

Spring 2009
American Studies Course Offerings

AMST 3700/01 - Intro to American Studies

MW 2:00-3:15

Susan Rouse

In this course we will analyze the cultural beliefs, practices, and identities of America and Americans through the lens of race, class, and gender. We will examine a range of cultural productions, including fiction, material and visual culture as we look at suburbs, religion, shopping and public art.

AMST 3710/01 - US in the World

MW 9:30 a.m.-10:45 a.m.

Dan Paracka

Does America dominate popular culture around the world? What are the messages of America and how are they perceived? This course will examine "America" as a cultural signifier of the United States as it circulates around the world. In addition to reading cultural theory to help us understand "the global" and globalization, we will look at film, television, fiction, and music as they embody notions about "America." Though by no means exhaustive of the possible configurations, some of our texts include perceptions of "America" by non-U.S. Americans; other texts show U.S. America/ns traveling abroad. Our primary concern is to interrogate what ideological assumptions underlie our notion of what "America" means and analyze how it circulates around the world.

AMST 3740/01 - Jazz in American Culture

MW 11:00am-12:15pm

Don Fay

Jazz is a uniquely American art form, but little understood by the average American. In this course for nonmusicians (musicians welcome, of course), we will learn to listen to jazz in its varied styles, listen to its major contributors, learn its basic elements and how jazz musicians learn to improvise individually and collectively. We'll trace the history of jazz within its social and cultural contexts (including its many connections to literature and its important communities and venues). We'll examine racial, political, economic and technological forces that shaped the development of jazz, the role of women in jazz, and how jazz transcended America's national borders. Our study of jazz will illuminate many of the central debates and issues of 20th-century America. This course will be cross-listed with ENGL4560/01

AMST 3740/02 - "Portrayals of Pancho Villa"

Wednesday 5:00 p.m.-7:45 p.m.

Emron Esplin

In this course we will examine the iconic and controversial Mexican revolutionary and folk hero Doroteo Arango-better known as Francisco (Pancho) Villa. We will approach Villa through four broad genres-biography, fiction, visual media (political cartoons and posters), and film in order to answer the following questions: Who was Pancho Villa? Why does he remain one of the two most popular and most powerful Mexican Revolutionaries in both the public mind and the creative world of fiction/film almost a century after his military defeat in 1915 and his assassination in 1923? What do his life experiences teach us about U.S.-Mexico relations in the early 20th century? What do the disparate portrayals of Villa suggest about current U.S.-Mexico relations? This course cross-listed with: ENGL 3340-01

AMST 3770/01 - Boundary Issues: American Immigration History

Monday 5:00 p.m.-7:45 p.m.

Ken Maffitt

The United States is hailed as a "land of immigrants," yet American attitudes about immigration tend to be contradictory. Immigrants are alternately idealized and demonized. Ethnic diversity is both celebrated as essential to American identity and blamed for diluting American values.

This course explores the production of beliefs about immigration in the United States through historical study of immigrant experiences, policy debates, and contesting images and ideas about immigration. We will examine a range of interdisciplinary sources including memoirs, key legal cases, fiction, documentaries, and music. Students will also explore their own immigration histories and interact with local immigrant communities.

AMST 3780/01 - The American Civil Rights Movement

T/Th 5:00p.m.-6:15p.m.

Eva Thompson

This course is student-centered (dare I say, more so, perhaps) than any course you will ever take. This is how the semester will unfold: Each week we'll sit in a circle. We'll talk to each other, rather, you all (students) will talk to each other. When we're not in circles, we'll be looking at *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Movement*. There will be musical selections, as well, and a novel—one of my favorites—Anthony Grooms' *Bombingham*. My hope is that *Bombingham*, the music and the *Eyes on the Prize* series will guide your discussions, but the subject-matter will be up to each of you, as the success of the course depends on you. But whatever you talk about—hopefully, our shared past and present-day culture, as well as contemporary writers—my hope is that discussions will be with an eye toward the future. My role in the class will be to facilitate your discussions. Period. I'll sit in the circle, too, but unless you insist that I control the class (I really don't want to do this, so please don't make me!), I will be a part of the student-centered community that you create. There will be journals and, of course, lots and lots and lots of discussions about our American culture (where we've been, where we are, where we're going) and a final paper. So that's how the semester will unfold. I have ideas about student outcomes, and those will be listed on your syllabus and we'll talk about them, but if the truth be told, the only student outcome that will matter, *really*, will be unobservable to those with whom you'll share this community.

AMST 3780/02 - American Cultural Movements

MW 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

David Parker

This course is a social and cultural history of American religious life, from witches and the Great Awakening to Jerry Falwell and In God We Trust, from hymnbooks and Bibles to church fans, rapture t-shirts, and other religious kitsch. Secondary texts may include Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God became a National Icon*; David Holmes, *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers*; Charles Reagan Wilson and Mark Silk, ed., *Religion and Public Life in the South*; and Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*. Students will examine primary texts, both as a class and individually; the latter will result in a research paper due the last week of class.

AMST 3780/03 - Policies and Pop Culture of the Nuclear Apocalypse

POLS 4490/ FILM 3220

Tuesday 5:00 p.m.-7:45 p.m.

This team-taught course focuses on the military policies and human fears of the nuclear era, and how these policies and fears affected popular culture, especially books and movies, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. We will study nuclear policies and historical events extending from Hiroshima until today, and discuss and analyze books and movies including *Alas Babylon*, *On the Beach*, *Fail Safe*, "Dr. Strange love," "War Games," and "The Day After." The purpose of this course is to help us understand how the policies and fears of the nuclear era have shaped how we think, what we do, and who we are today. Instructors for this interdisciplinary course will be President Dan Papp (Political Science and International Affairs) and David King (English and Film Studies).