

American Studies

DIRECTOR **Brown** GRADUATE DIRECTOR **Gundaker** UNDERGRADUATE DIRECTOR **Knight** (Robert F. and Sarah M. Boyd Term Distinguished Associate Professor of English and American Studies) PROFESSORS **Aday, Barnes, Blakey** (National Endowment for the Humanities Professor of Anthropology and American Studies) **Donaldson** (National Endowment for the Humanities Professor of English and American Studies) **Gundaker, Scholnick** (English and American Studies) **Webster** (Mahoney Professor of Art and Art History). ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS **Fitzgerald, McGovern, Meyer** (Class of 1964 Distinguished Associate Professor of American Studies and History) **Weiss, Wulf** ASSISTANT PROFESSOR **Thompson** VISITING ASSISTANT PROFESSORS **Barnard** (American Studies and Coordinator of Mellon Projects in the Humanities) **Schroeder**. EMERITUS FACULTY **R. Price, S. Price, Wallach** The American Studies Program

The American Studies program engages students in examination of the culture and society of the United States, past and present. As a nation of immigrants, the United States has always been a pluralistic society, embracing diverse racial and ethnic groups in mutual encounter and conflict. It has also been a society in endless change, owing to transformations wrought by geographical expansion, democracy, industrialization, urbanization, and the pressures of war and international politics. These forces for change have uprooted whole peoples, such as the forcible removal of Native Americans from their lands, and have touched the most intimate realms of life, such as the relations between men and women in the home.

Yet, in the midst of these large movements of history, many Americans have forged distinctive cultures—ways of thinking, feeling and acting—that express their basic values and give meaning to their institutions and everyday social practices. Such cultures reflect, in part, the different experiences of people, according to their race, gender, and class. But they may also attest to Americans' participation in a larger ideological heritage, shaped by ideals of democracy and equality that have been affirmed in major political movements, such as the American Revolution, and articulated in art, literature, music, and films.

The American Studies program offers an opportunity to explore the commonalities and differences among Americans through an interdisciplinary course of studies. All students are expected to develop a solid grounding in history as a basis and context for their other investigations of American life. Working closely with their advisor, students will assemble a set of courses, designed both to represent the diversity of cultures and social forms within the United States and to pursue significant themes or questions in depth. In developing the major, students may also take up comparative perspectives on the United States, considering, for example, African American life within the context of the black diaspora, or the American experience of industrial capitalism as a variant on a general model in the West.

Requirements for Major

Required Credit Hours: 37

Major Computing Requirement: AMST 370

Major Writing Requirement: AMST 370 and AMST 470

Core Requirements: At least 24 of the required 37 credits must be in courses numbered 300 and above, in courses on American topics distributed among the following areas:

- AMST 201, 202, 203 or 205 (4 credits), or 204 (3 credits);
- at least 6 approved credits in History;
- at least 9 approved credits from English, Art and Art History, Dance, Kinesiology, Music, and Theatre (AMST 240, 241, 271, 273, 343, 350, 409, 421, 422, 433, 445, 451 may be used to fulfill this area);
- at least 6 approved credits from Anthropology, Economics, Government, Philosophy, Religion, and Sociology (AMST 235, 341, 350, 423, 434, 435 may be used to fulfill this area);

- AMST 370 (4 credits);
- two topics courses, AMST 470 (6 credits);
- one semester of independent study, (2-3 credits) 410, (4) or or a two semester honors project (6 credits).

An updated list of approved courses is available on the American Studies website and from the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

Requirements for Minor

Required Credit Hours: 20

Core Requirements: At least 13 of the required 20 credits must be in courses numbered 300 and above. Students will take AMST 201, 202 or 203 (4 credits), AMST 370 (4 credits) and one topics course (AMST 470). They will also take at least 3 credit hours each from approved courses in requirements b), c), and d) above.

Description of Courses

150W. Freshman Seminar.

Topics for Fall 2009 or Spring 2010

Women of the US South.

Fall (4) Donaldson.

This course examines the "peculiar sisterhood" of white women and women of color in the American South, from the intertwining of black and white definitions of womanhood under slavery to explorations of Native American and Cuban American female identities by contemporary writers.

Material Identities.

Fall (4) Gundaker.

How do people shape their lives with material things and places?

How does the material world shape who we are and who we can become? This course explores how certain ethnic, religious, and cultural groups use things to define their identities and environments, and how things also serve as stereotypes that limit the ways that others view them.

201. American Popular Culture and Modern America.

(GER 4A) McGovern.

This course introduces and examines forms of popular culture that emerged after 1865. It considers popular culture within the context of social, political, and economic changes in the U.S., such as migration, industrialization, technology, and globalization of capitalism.

