

AMERICAN STUDIES (AMST)

AMST 2201 Roots of American Culture

3 Credits

Attributes: MSID Magis Core: Interdisciplinary

Prerequisite: One American Studies Gateway course.

This course provides an introduction to the study of American culture. In familiarizing students with the variety of interdisciplinary ways to approach American Studies, students will examine the diverse experiences, intellectual traditions, and cultural touchstones that make American life a rich and fascinating object of study. Using a variety of sources, students will survey the following themes: race, ethnicity and immigration; expression and imagination; values and ethics; gender; institutional power and politics; and America as a global identity.

AMST 3980 Internship

1-3 Credits

The internship program allows students to gain on-site access experience in a wide variety of fields, including, but not limited to, law, marketing, magazine publishing. These positions are available upon recommendation of the program intern supervisor, under whose guidance the students assume the jobs, which require 10-15 hours a week. Students may take one internship for credit toward the American Studies major. Students may take a second internship for elective credit. Enrollment by permission only.

AMST 3990 Independent Research Project

3 Credits

During their senior year, each American studies major writes a research paper under the supervision of several participating faculty members. Students integrate different intellectual disciplines in the design and execution of their projects.

AMST 5401 Critical Issues in American Studies

3 Credits

This graduate seminar provides an introduction to the field of American Studies. Using key books and essays in American Studies, students will familiarize themselves with the diverse cultural and intellectual traditions that have created the American experience. Using interdisciplinary approaches, students will survey the following themes in American society and culture: race, ethnicity and immigration; expression and imagination; values and ethics; gender; institutional power and politics; and America and the world.

AMST 5405 Values and Ethics: Social Justice in America

3 Credits

This course explores the experiences of individuals and social movements in American culture who from a variety of traditions – for example religious, political, cultural, philosophical – found meaning in their lives and ways to make a difference in their worlds. Our approach in this course will examine contradictions and struggles: between the individual and the community, between the ideals which have always motivated Americans and the hard reality in which many Americans have lived, between the commitment to democracy and the tragic failure of its promise, and the ways in which individuals and groups nonetheless worked to build a better future.

AMST 5406 Power, Politics, and Institutions in the United States

3 Credits

This course focuses on a specific political institution or institutions that illustrates larger dynamics and aspects of power, politics, and institutions within the American experience. The overarching objective of the course is to explore the multi-faceted, dynamic, and intersecting dimensions of power within the American political and historical script, as formal rules and structures as well as human experiences, lived practices, beliefs, and cultural norms. Course readings thus encompass a mix of secondary but also primary sources, extending to court documents, statutes, law codes, estate records, diaries, wills, travel reports, novels, oral histories, and letters.

AMST 5407 America and the World

3 Credits

American identity is often imagined solely in terms of the internal dynamic that defines the United States as a nation; however, the idea of America has always been shaped trans-nationally in relation to the world beyond its borders: politically, economically, militarily, culturally. The purpose of this course is to consider in depth questions about how the idea of America has been, and continues to be, shaped beyond its geographical borders. Course themes may include, but are not limited to, the following: American exceptionalism, colonialism, imperialism, neoliberalism and consumer culture, globalization, foreign relations, military conflicts, anti-Americanism, immigration, and migration.

AMST 5408 Immigration, Ethnicity, and Race in United States History

3 Credits

This intensive reading, writing, and discussion seminar examines the history of U.S. immigration in the 19th and 20th centuries. Arranged thematically within a chronological framework, the seminar situates the United States within the context of global migration patterns and economic development. The first part of the course investigates patterns of migration and community settlement, family strategies of survival and adaptation, and immigrant cultures. The second part analyzes the reception of successive immigrant groups. Most importantly, the course explores how race, ethnicity, assimilation, acculturation, and Americanization were defined by American government and society. Throughout, the course conducts a critical evaluation of how historians and other scholars have studied immigration and immigrant communities and examines today's perceptions of the American immigrant experience. Varied readings include monographs, oral histories, reform investigations, and a novel.

AMST 5409 The Radical Imagination

3 Credits

This course addresses the ways which dominant narratives of U.S. national identity have been sustained by "social imaginaries" and the ways in which those narratives are challenged by the "radical imagination" in wide-ranging contexts: social and political, religious, literary, the arts, popular culture; all of which might overlap and inform one another at a given historical moment. Using case studies and drawing from a wide range of cultural artifacts, this course explores the radical imagination in United States history.

