

# AMERICAN STUDIES

## Department Overview

American Studies is an interdisciplinary major that focuses upon life and culture in the United States, past and present, using a variety of resources, techniques, and methodological approaches. The major examines the diversity of Americans, as well as their commonly shared experiences and incorporates race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class and ability as categories of analysis. The major is structured to allow students to take courses about the United States and related topics in different departments and to integrate that material into the courses that the American Studies faculty teach. American Studies students often study abroad, participate in the Washington Semester, and do internships. Our majors have found American Studies a strong background for careers in journalism, publishing, museums, historic preservation, archaeology, education, government, law, business, NGOs, and the nonprofit sector, as well as useful preparation for further study in graduate and professional school programs.

*Chair of the Department of American Studies:* Gregory M. Pfitzer

Professors: Beck Krefting, Daniel A. Nathan, *The Douglas Family Chair in American Culture, History, and Literary and Interdisciplinary Studies;* Gregory M. Pfitzer

Assistant Professor: Tammy C. Owens

Visiting Assistant Professor: Aaron Pedinotti

## American Studies B.A.

Students must fulfill the requirements designated in the three areas below as well as satisfy the general college requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts. Students must take at least 10 courses in the major for a minimum of 32 credit hours.

Code	Title	Hours
AM 101	Introduction to American Studies (varies by topic and instructor) (Must be completed at Skidmore.) <sup>1</sup>	4
Select seven American Studies courses, each of three credits or more, above the 100 level <sup>2</sup> . These must include:		21
AM 221	American Studies: Methods and Approaches	
AM 374	Senior Seminar	
Select two American Subject courses, each of three credits or more, about the United States, taken in at least two other departments and above the 100 level <sup>3</sup>		6
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>31</b>

1

A required course to be taken by the end of the sophomore year, if possible, and recommended as a prerequisite for upper-level courses but not a formal requirement.

2

To be selected in consultation with the student's advisor

3

Courses meeting this requirement must be approved by the American Studies Department.

## The Writing Requirement in the Major

The Department of American Studies maintains a strong commitment to writing and, when possible, the process of revision. There is some form of writing in all American Studies courses: for example, traditional essays and research papers, but also book, film, music, and exhibition reviews, autobiographical and ethnographic writing, journal entries, oral histories, among other possibilities. Like other disciplines, American Studies values and promotes clear, concise prose and coherent arguments informed by evidence, reason, analytical thought, and creativity. We want American studies majors and minors to think in an interdisciplinary manner and to do research that cuts across and bridges traditional disciplinary lines. We want them to be able to use-competently, critically, and creatively-primary and secondary sources. We want them to be able to design and execute research projects. To do so, students must know the conventions of writing in the discipline. They must also know how to pose relevant questions, develop a research design, use a variety of sources, convey a clear understanding of chronological relationships, construct an argument with appropriate categories of proof, and to narrate well. While all American studies courses promote most of these qualities, they find fullest expression in the Senior Seminar. By successfully completing the requirements for the major, students fulfill the American studies writing requirement. Ideally, students should take the major's three required courses – AM 101 Introduction to American Studies, AM 221 American Studies: Methods and Approaches (sophomore or junior year), and AM 374 Senior Seminar – in that sequence; doing so promotes the developmental nature of writing in the discipline.

*Note:* 300-level courses in American studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students, except by permission of the instructor.

## American Studies Minor

The American Studies minor consists of five courses totaling a minimum of 18 credit hours, including:

Code	Title	Hours
AM 101	Introduction to American Studies (varies by topic and instructor) (Must be completed at Skidmore) <sup>1</sup>	4
AM 221	American Studies: Methods and Approaches	4
Three additional American Studies courses, at least one of which must be at the 300 level.		10
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>18</b>

1

A required course to be taken by the end of the sophomore year if possible and recommended as a prerequisite for upper-level courses but not a formal requirement.

An interested student should apply to the department chair for acceptance as an American Studies minor and for assignment to a faculty advisor, who will work with the student to devise a minor program suited to his or her interests and needs. Students must maintain at least a 2.0 average in minor courses and must file a declaration of minor form with the registrar's office before the beginning of their last semester at Skidmore.

