

GENS 245: Critical & Alternative Voices

Whitman College – Spring 2007

Mitch Clearfield

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(or by appt.)

Course Description

Antiquity & Modernity is a great course, with a wide variety of intrinsically worthwhile texts. But for all that variety, it self-consciously remains focused on the dominant views of one particular self-identified historical tradition: the “West.” So, it needs to be put into context.

There are two (interrelated) ways of adding that context. One would be to examine other Core-like texts that aren’t included in Antiquity & Modernity – either because they’re from other self-identified cultural traditions, or because they’re expressions of subordinated perspectives with the Western (or some other) tradition. This course provides some examples of those, but that isn’t its main goal (hence the course is *not*, in that sense, an “alternative Core” or “diversity Core,” as it has unfortunately come to be known) – other courses at Whitman do that much more thoroughly.

Instead, this course seeks to contextualize the First-Year Core by **examining the nature of Core itself**: the nature and effects of there being a “dominant tradition,” and the possibilities of responding to it. To me, the focal concepts of the course are **power** and **representation**. The authors we read explore the interactions between those two concepts. On the one hand, how can control over representation be a dominating form of power? What exactly are the effects of that kind of power? And on the other hand, what are the possibilities for resisting domination through (self-) representation?

In the process of exploring those focal concepts and questions, we’ll address a number of other recurring themes, ideas, and questions: How is identity constituted, in relation both to representation by others and to self-representation? What kind of knowledge is possible of others’, and even our own, identities? How does language itself affect the possibilities and effects of representation and domination? How are distinctions drawn between “us” and “them” – and what is the very idea of “otherness” implied by those distinctions? How do different forms of otherness intersect and interact with each other? What is a “hybrid,” and how does that notion relate to distinctions of otherness? What are the ethical constraints on drawing, blurring, acknowledging, and/or ignoring those distinctions? What are the possibilities for freedom (or different kinds of freedom) within, in resistance to, and beyond a system of domination?

This is an academic course, and the texts we will examine are intellectually rigorous. At the same time, this course strives to be deeply **personal**. Since it’s about the idea of an intellectual tradition, and especially about the First-Year Core and the self-identified Western intellectual tradition, it should relate to the fundamental nature of your academic experiences at Whitman. And since it’s about systems of power / representation, the distinctions those systems draw, and ways of responding to those systems, it should relate to, well, all aspects of your life: the information that you seek and encounter through mass media, alternative media, on the internet, etc.; and the people you encounter at Whitman, in Walla Walla, at home, while studying abroad, etc. Most of all, the course strives to help you connect all of those: to help you see how your academic experiences on the one hand may reflect, and on the other hand can be used to respond to, the systems of power / representation that structure your encounters with information and people.

Course Assistant

We are very fortunate to have the help of **Laura Hanson**, who was an outstanding CAV student two years ago, and who has served as the course assistant two other semesters since then. She is available to work with you on any of the reading assignments, essays, papers, and steps of the term project, as well as the larger issues raised by the course.

Laura’s e-mail: hansonla@whitman.edu
phone: 937-216-9913

office hours: Wed. 9:00-11:00 p.m.
ASWC office (Reid 210)

Texts to Be Used

** A good dictionary. (You can't understand the readings if you don't know what the words mean!)

1. Tzvetan Todorov, The Conquest of America (U of Oklahoma, 1984/1999).
2. Richard Rodriguez, Brown: The Last Discovery of America (Penguin, 2002).
3. Patricia Williams, The Alchemy of Race and Rights (Harvard, 1991).
4. Dorothy Allison, Bastard out of Carolina (Plume, 1992).
5. Edward Said, Orientalism (Vintage, 1978/1994/2003).
6. Amitav Ghosh, In an Antique Land (Vintage, 1992)

All of these books are available in the Whitman Bookstore (as well as countless online bookstores), and are on three-hour reserve in Penrose Library.

High Tech

- There is an e-mail list-server set up for the class, which you should feel free to use. Messages sent to gens245b_07sp@whitman.edu will be forwarded to everyone in the class.
- I will often distribute important announcements, reminders, and clarifications through e-mail. It is your responsibility to *check your account every day*.

Summary of Requirements and Grading

Preparation and participation.....	20% of your final grade
Brief essays (best 7 of 8).....	20%
2 moderate-length papers.....	30%
Term project.....	30%

(More details about each assignment are provided at the end of this syllabus.)