AMST 5410 Gender in American Society

3 Credits

This course introduces students to the theories, methods, and concepts of the interrelated fields of Women's Studies and Gender Studies, Masculinity Studies, and Sexuality Studies. Our focus is on the contours of these fields, their application across disciplines, and their importance in American Studies. With gender as a key analytical tool, we examine the diversity and dynamism of gendered experiences, taking into account race, class, sexuality, among other facets of identity. The course relies upon theoretical readings and historically situated cultural artifacts to explore gender in the United States, past and present.

AMST 5453 American Popular Entertainments and Social History 3 Credits

Popular entertainments have great power. "They tell us what is on the minds of ordinary people at any given moment - their concerns, biases and anxieties - and in turn refine them and restate them in a palatable, easily understood way," wrote Professor Emeritus Brooks McNamara of New York University of this new field of scholarly inquiry that plumbs America's popular entertainments as a means of understanding its social history. This course will examine critical live entertainment forms that flourished in the years between the conclusion of the Civil War and the end of the 1920s largely due to increased leisure time, improved transportation, and rapidly developing cities. Popular entertainment – amusements aimed at a broad, relatively unsophisticated audience – were frequently American reinventions of European imports, such as the circus, while others, like the Minstrel Show, were uniquely American creations. We will begin the course with an intensive look at the Minstrel Show as a key to the solidification and perpetuation of American racist stereotypes and then consider Circus, the Wild West Show, Vaudeville, Burlesque, Medicine Show, Chautauqua, and popular dramas such as Toby, Tab, and Tom shows, as manifestations of American society of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

AMST 5461 American Civil War 3 Credits

This course employs the interdisciplinary method of learning in examining the American Civil War. While using standard historical texts to establish the facts regarding the War, the course focuses on the sometimes confusing and contradictory versions of the War depicted in literature, photography, feature films, documentary films, and other modes of expression.

AMST 5471 Introduction to Native American Studies 3 Credits

This course explores a range of genres, for example autobiography, novels, short stories, film, and poems, by American Indian writers and filmmakers from the 18th through 21st centuries. We will rigorously examine how Native peoples have shaped and continue to shape their identities in and against U.S. colonialism. Writers and filmmakers may include, but are not limited to, Apsess, Eastman, Zia, Silko, Momaday, Welch, Eyre, Redroad.

AMST 5479 Islam in America 3 Credits

The course treats the history of Muslims in America from the early 19th century to the present. Topics include: the basic tenets of Islam; changing and diverse religious traditions and ideas; Islam among African-Americans; the role of women; concerns about prejudice and unfair treatment; and political views and practice before and after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

AMST 5483 America in the 1930s 3 Credits

The Great Depression represents the catalytic agent in America's extraordinary transformation in the 1930s, a decade during which the changes in the economic and political sectors provided the matter for American cultural life. This course acquaints students with the complexities of this pivotal period in American life through feature films and documentaries, popular and serious fiction, the American theatre of the time, popular music, public and private art, and mass circulation and little magazines, while introducing them to an interdisciplinary methodology.

AMST 5484 Battle Over Family Values in American Politics 3 Credits

The course examines family as an evolving American political and cultural ideal and investigates changes and continuities in American family politics through the twentieth century. It explores the causes, implications, and contexts for the rise of numerous political debates that have centered on the American family such as welfare and anti-poverty policies, LGBT rights, contraception and abortion, and immigration. It also familiarizes students with multiple forms of social scientific writing, methods of research design and original data gathering.

AMST 5486 Health and Healing in America 3 Credits

This seminar explores the idea of America through the lens of major themes in the history of health and medicine from the colonial era to contemporary America. Students will consider the changing American identity from the colonial era to the present as they engage with cultural artifacts evocative of a population grappling with the health and diseases in a land new to Europeans, medicine and health in the age of science and industrialization, and medicine and health in an age of technology.

AMST 5488 Frontier in American Culture 3 Credits

The frontier, traditionally understood as the place where "humanity" comes into contact with its apparent absence in the shape of alien beings and landscapes, has been the subject of some of the most lasting powerful stories in the formation of U.S. national identity. The purpose of this course is to investigate the ideological underpinnings of this myth and its consequences, as well as to explore alternative conceptualizations of the frontier, particularly as a "rhizomatic" space where cultures meet and grapple with one another. Materials for the course are drawn from literature, film, painting, photography, and popular culture.