*Note:* 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor.

## Honors

To qualify for honors in American Studies, students must complete the honors thesis and have a minimum GPA of 3.6 or higher in the major.

## Course Listing

### AM 101 - Introduction to American Studies

Credits: 4

Introduction to the interdisciplinary study of American culture, past and present. Emphasizes reading critically, thinking historically, practicing interdisciplinarity, and acknowledging diversity. Students will analyze and synthesize multiple kinds of primary sources (such as fiction, film, music, art) and disciplinary perspectives (sociology, economics, media criticism) to appreciate better the complexity of American life and culture. Topics change and may include, but are not limited to: American Cultural Geographies, Civil War in American Memory, A Humorous (Dis)Course, and 1968.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Social Sciences requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

### AM 200 - Issues In American Culture

Credits: 1

One-credit courses that focus on specific topics of relevance to American culture (either historical or contemporary), such as recent books of significance, film genres, documentary series, or current affairs. May or may not be associated with three-credit courses being offered simultaneously by the department; see specific course descriptions.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

### AM 201 - American Identities: Pre-1870s

Credits: 4

A study of what it means to be an American through the selective examination of continuities and changes in definitions of identity-self-constructed and assigned-from colonization to the mid-nineteenth century. The course considers cultural interactions among different groups (Europeans, Native Americans, African Americans) in the context of historical episodes of significance for identity formation (including the Salem Witch Trials, the American Revolution and the Civil War). In weekly "whodunit" workshops, students will examine primary sources, producing original historical scripts that document the ways cultural identities are shaped by multiple perspectives and contested paths.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Cultural Diversity and Social Sciences requirements; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

### AM 202 - American Identities: Post-1870s

Credits: 4

A study of what it means to be an American through the selective examination of continuities and changes in definitions of identity-self-constructed and assigned-from the Civil War to the present. The course considers cultural interactions among different groups (Europeans, Native Americans, African Americans) in the context of historical episodes of significance for identity formation (including the Centennial, the Great Depression, and the Cold War). In weekly "whodunit" workshops, students will examine primary sources, producing original historical scripts that document the ways cultural identities are shaped by multiple perspectives and contested paths.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Cultural Diversity and Social Sciences requirements; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

### AM 221 - American Studies: Methods and Approaches

Credits: 4

An introduction to American studies scholarship, methodologies, and approaches to the study of society and culture in the United States. Course materials include "classics" in American studies as well as the most recent scholarship: the "myth and symbol" school, the culture concept, psychoanalytic methodologies, new literary and feminist critiques, material culture and oral history resources, mass and popular culture analyses, with attention to issues of race, gender, class, and ethnicity throughout. The intent of the course is to offer students a variety of opportunities to sharpen their analytical, research, and writing skills from interdisciplinary and historiographic perspectives.

**Note(s):** Required of majors and minors in their sophomore or junior years. Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

### AM 230 - Born in America

Credits: 4

An exploration of the changing ways in which American women have experienced contraception, abortion, pregnancy, and childbirth, from 1587 to the present. We will examine developments in technology, law, medicine, the economy, and the role and position of women and the family in society as they have influenced the reproductive lives of American women, using sources from the history of medicine, social history, literature, legal and constitutional studies, government and sociology. Issues we will consider include social childbirth and the role of the midwife in the colonial period, the masculinization of obstetrics, introduction of anesthesia, and criminalization of abortion in the nineteenth century, the struggle for reproductive freedom and the introduction of hospital birth, as well as the legalization of abortion and introduction of alternative birthing patterns in the twentieth century. By analyzing these topics, reading about them, writing about them, and thinking and discussing various aspects of each, we will work to gain a greater understanding of how social change occurs, and what studying reproduction can tell us about the evolution of American society.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Expository Writing requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

### AM 231 - Ethnic and Immigrant Experience

Credits: 3

An introduction to the historical experiences of several American ethnic and immigrant groups, including Native Americans, African Americans, and people from Latin America, Asia, and Europe. Emphasizing both the larger society's view of a particular ethnic group and that group's perception of its own experiences, the course examines the processes of assimilation and acculturation, racism, nativism, ethnic conflict, and cultural survival mechanisms as found in historical monographs, films, novels, biographies and autobiographies, demographic materials, and oral histories.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Cultural Diversity requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 232H - New England Begins**

