

Tell 'em about the dream, Martin!
–Mahalia Jackson, gospel singer,
to Martin Luther King, at a key moment in his speech
at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (1963)

My American Dream is to give my brother freedom.
--Catherine Esmeralda Olvera, student at 826 Valencia (2010)

***If Americans want to live the American Dream,
they should move to Denmark.***
--British social scientist Richard Wilkinson (2011)

* * *

**History of the American Dream
History 450A (a service-learning seminar)
Fall 2014 Professor Chris Endy**

Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:40 to 1:20

Email: cendy@calstatela.edu

Office Phone: 323-343-2046

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3:15 to 4:15, 5:00 to 6:00, and by appointment.

Professor's Personal Web Page: <http://www.calstatela.edu/faculty/cendy>

Classroom: King Hall B4012

Professor's Office: King Hall C4076A

Course Description:

In this class, we will perform two different but closely related roles. *As academic historians*, we will explore the political, social, and cultural history of upward mobility and “success” in U.S. history. *As community-engaged historians*, we will work with local high-school seniors to help them write college application and scholarship essays. Together, our academic analysis and our work mentoring high school students will allow us to develop a deeper understanding of success and upward mobility in the United States, past and present. Not least, we will gain practical experience with team projects, interpersonal communication, self-reflection, writing, education policy, and non-profit organizing.

Core questions that will animate the class include:

- What have Americans meant when they talk about upward mobility and keywords such as “success” and “opportunity”? How have these meanings and discourses changed over time?
- Why did the concept of an “American Dream” emerge during the 1930s and 1940s? What roles has this concept played in U.S. history since then?

- What role has education played in the politics and culture of upward mobility, and how has that role changed over time?
- How effective have activists, reformers, and idealistic educators been in improving the lives of young Americans?
- What can people today learn by studying previous generations' visions of success and opportunity? What can you or other Americans learn?
- How does the study of history affect the volunteer work that we do with high-school students? How does our volunteer work change our understanding of history?
- What can people today learn by studying previous generations' visions of success and opportunity? What can you or other Americans learn?

Warning: In this class, we should not assume that there is an actual "American Dream." By way of parallel, imagine a class on the history of magic and witchcraft. In such a class, we would not assume that magic and witchcraft really exist. Instead, we would study how and why so many people in the past believed in magic and witchcraft. By the same token, in this class we will explore how and why, and to what effect, Americans have used the concept of the American Dream.

Required Readings (plus articles available online; see schedule for details).

- Horatio Alger, Jr., *Ragged Dick: Or, Street Life in New York with the Boot Blacks*, w/ intro. by Michael Meyer (New York: Signet Classics, 2005, first pub. in 1867).
- Américo Paredes, *George Washington Gómez* (Houston: Arte Público, 1993).
- Anzia Yezierska, *Arrogant Beggar* (Duke University Press, 1996; first pub. in 1927).

For satisfactory class participation, you will need to bring your own paper copy of each reading to the relevant class sessions.

Other Requirements:

- Live Scan (background check required for service in LAUSD schools; \$12 cost)
- Attendance at a "Crafting Powerful Personal Statements" training at 826LA
- Fifteen hours of service with 826LA

Assignments and Grading:

Class participation:	25%
"Easy A" for 826LA service	10% (must complete 15 hours to pass class)
Reading Responses (x6)	15% (must complete 6 of 8 responses)
Short Essays (x4)	20% (2 pages each)
Final Essay Outlines (x2)	8%
Final Essay	22% (8-10 pages)

•We will use a "+/-" system: A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (60-66), F (0-59).

If you don't understand the basis of the grade you received or if you disagree with the assessment, please speak to me—but only after letting twenty-four hours pass for you to absorb and reflect on the evaluation. Please act within two weeks of the return of the assignment. Please also note that you will most likely receive a failing grade for the course if you miss five or more class sessions, fail to submit the required assignments, or fail to complete your required 15 service hours.

Reading Responses:

For many class sessions, you will receive study questions designed to promote class discussion of reading assignments. You are required to turn in responses for six of those eight opportunities. The novels are especially important, and you must write at least one response for Alger, one for Yeziarska, and one for Paredes. The Lemann SAT reading is also a required response.

Late Policy:

Out of fairness to other students, assignments will be penalized 5% of their value for each class session late. Assignments turned in after the start of class on the day they are due will be considered “slightly late” and penalized 2% of their value. Late final papers are strongly discouraged and may result in a failing grade for the class.

The Free Late: Once during the quarter, you may submit an assignment one week late with no penalty. Simply write “Free Late” at the top the assignment. You may only use this option once; use it wisely. Exception: You may not use your Free Late for the Final Essay.

NOTE: In case of a family emergency, special allowances may be made. Please contact me as soon as possible. If you suspect that you might have a problem meeting a deadline, consult with me before the due date.

Essays:

Your grades on the essays will be based on three related criteria:

1. development of an argument or point of view that is pertinent to the issue at hand and that has breadth, coherence, and insight (argument);
2. use of the relevant class material (evidence); and
3. expression of ideas in a clear, concise, engaging prose (style).

