American Studies Courses (AMST)

This is a list of all American studies courses. For more information, see American Studies.

AMST:1000 First-Year Seminar 0-1 s.h.
Small discussion class taught by a faculty member; topics chosen by instructor; may include outside activities (e.g., films, lectures, performances, readings, field trips). Requirements: undergraduate first-year standing.

AMST:1010 Understanding American Cultures 3 s.h.
The United States in historical, contemporary, and transnational perspective; social and cultural diversity and conflict in American life; debates on concepts of America, the American Dream, national culture, citizenship. GE: Values and Culture. Same as GWSS:1074, SPST:1074.

AMST:1030 Introduction to African American Culture 3 s.h.
Examination of Black cultural experiences in the United States and the African diaspora; focus on literature, music, film, comics, anime, popular culture, and visual/performing arts. GE: Values and Culture. Same as GWSS.

AMST:1049 Introduction to American Indian and Native Studies 3 s.h.

AMST:1060 Sex and Popular Culture in America 3 s.h.
Critical and historical introduction to representation of human sexuality in American popular culture from World War II to the present. GE: Values and Culture. Same as ENGL:1410, GWSS:1060.

AMST:1065 Disney in America 3 s.h.
How Walt Disney Corporation has influenced American cultural values, ideals, and experiences through its evolution from an animation company in the 1920s, to a theme park company and television producer in the 1950s, to a media conglomerate today; the corporation's national importance, Hollywood's contributions to the Depression and World War II, postwar urban and community planning, America's changing leisure behavior, advertising and childhood, modern business history, and exportation of American culture.

AMST:1070 Drugs in American Popular Culture 3 s.h.
Cultural aspects of drug use and drug policy in American popular culture, particularly concerning recreational drugs; how ideas of race, gender, social class, and nation are connected to stories people tell about use of marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, and alcohol; sources include films, television, advertising, music, and cultural texts.

AMST:1074 Inequality in American Sport 3 s.h.
Cultural meanings of sport in contemporary U.S. culture; American dream as promoted, challenged in sport; sport experiences, inclusion, and exclusion as affected by gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, social class, age, physical ability/disability, and nationalism. GE: Diversity and Inclusion. Same as GWSS:1074, SPST:1074.

AMST:1075 American Popular Music: Rock and Roll to 1980 3 s.h.

AMST:1076 Rock and Roll 1980 to the Present 3 s.h.
From the beginning, rock and roll subcultures have deliberately challenged and changed the values, attitudes, and behaviors of the mainstream (as well as the music itself); during the past 40 years, movements such as punk, hip hop, and electronica have confronted conventional notions of race, gender, sexual identity, social justice, and economic disparities in ways that reveal much about the underlying tensions of American life; using music as a lens, students examine these aspects of the nation's social history from 1980 to the present; materials are drawn from music, films, music videos, popular magazines, newspapers, and books.

AMST:1080 American Political Humor 3 s.h.
How political humor reflects and influences American attitudes regarding government institutions, elected officials, the democratic process; how humor works; examples from Revolutionary War present and from varied media, including cartoons, fiction, film, television, the Internet.

AMST:1154 Food in America 3 s.h.
Cultural significance of production, distribution, and consumption of food in the United States. GE: Values and Culture.

AMST:1290 Native American Foods and Foodways 3 s.h.
Native Americans as original farmers of 46 percent of the world's table vegetables; examination of food as a cultural artifact (e.g., chocolate, tobacco); food as a primary way in which human beings express their identities; environmental, material, and linguistic differences that shape unique food cultures among Native peoples across the Western Hemisphere; close analysis of Indigenous foods, rituals, and gender roles associated with them; how colonization transformed Native American, European, and African American cultures. GE: Diversity and Inclusion. Same as GHS:1290, HIST:1290, NAIS:1290.

AMST:1400 Introduction to American Popular Culture 3 s.h.
Introduction to popular culture studies; variety of cultural expressions including cyber communities, radio, humor, television, music, sport, and material culture; discussion of these popular genres and topics within larger context of gender, race, sexualities, class, consumerism, nation state and global capitalism; what popular culture is; difference between folk, high, mass, and popular culture; how to critically read and interpret popular cultural expressions; role(s) consumers of popular culture play in market economy; new information technologies to enhance learning experience.

AMST:1500 American Celebrity Culture 3 s.h.
Cultural history of meanings and implications of fame and celebrity in America; shift from 18th-century culture of “fame” (something bestowed posthumously on great statesmen) to 19th-century culture of “celebrity” that conferred instant stardom on actors, sportsmen, musicians, writers, and others; role of mass media and impresarios (e.g., Barnum and “Buffalo Bill”) in promoting culture of celebrity; refinement of star system by Hollywood, television, and Internet; implications for political culture, consumer culture, and attitudes towards race, gender, class, and sexuality.
AMST:1900 Time in America: Clocks, Calendars, and Capsules 3 s.h.
History of technologies for telling the time, from ancient water clocks to atomic clocks; changing methods of measuring, subdividing, and regulating time in 19th- and 20th-century America; implementation of (and resistance to) time discipline in factories, plantations, and offices; rituals for marking historical time (e.g., time capsules); fantasies of time travel in fiction and film; debates about the acceleration of time and emergence of a “slow movement.”