Credits: 3

A critical examination of the evolution of culture and society in New England during the seventeenth century. After considering the origins of the Puritan community, the course will explore the ways in which that society changed over the course of the first seventy-five years of settlement, using the resources and methods of a variety of disciplines. By a culminating investigation of the events of the Salem witchcraft crisis of 1692, questions will be raised as to the impact of those changes and some of the ways in which New Englanders responded to them. Finally, by studying several historical and literary treatments of the witch trials, we will gain a greater understanding of the interconnections between the past and the present.

**Note(s):** This is an Honors course. Fulfills Social Sciences requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 233 - Representations of the American Past in Film**

Credits: 4

An examination of how Hollywood filmmakers have represented the American past, with special attention to the implications of movies for the construction of American cultural identity. Students will analyze films as historical documents that reflect (and sometimes reproduce) the ethos or cultural politics of the period in which they were made and first viewed. Through the use of popular culture theories, students will consider the ways in which films inform (and sometimes obfuscate and subvert) historical understanding.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Social Sciences requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 234 - American Sports/American Culture**

Credits: 4

A historical examination of 300 years of sport in America as an important expression of culture, conflict, and meaning. Special attention is devoted to the ways in which contemporary sports provide a window into politics, economics, racial and ethnic relations, class formation, and gender identity. Students analyze the ways in which Americans have played, watched, and understood sports and will focus on some of the recurrent cultural values, trends, and symbolism associated with American athletes and public life.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Social Sciences requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

D. Nathan

**AM 235 - Post-Apocalyptic Film and Literature**

Credits: 4

Analysis of post-apocalyptic texts produced throughout the past century (and even older than that) including novels, short stories, films, graphic novels, video games, and virtual reality. Student will learn to apply multiple methodological approaches to print and visual popular culture texts that imagine life in a post-apocalyptic world. Our analyses of texts will foreground the role that power and structural inequality plays in shaping experience-fictionally and in our contemporary world. The course will culminate with the creation and presentation of an original post-apocalyptic story drawing from course themes and analyses.

**Prerequisites:** SSP 100.

**Note(s):** Offered as letter only. Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Bridge Experience and Humanistic Inquiry requirements.

**AM 237 - Americans in Outer Space**

Credits: 4

An examination of the cultural, political and economic contours of the debate about the exploration of deep space, with special attention to NASA's "Artemis" proposal to return astronauts to the moon by 2024. The course will focus on the power and justice dynamics associated with efforts to find answers to lingering and unresolved questions associated with the original lunar landings, including Who has access to space? What groups have the authority to control the use of space? Who should be responsible for funding exploration? And how do the lenses of identity, ethnicity, gender, nationality, socio-economic class and race inform these decisions?

**Prerequisites:** SSP 100.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Social Sciences requirement; fulfills Bridge Experience requirement.

**AM 241 - Mark Twain's America**

Credits: 4

A study of American culture from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century through the life and works of Mark Twain. Using Twain's essays, letters, short stories, and novels as points of reference for discussions of major themes for the period of Twain's life (1835-1910), the course focuses on issues of regionalism, class, race relations, technology, humor, and imperialism.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 242 - The Funny Thing About History...**

Credits: 4

This course uses archival research to examine the historiography of stand-up comedy in the United States or the study of historical writings about comedians, their craft, and the venues supporting them from the late nineteenth century to the present. We will examine how the history of stand-up comedy has been told—the politics of editing; who gets to write history; and the comics who are remembered and those who are excluded.

**Prerequisites:** SSP 100.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry and Bridge Experience requirements.

**AM 251C - Regional Culture**

Credits: 3

Exploration of the development of distinctive regional cultures in the United States. Using a broadly based interdisciplinary approach, these courses focus on the interaction between people and their environments, the way people develop attachments to their own regions, and the tensions between regional and national cultures.

**Note(s):** May be repeated for credit with a different topic. Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 251D - Regional Culture**

Credits: 4

Exploration of the development of distinctive regional cultures in the United States. Using a broadly based interdisciplinary approach, these courses focus on the interaction between people and their environments, the way people develop attachments to their own regions, and the tensions between regional and national cultures.

