



From Walden Pond to Jurassic Park: Activism, Culture, and American Studies (New Americanists)

Paul Lauter

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Paul Lauter, an icon of American Studies who has been a primary agent in its transformation and its chief ambassador abroad, offers a wide-ranging collection of essays that demonstrate and reflect on this important and often highly politicized discipline. While American Studies was formerly seen as a wholly subsidiary academic program that loosely combined the study of American history, literature, and art, *From Walden Pond to Jurassic Park* reveals the evolution of an independent, highly interdisciplinary program with distinctive subjects, methods, and goals that are much different than the traditional academic departments that nurtured it.

With anecdote peppered discussions ranging from specific literary texts and movies to the future of higher education and the efficacy of unions, *From Walden Pond to Jurassic Park* entertains even as it offers a twenty-first century account of how and why Americanists at home and abroad now do what they do. Drawing on his forty-five years of teaching and research as well as his experience as a political activist and a cultural radical, Lauter shows how a multifaceted increase in the United States' global dominion has infused a particular political urgency into American Studies. With its military and economic influence, its cultural and linguistic reach, the United States is—for better or for worse—too formidable and potent *not* to be understood clearly and critically.

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