Grading rubric:

A: excellent. Outstanding in all three areas.

B: good. Strong in all three areas or notable strengths in one balanced by weakness in another.

C: average. Adequate performance in one or more areas offset by weakness in others that leaves the essay fragmented, murky, or narrow.

D: poor. Problems in all three areas, or lack of engagement with the assignment.

F: unacceptable. Serious flaws in all three areas, or lack of engagement.

Class Participation: We will spend a substantial part of class time engaged in some activity other than lecture. Your participation grade will reflect both your attendance and participation in activities. At several moments during the quarter, I will give you updates on your participation grade.

Note: All students are required to visit my office hours at least twice during the quarter. One of those visits must take place before 21 October. You do not need to have a specific question or agenda when you come in, and you can visit in small groups if you prefer.

What is good class participation?

Good class participation comes in many forms. It does *not* mean talking as often as possible in class. Here are some of the different ways that you can achieve good class participation:

- Read carefully outside of class. Come to class with paper copies of the readings and with good reading notes. Use the core class questions in the syllabus to guide your note-taking on the readings. Be prepared to point to specific page references in class. This is one of the most important steps you can take for good class participation.
- Raise your hand often and share ideas on a regular basis.
- Ask questions, no matter how broad or small.
- Get to know your classmates. Start a casual conversation while waiting for class to start, or right after class ends.
- Frame your comments in response to what classmates have said. If a classmate says something that strikes you as smart, funny, or provocative, let us know.
- Be a leader. Be aware of what the class needs at any given moment to keep our energy and focus on track. That could mean sharing a question, a reading passage, a joke, etc. It could mean keeping a small group on task. It could mean letting a constructive silence continue.
- Be aware if you are speaking too much. For students with a tendency to speak all the time, good class participation can mean stepping back and seeing what you and others can learn by *listening* to classmates for a while.
- Pay attention to emotions—yours and others. An honest examination of history requires us to explore the role of racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice in both the past and the present. Discussing these topics can sometimes be disturbing or upsetting, but this discomfort is often an essential part of the learning process. Hopefully, you will find yourself provoked, intrigued, at times amused, but above all enlightened during this class. You can help in this effort by respecting the views of your classmates and by being eager to listen to what classmates and historical sources have to say.
- Visit my office hours. This also counts as class participation.

- Attend class. Missing one class session will not hurt your class participation grade, but further unexcused absences will. Missing five classes will result in a zero grade for class participation. Missing six will result in a failing grade for the course.
- One final rule: To promote classroom cohesiveness, all laptops, tablets, cell phones, or other electronic devices should be turned off and hidden in the classroom.
- If you encounter obstacles to your participation in class (for whatever reason), please meet with me early in the quarter so we can work out a solution.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism refers to the use of another author's words or ideas without acknowledgement of this use. This includes copying from texts or webpages as well as submitting work done by somebody else. Other forms of plagiarism include altering a few words or the sentence structure of someone else's writing and presenting it as your own writing (that is, without quotation marks or footnotes). Violators will receive at minimum a zero on the assignment and will be reported to University authorities. Please also read the following statement about www.turnitin.com, which comes from the CSU General Counsel and will apply to this class:

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.

Disabilities: As your professor, I want all students to succeed in this class. If you have a disability or any other issue that affects your learning, please let me know at any time. Also take note of the resources available through the Office for Students with Disabilities (Student Affairs Building Room 115, 323-343-3140). If you have a verified accommodations form, please show it to me by Week Two of the course.

Change: As professor, I reserve the right to make reasonable modifications to the syllabus if necessary.

Final Essay (8-10 typed, double-spaced pages, plus bibliography)

This assignment represents a formal means for you to put into writing what you've learned in the class, particularly by synthesizing your academic learning and your 826LA work.

Rules and advice on finding your thesis: For your essay's thesis, identify one or two "big picture" ideas about "American dreaming" and the politics of upward mobility that you discovered or encountered through this class. Then, in the body of your essay, illustrate that thesis with examples from your first-hand experiences and from our classroom work. Do not try to give a definition of what the American Dream means to you. Instead, your thesis should present an argument that is historical in nature. For instance, you could focus on how other people's notions of success, education, or upward mobility have changed over time, or you could identify and explain interesting continuities between past and present.

Evidence: About 1/3 to 1/2 of your specific examples for your final paper should come from our collective 826LA experiences. The other 1/2 to 2/3 of your evidence should come from our academic readings. When referring to readings, use brief quotations and either footnotes or parenthetical citations for specific pages. Aim for substantial and numerous references to a wide range of readings. You should make multiple references to at least two of our three novels. Include a bibliography at the end and a catchy title at the start.

SERVICE LEARNING WITH 826LA

826LA is a non-profit education organization located in Echo Park, with another office in Mar Vista.

website: 826LA.org

address: 1714 W. Sunset Blvd. / Los Angeles, CA 90026

phone: (213) 413-338

contact: Mariesa Arrañaga Kubasek, mariesakubasek@826la.org

Your main form of service with 826LA will come by helping high school students write their personal statements for their college and scholarship applications. This work will take place in high schools outside of HIST 450A class hours. Students will be expected to complete hour logs to record their service.

