assignment late without a penalty. If there are circumstances that prohibit you from turning an assignment

in on time, please ask for an extension and name when you think you can get it done by. We will not always be able to grant it, but we try to be accommodating when life happens.

Workload

The American Culture Program consists of two four-credit hour courses: American Images (AMCP 2272) and American Culture Seminar (AMCP 3322). Due to the compressed Take2 structure, courses like this one ask you to spend several hours of out-of-class learning per hour spent in class. This enables TAKE2 courses to achieve the total learning time necessary to meet accreditation requirements.

What else will help you succeed?

Ask for help! If you have any questions about the lectures, assigned texts, or assignments, please ask them during class or student hours.

Tutoring

Dr. Kenaston consistently used my college's tutoring services as an undergraduate.

Randolph offers several free tutoring options that I encourage you to check out:

- Randolph's [Academic Services Center \(ASC\) Tutoring Registration](#)
- Randolph's [Writing Program and ASC website](#)

Google Drive

For this class, you have access to a [shared Google Drive folder](#) that includes powerpoints, handouts, recordings, and other helpful resources.

- [Shared Notes #1](#)

Basic Needs

It's hard to learn if you're hungry or have other basic needs that aren't being met. If that's the case for you, please talk to the [Dean of Students](#) and me. You may also check out:

- Wildcat [Emergency Microgrants](#)
- Randolph [College Food Pantry](#)
- Randolph [Counseling Center](#)
- Randolph [Health Center](#)

How will we assess your learning?

We prioritize learning, not grades. Grades are not an assessment of your intelligence or abilities, and they are certainly not an assessment of your value as a person. Rather, grades are a flawed attempt to reflect what you have learned. We will use the following grade breakdown to determine your grade(s) for AMCP 2272 and AMCP 3322:

AMCP 2272 American Images		AMCP 3322 American Culture Seminar	
Weekly Journal	25%	Weekly Journal	25%
Media Commentary	25%	Travel Journal	25%
Citizenship	25%	Citizenship	25%
Final Reflection	25%	Final Reflection	25%
Total	100%	Total	100%

Weekly Journal

Throughout the semester, we will be reading and discussing a range of topics. Each week you will write a journal entry that reflects on the assigned materials and in-class films, interviews, and discussions. These journal entries do not need to follow any particular format or structure, but they should be thoughtful and well-written. You may choose to write them from a first person perspective. The hope is that your weekly journal should evidence your own developing voice about America.

To earn a C, your entry should record and report the voices heard and materials discussed. To earn a B, your entry should analyze and offer insightful commentary on the material. To earn an A, your entry should connect that week's material to other materials we have engaged and/or to life outside of class. Journal entries must be between 350 and 550 words in length and uploaded to Moodle by 11:59pm on Fridays. At the beginning of each week, we will meet in small groups to discuss your journal entries and how you can refine your thinking and writing.

Travel Journal

Your travel journal functions similarly to the weekly journal but should be about the travel we do as a class. The travel journal has the same rubric and length requirements as the weekly journal. Travel journals are due on Tuesdays at 11:59pm after we have returned.

Media Commentary

You will learn about labor, leisure, and music by engaging a variety of visual and audio media. You will use Moodle to make comments on assigned podcasts and films. These comments can be questions, statements, or suggestions about what we should discuss. Your comments, along with those of your classmates, will shape how we structure discussions. They will also later help you write an effective final reflection.

Citizenship

Each week, you will earn a citizenship grade. This grade will be based on both their attendance and contribution in class discussions. This is a discussion-based program, and we are excited to have many insightful and in depth conversations with you all! Additionally, throughout the session, we will have the chance to speak with several guest speakers. Students are expected to be prepared with questions for our guest speakers.

Final Reflection

Your final reflection asks you to synthesize everything you've learned thus far into a cohesive narrative. It should emphasize how what you have learned relates to your own life. The hope is that your final reflection will be a resource for you, in the years to come, as you continue to think about America and what it means to be an American. Your final reflection takes the place of a Final Exam and will be due at the end of exam period.

What dates should you add to your calendar?	
TRAVEL 3/24 - R.E.S.P.E.C.T. Concert 3/30-3/31 - DC 4/11 - Meet at Maeir Museum for Class TBD - Hillcats Game 4/17 - Charlottesville 4/19 - Screening of King in the Wilderness 4/23-4/28 - Tennessee	Assignments Weekly Journal Due Dates: 3/31; 4/7; 4/14; 4/21; 5/5; 5/9 Travel Journal Due Dates: 3/28; 4/4; 4/18; 5/2 Final Reflection Due Date: 5/13

What is our course schedule?

