

AMERICAN STUDIES (AMS)

Courses and Descriptions

AMS 200 Introduction to American Studies 3 Credits

An introduction to various historical definitions of the American experience and national identity and the methods of research used by American Studies scholars. Students will explore multiple routes into American Studies (sociocultural, literary, anthropological, and historical) and practice methods that may include historical/archival research, public policy analysis, ethnography, literary analysis, cultural studies/media analysis, and other interdisciplinary approaches.

AMS 210 American Memoir and Autobiography 3 Credits

Studies American memoir and autobiography through analysis of literary and cultural tropes such as the self-made American, the immigrant who achieves the American Dream, bootstraps and rags-to-riches stories, etc. Texts represent the experiences of Americans of different genders, classes, races, ethnicities, and religions.

AMS 211 Sports in American Life 3 Credits

Literary, sociological, and psychological views of sports in 20th-century American life are examined, focusing on sports as a symbol and reflection of our ideals and tensions.

AMS 212 Multicultural America 3 Credits

Focusing primarily on the new century, this course explores the experiences of the remarkably diverse range of ethnic groups who have come to the U.S. in recent years, including Hispanics, Europeans, Asians and Africans. How these groups have impacted the communities where they have settled, how they have interacted with other ethnic groups, and how they have assimilated (or not) and prospered (or not) are among the issues examined and discussed.

AMS 213 American Myth in Literature, Landscape, and Music 3 Credits

A study of the New World and related myths from an interdisciplinary perspective. Students will read essays, fiction, and poetry by Poe, Melville, Emerson, Whitman, James, and others. Paintings and musical works embodying New World concepts will be examined in connection with the above authors.

AMS 214 Special Topics in American Studies 3 Credits

Studies in specialized areas of American culture, including travel courses to New Orleans and Spoleto USA. Topics change each semester and are listed in the course roster.

AMS 215 Alfred Hitchcock in America 3 Credits

Explores the influence of American culture on the films of Alfred Hitchcock following his immigration to the United States. Students will study one of the cinema's greatest auteurs through the lens of American culture and its impact on Hitchcock's European sensibility. Also explores the reverse dynamic: how Hitchcock transformed American cinema.

AMS 225 American Folklore 3 Credits

An introduction to folk language, custom, and material culture in the United States. Proverbs; myths, legends, and tales; superstitions; music; arts and crafts are treated from both aesthetic and social perspectives. Students will collect and examine folklore within their own cultural contexts.

AMS 226 The New South in Literature, Music and Film 3 Credits

An exploration of Southern culture since World War II and how it has influenced American society as a whole. In literature, music, and film, the Sun Belt has been a significant, innovative region. From the spread of New Orleans jazz through the plays of Tennessee Williams to the fiction of Flannery O'Connor, Southern art has helped shape the larger American culture. This course examines that influence from an interdisciplinary perspective. This course offers a cross-listed section to those who wish to travel to a great southern city.

AMS 227 Martin Luther King Jr's America 3 Credits

This course studies Martin Luther King Jr's writings, speeches, and sermons, the context of the America he saw in his lifetime, and the implications of his message for today's America and its place in the world. King envisioned a wholly democratic America free of racism, poverty, and military aggression. Students will critically assess the political, economic, and religious thought at the root of his call for change.

AMS 228 Studies in American Jewish Culture 3 Credits

Focuses on important fiction, criticism, social/philosophical commentary, history, and films by 20th-century Jewish American intellectuals, including Michael Gold, Anzia Yezierska, Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, Cynthia Ozick, Grace Paley, Rebecca Goldstein, Art Spiegelman, Arthur Hertzberg, Leslie Fiedler, Chaim Potok, Woody Allen, and David Mamet.

AMS 229 American Popular Culture 3 Credits

An exploration of American popular culture and its profound impact on both the United States and the rest of the world. Pop-culture theorists regard American culture as a dominant force; this course examines the development of this trend from historical, political, and artistic perspectives.

AMS 250 America and the Future 3 Credits

Examines the projections of the American future in terms of the past and present. Emphasizes American studies methodologies, drawing upon philosophical, literary, environmental, and other varieties of futuristic speculations.

AMS 304 Technology and Science in America 3 Credits

An overview of the development and impact of technology and science on American institutions. Topics include innovation, economic growth, science and its relation to technology, social theory, and the politics of science.

AMS 305 Religion in America 3 Credits

Introduces the changing patterns of American development from the sectarianism of colonial America to the pluralism and growing secularism of the 20th-century American religious scene.

AMS 306 Poetry and Poetics in American Culture 3 Credits

Examines American poetry and poetics in relation to American culture and history of the 18th through the 21st centuries. Students read poems and statements about poetry, view artworks, hear recordings, and examine hypertext versions of poems.