**Note(s):** May be repeated for credit with a different topic. Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 252 - The Hudson River**

Credits: 4

An introduction to the history, literature, and art of the Hudson River Valley. The Hudson River is considered as an environmental entity, an economic and political concern, and especially as a cultural symbol. The course considers four centuries of American experience on the Hudson, but focuses on the nineteenth century, when the Hudson had its greatest influence on regional and national culture.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Social Sciences requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 253 - The West**

Credits: 4

An examination of the mythic, historical, and contemporary West, western heroes and themes and what they reveal about American values and culture. Using film, literature, social and intellectual histories, and the arts, the course considers discrepancies in the images and realities of western exploration and settlement. After considering the colonial period, the course then explores nineteenth-century conflicts over property, natural preservation, mineral and water claims, and the rights of native Americans and concludes with an examination of contemporary images and issues.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Social Sciences requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 254 - The South**

Credits: 3

An exploration of the development of the distinctive culture of the southern region of the United States. The course examines myths and legends of the Old South, including those surrounding the origins of the plantation system, southern womanhood, and the development of the slave and free communities of the region in the antebellum period. Topics include the myths and legends of the New South, the legacy of the Civil War and Reconstruction, the imposition of segregation, modernization of agriculture and industry, and the migration of African-Americans northward. The course culminates in a study of the civil rights movement, and recent demographic, economic, and political changes.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Social Sciences requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 255 - New England**

Credits: 3

A study of the growth and development of regional culture in the northeastern United States from the eighteenth century to the present. Beginning with a consideration of the heritage of the Puritan settlers, the course proceeds to an examination of the Revolutionary experience, the industrial revolution, the New England Renaissance of the nineteenth century, and the transforming impact of immigration and migration on the region's population. It ends with a study of the literature, politics, and economy of New England in the twentieth century.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Social Sciences requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 260X - Themes in American Culture**

Credits: 4

(Fulfills humanistic inquiry.)

**AM 261A-D - Themes in American Culture**

Credits: 1-4

**AM 262 - Civil Rights in Twentieth-Century United States**

Credits: 3

An examination of the interactions of individuals, groups, institutions, and agencies seeking to achieve, enforce, or dismiss those civil rights guarantees contained primarily in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments to the Constitution of the United States and in subsequent twentieth-century legislation. Although a major focus of the course is on the attempts of women and African-Americans to secure full civil rights protections, students are encouraged to investigate civil rights issues that range beyond these two groups. The course uses a variety of materials including legislative histories, autobiographies, executive orders, judicial decisions, biographies, histories of specific aspects of the civil rights struggle, journalistic accounts, documentary films, works of fiction, and oral histories.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Social Sciences requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 263 - The Machine in the Garden**

Credits: 3

An introduction to the relations between agricultural industrialization and the American pastoral ideal. In the early twentieth century, the longstanding association of American identity with an agrarian paradise was challenged, reconfigured, and/or redirected by newly emerging discourses in sociology, domestic and industrial labor, eugenics, and advertising, among others. At the same time, rural life was radically altered as many small family farms gave way to agribusiness. This course traces these shifts, focusing primarily on the transformative period between 1900 and 1945, and considers efforts to retain the notion of an American Arcadia in the face of the Machine Age.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Social Sciences requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 264 - The African-American Experience**

Credits: 4

Students will investigate the role African Americans have played in the history of the nation, including African-American contributions to, and exclusions from, various aspects of a "democratic" American society. Students will examine the critical issues and periods relevant to the African-American struggle toward freedom and equality from the nineteenth century to the contemporary moment. Topics include slavery, emancipation, and Reconstruction; the woman's era; the age of Jim Crow and the new Negro; the civil rights movement; and the post-reform period.

**Prerequisites:** SSP 100.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Cultural Diversity and Social Sciences requirements; fulfills Bridge Experience and Humanistic Inquiry requirements.