Week 1

March 23 - Learning Together

March 24 - Spirit in the Dark

No Class - Meet at 6:45pm in MAC Parking Lot for Aretha Franklin Tribute Concert

Homework to be completed prior to concert:

Review the syllabus. Use Google Docs "Comment" feature to make at least 2 comments. Your comment can be in the form of a question, comment, suggestion, or response to another comment already listed.

Read Crystal R. Sander, "[More Than A Song: Giving Aretha a Little R-E-S-P-E-C-T](#)," *Black Perspectives* (August 16, 2018).

Read James H. Cone, Introduction, Chp1, and Chp2, *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (New York: Seabury Press, 1972), 1-33.

No Weekly Journal Due

Week 2

March 27 - Clocking In

Homework to be completed prior to class:

Raymond Williams, "[Work](#)," in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 281-284.

Roxane Gay, "[Yes Your Job is Important. But It's Not All-Important](#)," *New York Times*, January 8, 2023

Randolph provides complimentary access to the *New York Times*. If you haven't signed up already, sign up for your free account by following the steps outlined [on the library website](#).

David Graeber, "[On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs: A Work Rant](#)," *Strike Magazine*, August 2013.

Louis Hyman, "[It's Not Technology That's Disrupting Our Jobs](#)," *New York Times*, August 18, 2018.

Complete Media Commentary in Moodle

March 28 - Work Week

Homework to be completed prior to class:

Read Sara Jaffe, "Introduction: Welcome to the Working Week," *Work Won't Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted, and Alone* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2022), 1-20.

Listen to "[Lonnie Bunch and the 'Museum of No'](#)," *Codeswitch*, March 17, 2021.

Complete Media Commentary on Moodle

Read Jeff Merkley, "[Why I'm Supporting Bernie Sanders](#)," *New York Times*, April 13, 2016

March 30 - DC

Meet at 7:30am in Main Hall

March 31 - DC

Return to Main Hall around 5pm

Assignment Due Today

Weekly Journal Due 11:59pm

Week 3

April 3 - Family

Homework to be completed prior to class:

Read Sara Jaffe, "Chp 1. The Family," *Work Won't Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted, and Alone* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2022), 21-54.

April 4 - Gendered Wages

Homework to be completed prior to class:

Read Sara Jaffe, "Chp 2. Domestic Work," *Work Won't Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted, and Alone* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2022), 55-82.

Watch Ai-jen Poo, "[The Work that Makes All Other Work Possible](#)," *TED Women*, December 7, 2018.

Media Commentary on Moodle

In-Class Plan: Watch *9to5 Story of a Movement*

Assignment Due Today

Travel Journal (DC) Due @ 11:59pm

April 6 - Sex

Homework to be completed prior to class:

Media Commentary on Moodle about *9to5 Story of a Movement*

Read Kim Kelly, "[The Star Garden Strip Club Strike is Part of the History of Sex Worker Organizing](#)," *Teen Vogue*, June 27, 2022.

Read Kathy Peiss, "[Charity Girls and City Pleasures](#)," *Magazine of History* 18, no. 4 (2004): 14-16.

Keep reading James Cone, *Spirituals and the Blues*, 34-57. Will discuss on 4/18.

In-Class Plan: Guest Speaker Mara Amster

April 7 - Teaching

Homework to be completed prior to class:

Read Sara Jaffe, "Chp 3. Teaching," *Work Won't Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted, and Alone* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2022), 83-110.

Read Jane McAlevey, "[Getting to Contract: Negotiating and Winning Against the Odds](#)," *The Nation*, March 4, 2023.

Keep reading James Cone, *Spirituals and the Blues*, 58-85. Will discuss on 4/18.

Assignment Due Today

Weekly Journal Due 11:59pm

Week 4

April 10 - Nonprofits & Retail

Homework to be completed prior to class:

Read Sara Jaffe, Chp 3 "Retail" **AND** Chp 4 "Nonprofits" *Work Won't Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted, and Alone* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2022), 111-174.

In-Class Plan: Watch *Sorry to Bother You*

April 11 - Art & Interns

Class Meets at the Maeir Museum

Homework to be completed prior to class:

Media Commentary on Moodle

Read Sara Jaffe, Chp 6 "Art" **AND** Chp 7 "Interns" *Work Won't Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted, and Alone* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2022), 175-230.

April 13 - Academia

Homework to be completed prior to class:

Read Sara Jaffe, "Chp 8. Academia," *Work Won't Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted, and Alone* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2022), 231-262.

Listen to "[Organizing While Trans](#)," *Talking Union*, April 27, 2022.

Media Commentary on Moodle

In-Class Plan: Guest Speaker TBD

April 14 - Sport

Homework to be completed prior to class:

Read Sara Jaffe, "Chp 10. Sport," *Work Won't Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted, and Alone* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2022), 291-320.