AMST 5501 Fine Art vs. Anti-Art: 1917 to 1967 3 Credits

Dr. Wayne Craven writes in *American Art: History and Culture*, "As the new century opened America was a nation in transition, and ripe for many kinds of revolutions - in politics, social systems, and certainly in literature and painting. [These] social shifting values and forces were occurring within American society at large." Focusing on the 50 years from WWI to Vietnam, this class examines the artistic debates and ideological struggles manifested by American art. During this time, there is a shifting barometric needle of stylistic expression. On one side, we see an entrenched, traditionalist school that retains the noble beaux arts criteria for realism and classical content. Artists to be studied in this school are: Henri, Sloan, Hopper, Marsh, Cadmus, Benton, Curry, Wood, Sheeler, Demuth and Wyeth. On the other side of the aesthetic spectrum, we encounter rebels leading the avant-garde. Sparked by the new "isms" of European modernism, artists to be discussed include: Duchamp, Stella, Dove, O'Keeffe, Gorky, Pollock, Rothko, Frankenthaler, De Kooning, Motherwell. The culmination and convergence of these parallel tracks arrive with the neo-realist but equally avant-gardist Pop art movement of the 1960s. Warhol, Rosenquist, Johns, and Wessleman use hard-edge realism to convey anti-establishment parodies and camp spin-offs of high culture. The period between 1917-1967 becomes, then, the pivotal shift when traditionalism is converted into a new cultural paradigm ending modernism as a distinct period.

AMST 5502 American Master Artists and Their Times 3 Credits

This class focuses on a selection of American Masters who came to define the American experience as visual innovators reflecting and transforming their times. Among the artists explored are: Thomas Cole, Winslow Homer, John Sloan, Frank Lloyd Wright, Georgia O'Keefe, Edward Hopper, Jacob Lawrence, Lee Krasner, Jackson Pollock, Andy Warhol, and Judy Chicago. Each artistic biography is presented as a filtered lens through which America's social, political, literary and economic themes are manifested in painterly expressions. Within this cultural framework, we examine the creative spirit of each age in the American experience. The course combines classroom illustrated slide lectures, discussions, and field trips to study on-site major collections of American art at museums including: The Yale University Art Gallery, Wadsworth Atheneum, New Britain Museum of American Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Whitney Museum of American Art.

AMST 5511 Poetry in America 3 Credits

A survey of major developments in American poetry from the mid-19th century to the late years of the 20th century, this course emphasizes the poems of Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, and Langston Hughes. The course also offers an introduction to the works of Ezra Pound, E. E. Cummings, Amy Lowell, Marianne Moore, and William Carlos Williams, as well as to Beat poetry (Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti), and to the confessional movement that dominated the second half of the 20th century (Robert Lowell, Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath). The focus is on the shifting patterns of poetic style and on the evolution of American sensibility and experience as expressed in the poems under discussion.

AMST 5521 Inventing Themselves: African-American Women in U.S. History 3 Credits

At the intersection of race, gender, and class, African-American women often challenged the codification of blackness and femaleness as well as a limited conception of class consciousness. From the diaspora to the present, they created forms of resistance, devised survival strategies, and transmitted cultural knowledge while defying racial/gender stereotypes. The multiple roles assumed by African-American women during their struggle from slaves to citizens in the United States represent a complex study of the relational nature of difference and identity. This course focuses on African-American women as subjects and agents of pivotal importance within the family, community, and labor force.

AMST 5522 Crises and Turning Points in United States Foreign Relations, 1776 to 2009 3 Credits

This seminar explores crises and turning points in U.S. Foreign Relations from the American Revolution to 9/11, the Iraq War, Afghanistan and up to the present, including the Alliance with France, the War of 1812, Manifest Destiny, the Mexican War, Indian Removal, the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War, World War I, Pearl Harbor, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and the resurgence of China and Russia.

AMST 5531 History of Jazz 3 Credits

This course traces the development of American jazz from its origins in Black musical traditions. Topics include the roots of jazz in ragtime, blues, work songs, and march music. Also addresses the development of different jazz styles, such as Dixieland in the 1920s, swing in the 1930s, bop in the 1940s, and present-day evolutions. The course emphasizes connecting the historical period with the music of jazz: America's original art music.