**** NOTE: You cannot pass the class if:**

1. You miss more than 5 class meetings *for any reason*.
2. You miss more than 2 of the brief essays *for any reason*.
3. You miss or fail either of the papers or the term project *for any reason*.

Academic Honesty

All of the work that you submit in this course must be entirely your own. Of course, you can seek help in a variety of ways as you prepare your papers. So it is **permitted** (and even recommended!) for you to: consult additional readings, search for material on the internet, discuss your ideas with other students, exchange notes with other students, or read and discuss drafts of each other's papers. If you do use someone else's words or ideas in your written work, you *must* give proper acknowledgment. (Guidelines for citation can be found in Hacker's Style Manual.)

Plagiarism will *not* be tolerated in any form. You have signed a statement indicating that you understand and will abide by the College policy on plagiarism. **Any student caught plagiarizing will automatically fail the course**, and may face more severe penalties from the College. (For more details, see the Student Handbook.)

Tentative Schedule of Readings & Assignments

Wed. Jan. 17	COURSE INTRODUCTION	
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Mon. Jan. 22	Todorov, pp. 1-50	
Wed. Jan. 24	Todorov, pp. 51-97	<i>sign up for field trip</i>
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Mon. Jan. 29	Todorov, pp. 98-145	
Wed. Jan. 31	Todorov, pp. 146-201	
* Fri. Feb. 2 – noon		<i>brief essay due</i>
* Sat. Feb. 3	<i>field trip: Tamástslikt Cultural Inst. & Whitman Mission</i>	
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Mon. Feb. 5	Todorov, pp. 202-254	
Wed. Feb. 7	Rodriguez, preface & pp. 1-46	
* Fri. Feb. 9 – noon		<i>brief essay due</i>
* Sat. Feb. 10	<i>field trip: Tamástslikt Cultural Inst. & Whitman Mission</i>	
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Mon. Feb. 12	Rodriguez, pp. 47-123	
Wed. Feb. 14	Rodriguez, pp. 124-167	
* Fri. Feb. 16 – noon		<i>brief essay due</i>
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Mon. Feb. 19	NO CLASS (Presidents' Day)	
Wed. Feb. 21	Rodriguez, pp. 169-232	<i>term project proposal due</i>
* Thu. Feb. 22 – 7 pm	<i>video & discussion: "Eye of the Storm" (Reid G-02)</i>	
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Mon. Feb. 26	Williams, pp. 1-51	
* Mon. Feb. 26 – 7 pm	<i>video & discussion: "Eye of the Storm" (Reid G-02)</i>	

Wed. Feb. 28 Williams, pp. 53-130 *participation self-evaluation, pt. 1*
* Thu. Mar. 1 – 7:30 pm *lecture by Jane Elliott (Maxey Auditorium)*
* Fri. Mar. 2 – noon *paper #1 due*

Mon. Mar. 5 Williams, pp. 131-178 *research plan due*
Wed. Mar. 7 Williams, pp. 179-236
* Fri. Mar. 9 – noon *brief essay due*

SPRING BREAK

Mon. Mar. 26 Allison, pp. 1-93 *meet with me this week*
Wed. Mar. 28 Allison, pp. 92-152
* Fri. Mar. 30 – noon *brief essay due*

Mon. Apr. 2 Allison, pp. 153-226
Wed. Apr. 4 Allison, pp. 227-309
* Fri. Apr. 6 – noon *brief essay due*

Mon. Apr. 9 Said, pp. 1-28 *progress report due*
Wed. Apr. 11 Said, pp. 31-110
* Fri. Apr. 13 – noon *paper #2 due*

Mon. Apr. 16 Said, pp. 111-197
Wed. Apr. 18 Said, pp. 201-284
* Thu. Apr. 19 – 7-9 pm \\
* Sat. Apr. 21 – 1-3 pm ----- CAV “mini-conference” (Reid G-02)
* Sun. Apr. 22 – 1-3 pm //

Mon. Apr. 23	Said, pp. 284-352	
Wed. Apr. 25	Ghosh, pp. 11-105	
* Fri. Apr. 27 – noon		<i>brief essay due</i>
Mon. Apr. 30	Ghosh, pp. 107-237	
Wed. May 2	Ghosh, pp. 239-353	<i>participation self-evaluation, pt. 2</i>
* Fri. May 3 – noon		<i>brief essay due</i>
Mon. May 7	SEMESTER WRAP-UP	