202. Introduction to American Studies: Cinema and the Modernization of U.S. Culture, 1914-1945.

(GER 5) Spring (4) Knight.

This course introduces students to the forms and techniques of cinema. At the same time, it will examine how cinema, America's most popular and powerful entertainment, both reflected and participated in the social, cultural, and political upheavals of the first half of the twentieth century.

203. Introduction to American Studies: American Medicine: A Social and Cultural History.

(GER 4A) Spring (4) Scholnick.

An overview of American medicine from the 18th century to the present. Subjects include the changing understanding of disease; the social role of the physician; and society's response to such public health crises as cholera and AIDS.

204. The American Way of War.

Fall (4) Brown.

This course examines the social and cultural history of Americans at war from the latter part of the 17th century to the present. Course readings will concentrate on primary sources: fiction, memoirs, and historical accounts drawn from three centuries of American experiences in combat.

205. Sexuality In America.

The course introduces students to the study of American culture through history, popular culture, multiple media, and scientific literature concerned with sexualities in America. The course will also show how normative sexualities are articulated distinctly depending on race, class, ethnicity, immigrant status, and other factors related to specific American communities.

206. Black Popular Culture in the Americas: From the Folk to the New Hip Hop.

(GER 4C, 5) (4) Phillips.

Course compares black culture from the early 20th c. folk practices to 21st c. Hip Hop in the US and the Caribbean. It considers these expressions in political, social, and economic contexts. Course materials include literature, film, music, and art.

240. The History of Modern Dance.

(GER 5) Spring (3) Glenn.

An introduction through films and lectures to the field of modern dance, which is rooted in American culture, with emphasis on the stylistic approach and aesthetic of the artists who have contributed to its development in the twentieth century. (Cross listed with DANC 220)

241. History of American Vernacular Dance.

(GER 5) Fall (3) Glenn.

An introduction through films and lectures to dance in U.S. popular culture with an emphasis on its development from roots in African dance to the vernacular forms of tap, ballroom, and jazz by examining the movement styles found in concert jazz, musical theatre, and popular social dances. (Cross listed with AFST 334, DANC 230)

271. American Popular Music.

(GER 4A) Spring (4) Staff.

This course treats the traditions of vernacular musics in the United States, specifically those commonly known as religious, popular, folk, jazz, rock, and country. It will survey the literature of these musics expression and consider questions of cultural meaning. (Cross listed with MUSC 171)

273. Jazz.

(GER 4A, 5) Fall (4) Katz.

A survey of jazz from its origins to the present, focusing on the most influential improvisers and composers. Issues of race, class, and gender will arise as we examine the attitudes of listeners, jazz musicians and promoters. (Cross listed with AFST 331, MUSC 273)

341. Artists and Cultures.

(GER 4C)) S. Price.

This course will explore the artistic ideas and activities of people in a variety of cultural settings. Rather than focusing primarily on formal qualities (what art looks like in this or that society), it will examine the diverse ways that people think about art and artists, and the equally diverse roles that art can play in the economic, political, religious, and social aspects of a cultural system. Materials will range from Australian barkcloth paintings to Greek sculptures, from African masks to European films. (Cross listed with ANTH 364)

343. American Ethnic Literature and Culture.

(GER 5) Spring (3) Weiss.

The course aims to increase students understanding of the rich complexity of American life by studying multi-ethnic American literature and culture. We will explore some of the theoretical problems associated with race and ethnicity. For the most part, however, we will work outward from certain key texts, pursuing the questions that emerge in and from them. We will consider such matters as the evolution of immigration law, the problems of identity and dual identity, and the question of assimilation versus cultural separatism. We will also emphasize the achievement of these texts as literary documents that need to be understood as responding to local cultural practices even as they speak more broadly to Americans as a whole.

350. Topics in American Culture.

Fall and Spring (1-4, 1-4) Staff.

Selected topics in the study of American culture. The topics to be considered will be announced prior to the beginning of the semester. May be repeated for credit.

Early African American Literature.

Fall (3) Weiss

A survey of Black American literature and thought from the colonial period through the era of Booker T. Washington, focusing on the ways in which developing African American literature met the challenges posed successively by slavery, abolition, and emancipation.

The Idea of Race.

Spring (3) Blakey.

This course follows the history of the concept of race in Western science and society. The course examines racist ideas in biological anthropology and cognate fields that are reflected in the broader society. This subject helps students understand the origins and manifestations of American racism, to develop an appreciation of ways in which culture can systematically influence scientific results, and to critically evaluate all theories of the interactions of biology and behavior. (Cross listed with AFST 302, ANTH 371)

The City and the Camera.

Fall (3) Hilpert.