AMST:2000 Introduction to American Studies 3 s.h.
Variety of historic and contemporary sources, such as literature, law, photography, painting, film, TV, music, fashions, environments, events of everyday life. GE: Values and Culture.

AMST:2025 Diversity in American Culture 3 s.h.
History and variety of American identities, examined through citizenship, culture, social stratification; conflict and commonalities among groups according to race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality; how art, literature, music, film, photography, and other cultural artifacts represent diversity of identities. GE: Diversity and Inclusion.

AMST:2050 The American Vacation 3 s.h.
Development of the idea of vacation from upper-class origins to acceptance as part of middle- and working-class life; Niagara Falls, Saratoga Springs, the Catskills, Atlantic City, Idlewild, Coney Island, national parks of the American West, Chicago World’s Fair, Gettysburg, Disneyland; how vacation experiences and meanings are shaped by social class, race, gender, age; growth of leisure time, labor legislation, proper use of leisure time, tourism, vacations as social rituals, golden age of family vacations. Same as SPST:2050.

AMST:2052 Fairs and Amusement Parks 3 s.h.
Nineteenth- and twentieth-century international expositions, amusement parks, and theme parks as cultural events of U.S. self-definition.

AMST:2084 Sport and Film 3 s.h.
Sport films as means of exploring contemporary ideas about sport in the U.S.; focus on narrative structure, characterization, historical, and political contexts; formal aspects of film analysis (e.g., editing, lighting, cinematography). Same as SPST:2084.

AMST:2085 Native Peoples of North America 3 s.h.

AMST:2165 Native Peoples of North America 3 s.h.

AMST:2200 American Monuments 3 s.h.
History of public monuments in America from the inception of first major monuments in the 1820s to the latest incarnations (e.g., counter-monuments such as the 9/11 Memorial, spontaneous and temporary monuments, online memorials); how monuments have depicted Indians, blacks, Southern Confederates, women, and other groups; how monuments have commemorated wars, Indian massacres, lynching, and political movements (e.g., civil rights, women’s suffrage); how monuments have been reinterpreted through popular protests and depositing of artifacts; why monuments have attracted so much controversy, culminating in recent events at Charlottesville. Same as HIST:2206.

AMST:2300 Native Americans in Film 3 s.h.
Representations of Native Americans in film from the western to science fiction and animation. Same as NAIS:2300.

AMST:2400 The Guitar in American Culture 3 s.h.
Cultural history of the guitar in America from 19th century to present; how the instrument evolved in America (e.g., with the introduction of steel strings, electric pick-ups, amplifiers, new body shapes); how the instrument contributed to musical styles from folk, blues, and jazz to pop, rock, heavy metal, and beyond; what impact it had on American culture and politics as a means of folk-cultural expression for black slaves and sharecroppers, an icon of youth rebellion and countercultural opposition, a signifier of hyper-masculinity (one that has been reclaimed by female guitarists), or even a ritual object to smash or burn on stage; the guitar’s future in an age of electronic music.

AMST:2500 U.S. Cinema and Culture 3 s.h.
Role of animals in various forms of cultural expression in the U.S. from the 19th to the 21st centuries; along with visual and literary arts, special emphasis will be placed on live performance (e.g., circus and theatre) because of how it highlights embodied and affective modes of communication that inform our connections to animals; relationship of cultural forms involving animals (real and imagined) to the lived experience of animals in the wider historical and social context; how animals shape human ideas about race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and construct notions of “Americanness.” Same as THTR:2450.
AMST:3047 American Disasters 3 s.h.
Fault lines of American society and culture as exposed during catastrophe; history of American disaster investigated through methods from cultural history, visual theory, sociology, and media studies; varied disasters 1800 to present, including those involving cities (Chicago fire, San Francisco earthquake, Chicago heat wave), transportation (Titanic, Challenger, Columbia), and environment (Union Carbide and Bhopal, Exxon Valdez); causes of catastrophes; how Americans react and are drawn to catastrophe (e.g., disaster films, jokes); related topics, including technology, urbanism, race, class, apocalyptic religion, journalism, popular culture.

AMST:3050 Topics in American Cultural Studies 3 s.h.
Special topics in American history, literature, culture.

AMST:3051 The Office: Business Life in America 3 s.h.
History of business life in America from birth of Wall Street to rise of Silicon Valley; modes of managing and regulating office workers; changing designs of office buildings, furniture, gadgets; corporate response to rise of class inequalities and growing gender and racial diversity in workforce; portrayal of businessperson in novels, movies, television, art, photography.