★ TERM PROJECT DUE – MONDAY, MAY 14 @ NOON ★

Some other campus events you may be interested in...

mid-January to mid-February – Stevens Gallery exhibit on U.S.-Mexico border

Wednesday, January 24 – Winona LaDuke, lecture on native rights and environmental issues (7:00, Maxey Auditorium)

Monday, February 12 – Alanis Obomsawin, “Wabanake: The People from where the Sun Rises” (8:00 pm, Olin 157)

Tuesday, February 13 – Alanis Obomsawin, film screening and Q&A (7:00 pm, Kimball Theatre)

Monday, March 26 – Lee Baker, lecture on anthropology and racial categories

Thursday, April 12 – Susan Johnson, lecture on intersections of gender and ethnicity in the American West

Tuesday, April 17 – Orin Starn, “Ishi’s Brain: History, Memory, and the Last Yahi” (7:30 pm, Olin 130)

Thursday, April 26 – Joan Wallach Scott, “Cover Up: French Gender Equality and the Islamic Headscarf”

More information about these and other events will be announced as it becomes available...

Preparation and Participation

(20% of your final grade)

Most of our time together will be spent in a group conversation about the readings and the issues and questions that they suggest. You will learn not only from the authors and from me, but also from each other.

Like any conversation, you can't usefully participate if you don't know what you're talking about. So it is essential that you come to our meetings prepared. To do that, you must carefully read (and often re-read) the assigned texts before class, as well as reflect on their meaning and significance, both on their own and in relation to the other texts we've read. Before we begin each text, I will hand out a set of questions to help guide your reading and indicate some of the issues that I expect us to discuss in class. However, it is absolutely essential for you also to work on developing your *own* agenda, identifying questions, ideas, and forms of expression that *you* find to be interesting and important.

Preparation and attendance are crucial, but they are only starting points. In order for the course to be successful, it is essential that *each* of you *actively* participate in our conversations and other activities. Always keep in mind that the point of our class discussions is *not* merely to take turns stating what we already know, but rather to work together to develop better ideas than any of us could have come up with on our own. As long as you're regularly involved, the *quality* of your contributions is much more important than the *quantity* of time that you're speaking. You should raise questions, both of the texts and of each other; explore and defend alternatives (perhaps just for the sake of discussion); and consider ways that the texts and ideas under consideration could be applied to concrete situations.

It is crucial that we engage as many different perspectives as we can. The only presupposition of this class is that these questions are worth asking – we need to be open to the widest possible range of answers, and to ensure that all are treated with seriousness and respect.

These are the grading criteria that will be used:

An **OUTSTANDING** (A-level) participant typically:

- Displays great enthusiasm and personal engagement with the readings.
- Advances the conversation to new levels.
- Contributes complex insights into the texts and issues.
- Draws insightful connections among different texts and issues.
- Enhances the participation of others by questioning, actively listening, and sharing time.

A **GOOD** (B-level) participant typically:

- Shows genuine effort.
- Actively listens and volunteers.
- Stays on-topic and furthers the conversation.
- Raises substantial, text-based questions and ideas.

A **FAIR** (C-level) participant typically:

- Listens but does not volunteer.
- Shows acquaintance with the text and signs of preparation if called on.
- Offers opinions on the text, but without specific textual reference or other support.

UNACCEPTABLE (failing) behavior includes:

- Signs of total disengagement at our meetings: sleeping, writing letters, reading, etc.
- No evidence of preparation.
- "Toxic" behavior that interferes with our conversation.

Brief Essays

(20% of your final grade)

The purpose of the brief essays is to give you a forum throughout the semester to develop and express your own thoughts about the course material. The only restrictions on content are:

1. **Your essay must make direct contact with at least one specific idea or passage from one of the readings since the last brief essay was due.**
2. **Your essay must express a specific position in relation to the course material.**

Some of the possibilities include:

- Explore one or two of the assumptions behind the author's view.
- Express a concern or objection to one of the author's ideas.
- Provide further or different support for one of the author's ideas.
- Explore the connections between two different aspects of an author's view.
- Relate one author's ideas to another author, from this course, from Core, or that you've read in any other context.
- Expand on or respond to a point made in class about an author's view.
- Apply one of the author's views to your research topic.
- Apply one of the author's views to some current event or issue.
- Apply one of the author's views to your own experience (but *be careful* that your discussion still advances the analytical goals of the course).