AMST 5532 History of Rock 3 Credits

This course surveys the musical and social trends that resulted in the emergence of rock and roll as an important musical and cultural force in America. The course traces the roots of rock, blues, and country styles and, showing how they merged with popular music, studies periods from the 1950s to the present, along with Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, Little Richard, the Beatles, the British invasion, folk music, Bob Dylan, jazz and art rock, Jimi Hendrix, the west coast movement, and the music industry. The social, political, and cultural aspects of rock as they have affected American life provide an American studies emphasis.

AMST 5541 Jews and Judaism in America 3 Credits

What has it meant in the past and what does it mean today to be a Jew in America? Viewing Judaism and Jewishness as inseparable from one another, Jews remain a distinct, though by no means homogeneous, religious and ethnic group in American society. This course explores the religious, cultural, social, economic, and political diversity that exists among American Jews, as well as distinctive beliefs, concerns, and experiences that continue to unite them. The course pays special attention to issues related to immigration, acculturation, gender, and African-American/Jewish relations.

AMST 5551 Women: Work and Sport 3 Credits

Gender stratification exists in most areas of everyday life throughout American society. This course concentrates on the varying experiences (based on class, race, and ethnic differences) of women in the workplace and on the playing field. Sex segregation and sex integration as complex historical and contemporary processes constitute the main focus of the first part of the course. Within this context, economic and social changes will be viewed as historically having an enormous impact on the roles of women in the work force and how they have managed these roles. In turn, their experiences will be analyzed as catalysts of societal change. The last part of the course focuses on women as athletes. Their varied experiences in this world parallel to a large extent their experiences within the workplace. The underlying theme is that the sports arena mirrors the larger society particularly in terms of gender roles. What is seen as "acceptable and non-acceptable" behavior for women in the everyday world is reflected in their roles as athletes. The impact of gender on socializing children into sport and sport itself as a socializing agency is the foundation for critically assessing the outcomes of Title IX and the existence of homophobia in sport.

AMST 5561 Ethnic American Perf & Society 3 Credits

The course will explore the social, political, economic, and cultural forces that have shaped the United States via the themes, perspectives, and production choices expressed in its ethnic drama and performance. We will consider plays and performance pieces (such as pow-wows, Chinese New Year celebrations, and the like) created by African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Latino/a Americans, and Native Americans, all of whom have been marginalized voices existing outside of mainstream theatre, an arena historically dominated by white males. We shall pay particular attention to issues of race, gender, and class apparent in both the play texts as well as in the ideological perspectives of the playwrights. We also will note the choice of subjects, themes, and environments and consider how these are placed within the larger context of American culture and society.

AMST 5562 American Drama and Society 3 Credits

This course explores the social, political, and economic forces that have shaped the United States via the themes and perspectives expressed in its drama. The course covers the late 18th century through the present, paying particular attention to dramas and more populist forms of entertainment that specifically address the notion and development of a distinctly American voice and ideology. Students begin with Royall Tyler's 1787 comedy, *The Contrast*, which offers the first wholly American character - Jonathan the "true-blue" Yankee - and end with Tony Kushner's monumental two-part drama, *Angels in America* (1991), which juxtaposes American Judaism and Mormonism within the context of politics, homo- and heterosexual relationships, and the AIDS epidemic. In between, students consider the work of seminal American dramatists (O'Neill, Miller, Williams, and others) as well as trends in popular theatre forms (minstrelsy, wild west shows, vaudeville, burlesque, musical comedy) in creating the totality of the American cultural experience.

AMST 5900 Special Topics (Shell) 3 Credits

Topics in American Studies not currently among the program's offerings may be offered once or to allow a professor the opportunity to "test drive" a course for the first time.

AMST 5990 Independent Study 3 Credits

Students arrange for independent study with a professor willing to serve as a tutor and under whose direction they will write a research paper of approximately fifty pages. This project should be completed in one semester. All independent study must have the approval of the program director. Students may take only one independent study toward the MA degree.

AMST 5999 American Studies Graduate Project 3 Credits

This course is the culminating component of the MA program in American Studies. With the guidance of a faculty mentor, the student undertakes a major research project focused on an approved American Studies topic. The faculty mentor and student will choose a second faculty reader from another discipline within the American Studies Program. At the outset, the student will register with the faculty mentor and will provide a proposal and preliminary bibliography. Specific guidelines are distributed by the Graduate Program Director.