Photography and American cities have intertwined histories. This course traces those histories and the many visual productions of the city in photographs. From the beginnings of urbanization in the 19th century to the present, photography's popularity and seeming technological wizardry made it the perfect means by which to capture – and make visual sense – of equally exciting new urban forms. The course traces photography's critical role in representing and understanding urban space, the photograph's vital history as a social and political tool, and the important roles of amateur photographers and tourists in making urban images. Topics include reform and documentary photography, tourism, crime, disaster and vice imagery, and amateur and art photographs.

370. Major Seminar: America and the Americas.

Fall, Spring (4) Schroeder. Prerequisite: AMST 201, 202, 203, 204, or consent of instructor.

By exploring theoretical, methodological and historical approaches to a range of cultural materials, students will critically engage with how American Studies and its related disciplinary fields have addressed the politics and culture of national identity in the U.S. (Non-majors may enroll only by permission of the instructor.)

410. Williamsburg Documentary Project.

Spring (3) Knight.

In this course students will learn a variety of interdisciplinary methods—e.g., oral history collection, archival research, material cultural analysis—for doing American Studies research. They will then apply these methods practically to the study of Williamsburg in the 20th century. (Non majors may enroll with consent of instructor.)

445. The Making of a Region: Southern Literature and Culture.

Spring (3) Donaldson.

An interdisciplinary examination of 19th- and 20th-century southern texts within the cultural context of self-conscious regionalism. Emphasis is on the interaction between literature and the social configurations of slavery, abolitionism, southern nationalism, racism, traditionalism, and the civil rights movement.

470. Topics in American Studies.

Fall and Spring (1-4, 1-4) Staff.

Selected topics in the study of American studies. The topics to be considered will be announced prior to the beginning of the semester. May be repeated for credit.

The Art Museum: Hist, Theory, Practice (Washington, DC campus)*Fall (3) Wallach.*

This course will approach the history of art museums with an eye to the way museums operate today. To gain first hand understanding of key issues, meetings with museum professionals and visits to art museums will be part of the course

Contemporary Art & Criticism. (Washington, DC campus)*Fall(3) Wallach.*

This class has as its subject contemporary art. Its aim is an understanding of the conditions under which artistic production and reception takes place. The class involves studying works of art, writing criticism, visiting museums and galleries, and meeting with curators, dealers, artists, and collectors.

Material Life in African America.*Fall (3) Gundaker*

This semester's focus will be plantation worlds, including landscapes, labor, and artifacts from the perspective of the enslaved.

African American Travel Narratives.*Fall (3) Weiss*

Using travel narratives by black Americans from the 19th and 20th century, this course explores their different and differing accounts of Africa. These include black Christian organizations, 20th century war stories, autobiography (including Peace Corp) will be our primary texts. We will examine the ways in which literary form, shapes, and informs the content of these accounts. Our writers include, William Sheppard, "the black Livingstone," Alexander Crummell, Richard Wright, Era Bell Thompson, Gwendolyn Brooks, Marita Golden, Eddy Harris and others.

Performing Sovereignty.*Fall (3) Thompson.*

This seminar investigates the concepts of sovereignty, self-determination, and biopolitics through the U.S. federal incursions into tribal politics. By reading theoretical accounts of sovereignty and biopolitics in the context of Native American legal and cultural histories, we will ask: How is sovereignty performative? Is sovereignty a "natural" or inherent right?

Western in American Lit and Film.*Fall (4) Barnard.****480. Independent Study.***Fall and Spring (2-3, 2-3) Staff.*

A program of extensive reading, writing, and discussion in a special area of American Studies for the advanced student. Students accepted for this course will arrange their program of study with an appropriate faculty advisor. This course may be repeated for credit.

†495-496. Honors.*Fall, Spring (3, 3) Wulf.*

Students admitted to Honors study in American Studies will be enrolled in this course during both semesters of their senior year. Each candidate will be responsible for (a) formulating a program of study in consultation with a faculty advisor; (b) preparation and presentation of an Honors essay two weeks before the last day of classes, spring semester; (c) satisfactory performance in a comprehensive oral examination which focuses on the subject matter of the Honors essay. Students who wish to write an honors essay in the senior year must write a brief proposal outlining the project. This proposal must be approved by the faculty advisor and the Director of Undergraduate Studies in the semester before work on the project begins. For College provisions governing the Admission to Honors, see catalog section titled Honors and Special Programs.

†498. Internship.*Fall and Spring (3,3) Knight.*

This course is designed to allow students to gain knowledge through experience in a setting relevant to the study of America. Students will be supervised by a faculty advisor. The internship includes readings in related areas of theory and research as assigned by the supervising faculty. permission from the Director of Undergraduate Studies is required as is the completion of the Internship form from the Dean of Undergraduate Studies. This course may be repeated for credit.