These are only suggestions; any other topic is fine, as long as it satisfies the two requirements listed above.

Style: This course is centrally concerned with the relation between different styles of expression and the content of the ideas expressed. Thus you are encouraged to experiment with different styles yourself: academic, polemical, autobiographical, creative, or any other that you wish. Just be careful always to keep in mind that the purpose of using *any* particular writing style is the *effective communication of your ideas*.

Length: For traditional academic essays, there is an *absolute* maximum length of **650 words**. Assignments using alternative writing styles should be equivalently brief and focused.

Due: You can hand in your brief essay *anytime* during the week, up to **noon** on Friday – *no extensions*. Essays should be submitted in my mailbox in the main Olin office – *not* slipped under my office door.

* *Late essays will not be accepted* unless there's an absolute emergency. (I hope not!) In that case, you must first talk with one of the Powers That Be, and I will gladly make any reasonable accommodation.

Format:

- Your essay should be typed, using 12-point Times New Roman or a similar font.
- In the upper left-hand corner, single-spaced, you should list your name, the course number, and the date.
- The body of your paper should be double-spaced.
- At the end of your essay, you should include a word-count.
- If possible, please print on both sides of the paper.
- Multiple pages must be stapled together.

Citation (very important!): If you use someone else's exact words, you must put them in quotation marks, and you must give proper acknowledgment. You must also acknowledge any specific passages or ideas that you paraphrase. For this assignment, informal citation is fine. After the end of the quote or paraphrase, include a brief parenthetical citation in the text. For assigned readings, author and page number are all that's needed. For outside sources, just include enough information for your reader to find the original source.

Grading:

It is important to recognize that the quality of your understanding and insight cannot directly be graded. All that can be graded is the *product* of that understanding and insight: your paper. These are the standards of evaluation that I employ:

- A** The essay expresses sophisticated insight into the text or issues, or draws unusual and profound connections between texts or ideas.
- B** The essay gives an adequate presentation of ideas that go beyond the text and our class discussion.
- C** The essay indicates some reflection on the material, but does not go far enough beyond a recap of the text itself or our class discussion, does not make adequate contact with the text, or is based on an important misunderstanding of the text or issues.
- F** The essay does not constitute a serious attempt to fulfill the assignment: the substance, expression, and/or mechanics of fall far short of normal college-level work.

In calculating your overall grade, your lowest essay grade will be dropped. You may skip any one you wish, but I recommend that you plan to complete them all: it is a good idea to have a cushion in case you don't do as well as you'd like on one or need to miss one unexpectedly.

Papers

(30% of your final grade)

You will also write two moderate-length papers, which will give you the opportunity to explore the texts in some depth, and to draw connections among them. As with the brief essays, the exact topics will be left for you to determine, based on your own interests and insights. The only restrictions on content are:

1. Each paper must make *substantial* contact with at least one idea that's *important* to at least one of the two authors listed:

Paper #1 – Todorov and/or Rodriguez

Paper #2 – Williams and/or Allison

2. You should make sure that the topic you choose is worthy of *sustained* development and exploration.

Specific possibilities are otherwise the same as with the brief essays – you can treat one text on its own, relate two texts to each other, and/or apply one or two of the texts in some concrete way.

Coming up with an interesting question or issue is often the most difficult element of an assignment like this, and hence the formulation of each topic should be approached with great care. You are strongly encouraged to work with me, Laura Hanson, and/or other students in developing your topics and arguments.

Style: Your papers must take the form of standard academic essays. Depending on the nature of your topic and your approach to it, you may supplement your paper with other forms of writing, creative artwork, or anything else that will help communicate your ideas.

Author's Note: At the end of your essay, *on a separate sheet*, please describe *in detail* your own thoughts about your essay. You should explain what you think are the most successful aspects of your paper and which aspects concern you most, and also how the writing process went for you – what came easily and what didn't. Your Author's Note won't be read until after I've come to an evaluation of your paper, and what you say there won't affect your grade. The goal is simply to allow me provide more focused and helpful feedback for you. *Be honest!*

Length: Your paper should be just as long as it needs to be to explain the ideas and support your claims about them in a clear, thorough, and yet concise manner. Length itself will not affect your grade. (As a *very rough* guideline, I expect that most students will need about 5-6 pages successfully to address an appropriate topic.)