If you have any questions or concerns about the service learning component of this class, please do not hesitate to contact me. If unusual circumstances arise, I am much more likely to be sympathetic and open to alternatives when you contact me as soon as problems emerge, rather than waiting until later in the quarter. You will receive full information about the 826LA project at our class session on Tuesday, 30 September. You **MUST** attend class this day to serve with 826LA.

You will also need to attend one of the following four workshops that will provide you with training specific to college application personal statements. Please RSVP to me as soon as possible to let me know which training you will attend.

826LA in MAR VISTA: **Monday, September 29th**, 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm
location: 12515 Venice Blvd. / Los Angeles, CA 90066 / (310) 915-0200

826LA in ECHO PARK: **Monday, October 13th**, 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm
location: 1714 W. Sunset Blvd. / Los Angeles, CA 90026 / (213) 413-3388

826LA in MAR VISTA: **Sunday, October 19th**, 11:00 am to 2:00 pm
location: 12515 Venice Blvd. / Los Angeles, CA 90066 / (310) 915-0200

826LA in ECHO PARK: **Saturday, October 25th**, 10 am to 1:00 pm

EXTRA CREDIT OPTION:

Volunteering an extra two hours (17 hours total) with 826LA will add a 1/2 point to your overall course grade. For instance, a 92.1 final grade (A-) would become a 92.6 (A). An extra four hours (19 hours total) will add a full point to your overall grade.

CLASS SCHEDULE: Please see the next page for details.

Note: Bring a paper copy of each day's readings on hand. For the readings beyond the books, our Moodle page will provide a download link. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due in paper at the start of class.

- 25 Sept Course Introduction
- 29 Sept** **826LA: “Crafting Powerful Personal Statements” training workshop; 826LA in MAR VISTA: Monday, September 29th, 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm**
- 30 Sept 826LA Orientation Session (in our classroom; no readings today)
Guest from 826LA: Mariesa Arrañaga Kubasek
- 2 Oct Adams, “What of the ‘American Dream?’” (4 pages)
Alger, *Ragged Dick* (first half, read through Chapter XI)
Response 1 Due
- 7 Oct Alger, *Ragged Dick* (second half, read from Chapter XII to end)
Twain, “Poor Little Stephen Girard” (1 page)
Response 2 Due
- 9 Oct White, “Before Greed” (dense 5 pages)
Surowiecki, “The Pay Is Too Damn Low,” (1 dense page)
Packet of Economic Statistics (3-4 pages)
Obama, speech on economic mobility (2 pages)
Short Essay 1 Due [Alger version]
- 13 Oct** **826LA: “Crafting Powerful Personal Statements” training workshop; 826LA in ECHO PARK: Monday, October 13th, 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm**
- 14 Oct Paredes, G.W. Gómez, 5-6, 9-63, 71-82, 99-118, 124-137, 147-75
Response 3 Due
- 16 Oct Sandage, “Gender and the Economics of the Sentimental...” (16 pages)
Response 4 Due
- 19 Oct** **826LA: “Crafting Powerful Personal Statements” training workshop; 826LA in MAR VISTA: Sunday, October 19th, 11:00 am to 2:00 pm**
- 21 Oct Paredes, G.W. Gómez, 189-302
Response 5 Due
- 23 Oct Service work or meetings with the professor
- 25 Oct** **826LA: LAST CHANCE to attend the required “Crafting Powerful Personal Statements” training workshop; 826LA in ECHO PARK: Saturday, October 25th, from 10am to 1:00 pm**

- 28 Oct *This American Life* radio show, episode #504
Short Essay 2 Due [Paredes version]
- 30 Oct Service work or meetings with the professor
- 4 Nov Yeziarska, *Arrogant Beggar*, 7-90
Response 6 Due
- 6 Nov Yeziarska, *Arrogant Beggar*, 91-153
Response 7 Due
826LA Service Hours Log Due (first of two orange sheets)
- 11 Nov Veteran's Day – Campus Closed / No Class
Movie Selection for Short Essay 4 Due. Email me your movie title
- 13 Nov No readings
Short Essay 3 Due [Yeziarska version]
- 15 and 16 Nov 826LA: Saturday and Sunday: 826LA's Great Los Angeles
Personal Statement Weekend; West Adams High School,
11 am to 3 pm each day**
- 18 Nov Lemann on the history of the SAT (dense 24 pages)
Piketty on education and mobility (4 pages)
Zimmerman, "Ethnics against Ethnicity" (21 pages)
Response 8 Due (required response for all students)
- 20 Nov *Waiting for Superman* documentary (excerpts)
Short Essay 4 Due [1930s movie version]
- 25 Nov **Final Essay Outline Due**
- 27 Nov: Thanksgiving – Campus Closed / No Class
- 2 Dec **Revised and Expanded Final Essay Outline Due**
- 4 Dec Class Conclusion and Celebration
826LA Service Hours Log Due (second of two orange sheets)
- 11 Dec: **Thursday: Final Essay Due in paper in my office by 6:30 p.m.**