**AM 265 - Popular Culture**

Credits: 4

A topical examination of the cultural-historical process of the creation, dissemination, and consumption of mass or popular culture and analysis of popular culture as a defining characteristic of Americans. Specific focus will be upon the evolution of modern electronic forms of communication in the twentieth century, and the interrelationships between the popular and elite and folk culture will be explored. Illustrative topics include: popular genre literature, mass movements, celebrities and heroes, and film, radio, and television.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Social Sciences requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 266 - Diversity in The United States**

Credits: 3

An examination of the ways in which people in the United States try to reconcile the realities of cultural difference with preconceived notions of a unified America and American identity. Students will learn about the United States as a complex, heterogeneous society that has been profoundly shaped by both the connections and conflict implicit in its multicultural heritage. Students will also address interrelationships and tensions that characterize a culturally diverse democracy by examining how accepted cultural traditions intersect with contested themes such as race, the family, adoption, gender, sexuality, and education.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Cultural Diversity and Social Sciences requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 267 - American Bestsellers and Popular Culture**

Credits: 3

An exploration of bestselling novels of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and their relations to the social, political, and commercial preoccupations of American society. The course considers not only the novels themselves, but also illustrations, film and stage adaptations, critical reactions, and related cultural ephemera. Supplementary readings focus on such topics as early marketing and the emergence of bestseller lists; the development of "middlebrow" genres such as the romance, the western, and the detective story; and the role of the Book-of-the-Month Club.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 268 - Gaming in American Culture**

Credits: 3

This course explores the multivalent significance of video gaming to American society and examines the many ways in which the diverse forms of gamic praxes have been represented in American culture. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, it examines gaming as a set of socio-cultural practices with profound resonances and effects in American life. Culturally oriented portions of the course focus on representations of gaming in films, television shows, genre fiction, and in games themselves. Other portions focus on the intertwinement of gaming with broader social, political, and economic issues. These include questions of ethnic, racial, and gender representation and diversity in games; the relationship of game industries and online worlds to America's place in the global economy; the historical roles of gamic practices in US military planning and technological development; the increasing influence of online game communities and fan cultures in mainstream society; debates and moral panics over violence in games; and the potential role of games as educational, journalistic and persuasive technologies. Game genres studied in the course include console and pc-based videogames, war and strategy games, tabletop and massive multiplayer online RPGS, and virtual reality games. Readings include theoretical texts, game studies literature, historical accounts of video gaming's emergence and development, and cultural and ethnographic studies of American gaming. Evaluation is based on reading responses, participation, and papers. Some experiential engagement with gaming is also a part of the curriculum.

**Prerequisites:** SSP 100.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Social Sciences requirement; fulfills Bridge Experience and Humanistic Inquiry requirements.

**AM 299A-D - Professional Internship In American Studies**

Credits: 1-4

Internship opportunity for students whose academic and cocurricular work has prepared them for professional work related to the major. With faculty sponsorship and department approval, students may design internships at museums and historical societies, newspapers, radio and television stations, planning and architectural firms, schools, government agencies, and other appropriate sites.

**Prerequisites:** Two courses in American Studies.

**Note(s):** No more than three semester hours may count toward the major. Must be taken S/U.

**AM 331 - Critical Whiteness in the US**

Credits: 4

An interdisciplinary examination of the racial construction of whiteness across four centuries of American culture and history. Through primary sources, legal cases, historical accounts, literary analysis, cultural criticism, and analysis of fine art the course will examine groups occupying the borders and fringes of whiteness—how they negotiate and struggle for/against this designation and challenge institutional investments in maintaining white supremacy in America.

**Prerequisites:** SSP 100.

**Note(s):** 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor. Fulfills Cultural Diversity and Humanities requirements; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry and Bridge Experience requirements.

**AM 332 - Global Perspectives of the United States**

Credits: 4

Assesses and puts in historical context global perspectives on and representations of the U.S., its citizens and culture. Employing an interdisciplinary methodology, student will consider how the U.S. appeared to Europeans in the eighteenth century and how others since then have made sense of this country, with an emphasis on the twentieth century and the post-9/11 cultural moment. Students will examine themes including the preferred national narrative of the U.S. as a place of freedom, opportunity, democracy, and multicultural pluralism; and different forms of anti-Americanism.