Format:

- Your paper should be typed, using 12-point Times New Roman or a similar font.
- In the upper left-hand corner, single-spaced, you should list your name, the course number, and the date.
- Next, there should be an interesting and informative title, centered and in bold.
- The body of your paper should be double-spaced.
- Pages should be numbered.
- If possible, please print on both sides of the paper.
- Multiple pages must be stapled together.

Citation (very important!): If you use someone else's exact words, you must put them in quotation marks, and you must give proper acknowledgment. You must also acknowledge any specific passages or ideas that you paraphrase. For this assignment, informal citation is fine. After the end of the quote or paraphrase, include a brief parenthetical citation in the text. For assigned readings, author and page number are all that's needed. For outside sources, just include enough information for your reader to find the original source.

Paper #1 Due: Friday, March 2 by noon

Paper #2 Due: Friday, April 13 by noon

Papers should be submitted in my mailbox in the main Olin office – *not* slipped under my office door.

Extensions: This course is a lot of work, and it is very dangerous to fall behind. However, there is still some room for flexibility, so that everyone has a chance to produce her or his best work. Hence, anyone may get a *brief* extension for any reason, on either or both papers. There are only 3 conditions:

1. You must request an extension at least 48 hours before the paper is due. Your request should include a specific proposal for your new due date and time.
2. Don't tell me why you need more time – I really don't want to know.
3. The new due date and time that we set are absolute and unchangeable.

* ***Exceptions*** to these policies will be made ***only*** if there's an absolute emergency. (I hope not!) In that case, you must first talk with one of the Powers That Be, and I will gladly make any reasonable accommodation.

Grading:

It is important to recognize that the quality of your understanding and insight cannot directly be graded. All that can be graded is the *product* of that understanding and insight: your paper. These are the standards of evaluation that I employ:

An **OUTSTANDING** (A-level) paper:

- Reveals a thorough and careful reading of the texts.
- Contains sophisticated and penetrating insights into the texts and issues.
- Draws interesting and thought-provoking connections among ideas.
- Moves well beyond our class discussions.
- Provides compelling textual, interpretive, and/or argumentative support for all of its claims.
- Is written in lucid and elegant prose.
- Is well-organized, with a logical flow.
- Displays a clear structure, with a helpful and accurate introduction and conclusion, and an explicit thesis statement, topic sentences, and transitions.
- Is virtually flawless in its mechanics: almost no typos, misspellings, or mistakes of grammar or punctuation.

A **GOOD** (B-level) paper:

- Indicates a good understanding of the texts and issues.
- Shows independent reflection on the texts and issues.
- Provides compelling textual, interpretive, and/or argumentative support for all of its claims.
- Develops a coherent line of argument.
- Is written clearly enough to convey its points.
- Follows a discernible structure.
- Has few mechanical errors, such as typo's, and misspellings, mistakes of grammar or punctuation.
- May compensate for weakness in some aspects with particular strength in others.

A **POOR** (C-level) paper:

- Displays some understanding of the texts and issues.
- Indicates a reasonable attempt to address the assignment.

but has serious flaws, such as:

- Incomplete or importantly mistaken views about the texts or issues.
- Too little substance beyond summarizing the texts.
- Assertion of basic claims without significant textual, interpretive, and/or argumentative support.
- Lack of a central line of argument or discussion, instead jumping from topic to topic.
- Writing that is frequently unclear.
- Major mechanical errors – too many typos, misspellings, and/or mistakes of grammar and punctuation.

UNACCEPTABLE (failing) work may include any of the following:

- A complete misunderstanding of the texts and/or issues.
- A lack of substance normally found in college-level work.
- Incomprehensible writing.

Term Project

(30% of your total grade)

During the course of the semester, you will also be engaged in an ongoing research project designed to help you see how the texts and issues discussed in the classroom can be related to a concrete situation. The goals of your project will be to uncover, through independent research, and to analyze, using the tools and concepts of the course materials, a particular example of the interrelations of representation and power in or around Walla Walla, historically and/or currently.