AMS 307 Depictions of Racism in American Literature, Music, and Film 3 Credits

Depictions of Racism in American Literature, Music, and Film will study representations of racism in the American arts in historical context. Students will examine artistic representations of practices that disadvantage and disfranchise non-white Americans, with an eye toward understanding the ways America's history of racist practices has prompted responses from American writers, musicians, and filmmakers.

Prerequisites: CMP 125 or CMP 203 or BHP 150.

AMS 308 Kurt Vonnegut's America 3 Credits

Kurt Vonnegut's America will introduce students to Kurt Vonnegut's novels, short stories, essays, and plays, as well as critical approaches to his work. Students will examine Vonnegut's career and life as they speak to larger themes in American Studies and examine several aspects of this author's unique view of America, which challenged the easy embracing of complicated values like freedom and equality as symbols that America has seen disconnected from their meanings and origins.

Prerequisites: CMP 125 or CMP 203 or BHP 150.

AMS 309 Hip Hop and American Culture 3 Credits

Explore hip-hop culture via the music, dance, art, and poetry created in some of the poorest and most segregated neighborhoods in America. Students will examine the social conditions that fostered the creation of hip-hop and delve into a range of issues confronted in hip-hop music and culture.

Prerequisites: CMP 125 or CMP 203 or BHP 150.

AMS 310 American Identity in the Arts 3 Credits

Studies the place of the arts and the position of the creative artist in contemporary American society, with particular emphasis on the problems of the artist's search for an American identity in the complex cultural milieu.

Prerequisites: CMP 125 or CMP 203 or BHP 150.

AMS 311 Radicalism in 20th-Century America 3 Credits

Discusses a number of radical intellectual, literary, and political movements, organizations, and parties from the points of view of their members and leaders, and their historical genesis and development within the context of 20th-century American political life.

AMS 312 American Photography 3 Credits

An intensive analysis of the documentary, aesthetic, and expressive significance of photography in American culture from 1850 to the present. Particular emphasis on the interrelationships between photography and developments in American history, painting, literature, and the social sciences. This course does not deal with the technical aspects of still photography.

AMS 313 Black American Thought 3 Credits

This course introduces students to the critical and constructive nature of Black social and political thought through a survey of Black American leaders, with a focus on ideology, society and politics. Through readings and discussions, students will assess the complexities of various Black leaders and their ideological positions, often comparing and contrasting the attitudes, values and beliefs of Black thought leaders. Through the study of Black American leaders, students will gain an appreciation for the impact of Black history on the past and present of American public life. As we focus our attention on Black leaders of the 19th and 20th century, we will be mindful of the complex ways in which these leaders have agreed and disagreed on themes such as, but not limited to: achievement of Black liberation, direct action versus armed protests, the role of historical memory in modern political life, the economic and political significance of Black culture, and the tensions between Black segregation versus integration, as well as the defining of such core political concepts as citizenship, freedom, equality, progress, power, and justice.

AMS 338 Social Impact of Rock and Roll 3 Credits

Explores rock and roll music as a communication medium of American popular culture. The focus is on both how rock and roll music has influenced, and is influenced by, society. It addresses the origins, development and impact of rock music in relation to some of the critical cultural dynamics that provided not only its context, but also much of its content.

AMS 350 American Gothic 3 Credits

An introduction to American Gothic literature as a genre, including its historical development, governing conventions, politics, and aesthetics, as well as its emotional and cultural impact.

AMS 400 Seminar in American Studies I 3 Credits

A study of arts and letters in America from the Puritan period through the Civil War. Should be taken junior year if possible.

Prerequisite(s): AMS 200.

AMS 401 Seminar in American Studies II 3 Credits

A study of arts and letters in America from Reconstruction to the present. Should be taken junior year if possible.

Prerequisite(s): AMS 200.

AMS 490 Independent Study: Research and Creative Expression 1-4 Credits

Independent Research and Study allows juniors and seniors in good academic standing to investigate topics of interest under faculty supervision. Projects must be approved by the faculty member, department chairperson, and academic dean no later than the third week of the semester in which the project is to be conducted. Only one project can be scheduled in a semester, and for no more than four semester hours; up to 12 semester hours of independent research and study may be counted toward graduation. Note that individual departments may have additional restrictions.

AMS 491 Internship in American Studies 1-4 Credits

A supervised work experience in an approved organization to gain knowledge of various manifestations of American society in workplace settings. Placements can be made in business, government, and non-profit organizations and local grassroots movements that draw on the knowledge acquired in the American studies curriculum.