AMST:3053 The Civil Rights Movement 3 s.h.
History of the American civil rights movement. Same as AFAM:3053.

AMST:3060 Cities in American Culture 3 s.h.
Impact of American cities (skyscrapers, entertainments, crowds, ethnic neighborhoods) on American culture; depiction of American urban environments by artists, writers, musicians, filmmakers; treatment of city life in popular culture (superhero comics and movies, sitcoms, hip-hop, and more); debates about post-industrial decline of cities; focus on New York, Chicago, Los Angeles.

AMST:3063 American Ruins 3 s.h.
Emergence and development of American fascination with ruins, from indigenous to urban-industrial remains; actual ruins and depiction of imagined ruins in art, literature, cinema.

AMST:3130 Black American Cinema 3 s.h.
Major historical and cultural movements in Black cinema; independent and early Hollywood films, animation, Blaxploitation, the Black Renaissance, Black auteurs (e.g., Spike Lee, Julie Dash), hip-hop cinema, womanist films, 21st-century developments in film (e.g., theatre to film adaptions of Tyler Perry), new media’s effect on film and cinema; particular attention given to gender, sexualities, region, ethnicity, and class. Same as AFAM:3130.

AMST:3135 The Social Construction of Whiteness 3 s.h.
Whiteness as a socially constructed racial category with material effects in everyday life; race as a category with salience in determining public policy, forming identities, and shaping people’s actions; interdisciplinary approach using social history, philosophy, science, law, literature, autobiography, film, and the expressive arts.

AMST:3171 Baseball in America 3 s.h.
Forces that influenced political, economic, and social development of professional baseball in the United States; rise of major league baseball, its relationship to the minor leagues, and development of organized baseball industry. Same as SPST:3171.

AMST:3178 American Sport to 1900 3 s.h.
Growth and institutionalization of sport from colonial times to 1900. Same as SPST:3178.

AMST:3179 Twentieth-Century American Sport 3 s.h.
Historic development of sport in the United States since 1900; economic forces, professionalization, growth of media. Same as SPST:3179.

AMST:3195 American Cultures and American Photography 3 s.h.
Introduction to visual, cultural, and historical frameworks to view and interpret photographs as material artifacts.

AMST:3198 New Media and the Future of Sport 3 s.h.
Emergence and significance of Internet blogs, social media, convergence journalism, video games, and fantasy sports; economic, regulatory, and cultural forces that shape new media sport journalism and entertainment. Same as JMC:3135, SPST:3198.

AMST:3400 Black Popular Music 3 s.h.
History and expressive culture of people of African descent living in America through popular music forms; historical time span between the 17th and 21st centuries; poetry, music, cultural analysis, film, and art as sources for the study of Black music; genres covered include spirituals and gospel, blues, jazz, rock, rhythm and blues, Afropunk, alternative and neo soul, and hip-hop. Recommendations: AFAM:1020 and AMST:1030. Same as AFAM:3400.

AMST:3430 Women on Stage 3 s.h.
Examination of how and why women in the United States have expressed themselves through theatre and performance from 1776 to present; students study plays as performed events in specific times and places for specific audiences through works by African American, Asian American, European American, Latina, Native American, and lesbian/queer writers; what the theater—as a public, embodied art form—offers female writers; how stakes differ for women of diverse backgrounds in using this often suspect and uniquely powerful medium in particular historical moments; how changing definitions of gender and sexuality come into play; prior background in theater not required. Same as GWSS:3430, THTR:3430.

AMST:3500 American Gothic: Film, Literature, and Popular Culture 3 s.h.
Gothic eruptions of the uncanny in 19th- through 21st-century American literature, film, and mass culture; how ghosts, vampires, and visitors from the dark side call attention to fluid or liminal social space while communicating information and anxieties about repressed histories, economic change, and unstable intersections of gender, sexuality, race, religion, and class identities; special attention given to modernity and post-modernity of American gothic as an artifact of U.S. consumer culture and mass visual media.

AMST:3590 Seminar in American Cultural Studies 3 s.h.
Interdisciplinary perspectives on a single theme or period.

AMST:3994 Independent Study arr.
Independent interdisciplinary research, writing.

AMST:5000 Interdisciplinary Research in American Studies 3 s.h.
Research, theories, and methods in American studies; origins, evolution, and future of discipline; key figures, texts, and debates.

AMST:5002 Critical Theories and Cultural Studies 3 s.h.
Exploration and application of critical theories to contemporary sport; feminism, Marxism, critical race theory, whiteness studies, queer theory, postcolonial theory, postmodernism, and poststructuralism. Same as SPST:5002.
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<td>Seminar: Topics in American Studies</td>
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<td>AMST:6058</td>
<td>Seminar: Technology and American Culture</td>
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<td>Seminar: Topics in Sport Studies</td>
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