Your research might involve any combination of published texts; archival texts, photographs, and other materials; and personal interviews. The finished product will be a full-length scholarly paper (in the neighborhood of 15 pages). Depending on the nature of your topic and your approach to it, you may supplement your paper with other forms of writing, creative artwork, or anything else that will help communicate your ideas. A list of model topics from past semesters will be distributed early in the semester, to help provide a sense of the possibilities.

Your project may be conducted individually, or as part of a group of 2 or 3. If you choose to form a group, I will work with you to spell out clear parameters: which aspects of the project will be shared, what each member is expected to contribute to those shared aspects, and which aspects will remain individual.

I *strongly* encourage you to take advantage of the help that's available, throughout the research and writing process. It is usually very beneficial to work with other students, even those with very different topics, as sources of mutual support and inspiration. Laura Hanson completed this project when she was a student in CAV, and as the course assistant she has worked with many other students. Various library staff may be able to help you identify and/or obtain the materials you need. And I would be happy to meet with you throughout the semester to provide any assistance I can. This project will be a lot of work, but it shouldn't be a *struggle* – if you find yourself uncertain about what to do, or putting in lots of time without making good progress, **stop and get help!**

To facilitate the smooth and successful completion of this project, there will be a number of required steps along the way:

Research journal

Throughout the time that you're working on this project, from your initial brainstorming through to the final draft of your term paper, you should keep a "research journal" listing all of the steps that you've taken, summarizing all of the resources you've examined, and articulating all of the ideas you've had. Not only will this provide a direct reminder of the importance of working steadily on the project, it will also make it much easier for you to go back to earlier ideas and resources, even as your thinking evolves. Your research journal can be totally informal; it's entirely for your own use and benefit. (I may ask to see it, just to be sure that you're making good progress, but I won't examine it in any detail.)

Detailed proposal (due Wednesday, February 21)

Your proposal should be about 2 pages long, with two main parts. First, you will explain the topic. This should include a statement of the single, overarching question that will guide your project, as well as the variety of other questions and issues that you expect to address along the way. You should also be sure to explain how you see your topic fitting into the main issues and questions of the course (though not necessarily specific texts, since you won't have read most of them yet). Be as specific and thorough as you can be – although your project will surely evolve as the semester goes on, you need a definite starting point.

Second, you will explain your proposed methodology – how you plan to determine the answer to your fundamental question. You should consider both the kinds of information that you'll need, and what exactly you'll need to do to get that information. How will you identify the published texts that will be relevant and helpful? How will you locate the appropriate archived materials? How will you arrange and conduct the interviews? Answering those questions should help you determine what your project will *actually* require you to do – so that you can make sure both that you want to do it, and that you can complete it in the time that's available.

Research plan (due Monday, March 5)

Taking into account my feedback on your proposal, you will then break down your project into a series of discrete steps, and propose specific deadlines for completing each of those steps. Be as detailed as you can, with small and reasonable goals every few days or week. Again, these can be revised as your project evolves, but it's important for you to have a complete and feasible plan in place to work from. This will keep the project *manageable*, and allow you to make steady progress throughout the semester.

Meet with me (week of March 26-30)

As soon as we return from Spring Break, I'll meet with each of you to make sure that you're on track and that you have a clear sense of what you need to do to complete the project. (Of course, I'll be happy to meet with you at any other point in the process as well – I just want to make sure that I see everyone at least once.)

Progress report (due Monday, April 9)

This step is intended to give us a chance to step back and evaluate your progress, when you're far enough along to have a sense of the project as a whole, but while there's still time to refine your focus and/or to make up for lost time. It should include an updated explanation of your topic and methodology, as well as an (honest!) assessment of how far along you are in completing the project. If necessary, you should revise your earlier research plan to match your current focus and/or timing.

CAV "mini-conference" (Thursday, April 19; Saturday, April 21; or Sunday, April 22)

These "mini-conference" sessions will give students from both sections of CAV a chance to present and discuss their term projects with each other. Each student will be responsible for preparing a 6-7 minute overview of her or his project, with 3-4 minutes afterwards to consider questions, suggestions, and other feedback.

Your presentation won't be graded separately, but it will factor into your grade for preparation and participation.

★ Completed project due Monday, May 14 @ noon ★