Evan Drellich, "[The Six Years That Made Baseball's Minor League Union](#)," *The Athletic*, September 14, 2022.

In-Class Plan: Guest Speaker TBD or Watch Venus Vs.

Assignment Due Today

Weekly Journal Due 11:59pm

Week 5

April 17 - Cville

Meet at 7:45am in MAC Parking Lot

April 18 - Freedom Movements

Homework to be completed prior to class:

Keep reading James Cone, *Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (1972).

In-Class Plan: Watch King in the Wilderness

Assignment Due Today

Travel Journal (Cville) Due @ 11:59pm

April 20 - Spirituals and the Blues

Homework to be completed prior to class:

Media Commentary on Moodle - King in the Wilderness

Finish reading James Cone, *Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (1972).

In-Class Plan: Watch Summer of Soul

April 21 - Tennessee Prep

Homework to be completed prior to class:

Media Commentary on Moodle - Summer of Soul

Charles W. McKinney, "[Martin Luther King Jr. and the Grassroots Struggle in Memphis](#)," *Black Perspectives* April 2018

Grant Wong, "[The True History Behind Baz Luhrmann's 'Elvis'](#)," *Smithsonian Magazine*, June 23, 2022.

Jenny Brown, "[How to Get Unfired](#)," *Labor Notes*, February 16, 2023

Assignment Due Today

Weekly Journal Due 11:59pm

Week 6

April 23 (Sunday) - Departure for TN

April 28 (Friday) - Return to LYH

No Weekly Journal Due

Week 7

May 1 - Rest

Homework to be completed

Media Commentary on Moodle - Gives You Meaning Photograph

No Class

May 2 - Tech & Prison

Homework to be completed prior to class:

Read Sara Jaffe, "Chp 9. Technology," *Work Won't Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted, and Alone* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2022), 263-290.

Examine "[About](#)," *New York Times Guild*, nytimesguild.org.

Media Commentary on Moodle

Read Kim Kelly, "[How the Ongoing Prison Strike is Connected to the Labor movement](#)," *Teen Vogue*, September 4, 2018.

In-Class Plan: Guest Speaker Vicki Crosson

Assignment Due Today

Travel Journal (TN) Due @ 11:59pm

May 4 - US & World

Homework to be completed prior to class:

Read Interview with Mae Ngai, "[Manufacturing Illegality](#)," *Foreign Policy in Focus* (2019)

Listen to "[A New Child Labor Crisis in America](#)," *The Daily*, March 9, 2023.

Media Commentary on Moodle

Read Julie Greene, "[Moveable Empire](#)," *Jacobin*, December 13, 2017.

In-Class Plan: Film: Nike Sweatshops: Behind the Swoosh

May 5 - Sexuality & Disability

Homework to be completed prior to class:

Read an interview with Margot Canaday in "[Work is About Belonging: LGBTQ+ people's history of the workplace](#)," *The Guardian*, February 1, 2023.

Read Kim Kelly, "[The Disabled Workers](#)," *Fight Like Hell: The Untold History of American Labor* (2022), 223-250.

Recording of "[The Disabled Workers](#)" read by Aisha Downs.

In-Class Plan: Film Crip Camp

Assignment Due Today

Weekly Journal Due 11:59pm

Week 8

May 8 - Daydreaming

Homework to be completed prior to class:

Media Commentary on Moodle

Read Annabelle Timsit, "[A four-day workweek pilot was so successful most firms say they won't go back](#)," *Washington Post*, Feb. 21, 2023.

Read Melonyce McAfee, "[The Nap Bishop is Spreading the Good Word: Rest](#)," *New York Times*, Oct. 13, 2022.

Read Kurtis Lee, "[Guaranteed Income Programs Spread, City by City](#)," *New York Times*, Sept. 10, 2022.

May 9 - Clocking Out

Homework to be completed prior to class:

Read Sara Jaffe, "Conclusion," *Work Won't Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted, and Alone* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2022), 321-336.

Media Commentary on Moodle

Class Meets at Dr Kenaston's House: 231 Westmoreland St., Lynchburg, VA 24503

Assignment Due Today

Weekly Journal Due 11:59pm

May 13 - Final Reflections Due

Assignment Due Today

Final Reflections Due at Noon

Anything else?

A Living Syllabus

This is a living document, and we can adjust it as needed. Please let us know if you'd like to propose a change to our syllabus or class policies.

Acknowledgements

In creating this syllabus, we drew especially on the pedagogical scholarship of Dave Unger, Ashley Farmer, Catherine Denial, Kevin Gannon, bell hooks, Tona Hangen, Michael J. Kramer, Justina Licata, and Brandon Walsh.