

American Studies **SUMMER SEMESTER 2008**

AMST 3740/01 – American Popular Culture: Jazz in American Culture

8 week session

MW 5:00-7:45 PM

Professor Donald 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.

AMST 3750/01 – Place In American Culture: The American West

1st 4 week session

MTWR 2:00-4:45pm

Professor Kay Reeve

Cross-listed with HIST. 3315: The History of the American West.

Professor Elliott West once wrote "...what attracted pioneers (to the West) was the West's placelessness. As they saw it, the West was no past and all possibilities."

This course will examine the actual history of the region of the U.S. traditionally identified as the American West, and explore what role that unique place has played in American culture.

Students enrolled in the course can receive credit for history or American Studies. All students will read historical documents, classic and more recent historical essays focused on aspects of the history of the region, and creative literature written about and set in the American West. Film and fine art will also be utilized to seek an understanding of the American West as an American place. Choice of specific individual assignments will allow each student to focus on either a more traditional historical study or the multidisciplinary American Studies approach to fulfill individual goals and interests.

AMST 4490/01 – Body in American Culture

1st 4 week session

MTWR 11:00-1:45

Professor Hannah Harvey

From Britney Spears to RuPaul, Criss Angel to Avatars, "hot" bodies to freaks—this course looks at American culture and identity as fundamentally performances, or contextualized acts of display. Through in-class films, media clips, and slices of material culture and our own experiences, we will investigate the ways that social and national forces shape, discipline, script, look at, and mold our bodily performances, often without our knowledge.

We will question American cultural performance at specific sites, from everyday campus fashion to national identity. How are race, class, and gender performances? The course is centered in a series of projects that require you to integrate reading, reflection, performance, and engaged citizenship—no previous performance experience is required.

This course includes an optional/possible day-trip to New York to view live performance.