**Note(s):** 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor. Fulfills Cultural Diversity requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 340 - Women and Work in America**

Credits: 3

Examination and analysis of the role and status of women in the economy, particularly the paid work force, from the colonial era to the present. Topics considered are: the perceptions and the realities of women's participation in the work force, "women's work," and working women's conscious efforts to improve their economic status. A variety of sources provide insights into the myths and realities of working women's experiences; the impact of technology on women's work; the demands of family on working women; the socialization of women's work; legislation and working women's status; the influence of class, race, and ethnicity on women workers and women's work; the job segregation of women; and women workers and the organized women's movement.

**Note(s):** 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor. Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 342 - Black Feminist Thoughts**

Credits: 3

Examines the development and materialization of Black American feminist thoughts within historical, social, political, and cultural contexts. Interdisciplinary in focus, it surveys feminist politics and theories through films, popular culture, manifestos, literary texts, and theoretical and historical essays. In addition, the course will address how the concepts of black feminism and black womanhood overlap and diverge in accordance with the modes of representation used to articulate them.

**Prerequisites:** *Must Have Passed 24 Credits.*

**Note(s):** 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor. Fulfills Cultural Diversity requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 345H - Disorderly Women**

Credits: 4

Disorderly women focuses on some of the women who have been characterized by the larger society as unruly, disruptive, radical, militant, unfeminine—just generally "disorderly." The course examines women considered disorderly in the nineteenth and twentieth-century United States. We will focus, then, on "disorderly women" as actors within and upon their society and on the response of that larger society to their actions. Many of the women we will learn about this semester have made contributions to social justice efforts, community cultural development, and fighting for equality. In fact, it is for these efforts that they have been deemed "disorderly." Following their example, this course will include a service-learning component fostering civic engagement. Students will develop projects well-suited to the selected organization, learn the basics of grant writing, and collaborate with one or several nonprofit organizations to execute the project throughout the semester.

**Note(s):** 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of instructor. Fulfills Social Sciences requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 346 - True Crime in America**

Credits: 4

A critical examination of contemporary American true crime narratives, that is, accounts about a criminal act or acts based on fact rather than fiction. The course argues that true crime narratives throw into relief particular cultural concerns and values and help us understand American culture and the complex relationships among criminality, deviance, ethics, identity, justice, power, and representation. Students will consider questions such as What do true crime narratives tell us about the complicated relationship between power and justice at specific historical moments? Who has wielded (legitimate and illegitimate) power? And when crimes have been committed, what forms has justice taken, and who has administered it?

**Prerequisites:** *SSP 100.*

**Note(s):** Fulfills Social Sciences requirement; fulfills Bridge Experience requirement.

**AM 351A-D - Topics in American Culture**

Credits: 1-4

(Fulfills humanistic inquiry.)

**AM 352 - City**

Credits: 3

An examination of the growth and impact of urban life on American culture. Using fiction, film, histories, sociological studies and material culture, the course examines the relation between the perceptions of urban life and the actualities of that experience. By focusing on how varying reactions to the urban experience result from economic, ethnic, or gender differences, the course explores such topics as: the effect of industrialization, the waves of rural migration and overseas immigration, the concentrations of wealth and poverty, the impact of architecture, and the parks and planning movements.

**Note(s):** 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor. Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 353 - America on the Couch**

Credits: 3

A consideration of selected topics in the fields of cultural studies and psycho history. Through interdisciplinary materials, students will explore the rich literature of psycho historical interpretation, attempting to understand personal motivation, emotional character, and abnormal behavior in both prominent American figures and in the nation at large. Topics include conversion theory in the Salem witchcraft trials, infantilism and paternal authority in the age of Jackson, sentimental regression in the Civil War era, George Custer and the schizophrenic personality, neurasthenia in Victorian America, paranoia in the Nixon years, and narcissism in the "me" decade of the 1970s. 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor.

**AM 354 - Religion**

Credits: 4

An examination of the institutions of religion and the roles religion has played in the development of American society, from the seventeenth century to the present. Beginning with a study of the Puritan "city on a hill," proceeding to the Great Awakening, the Revolutionary separation of church and state and designation of religious toleration, the course will continue to explore the development of an increasingly diverse society of belief and unbelief. Using a variety of interdisciplinary sources, the course focuses on nineteenth-century nativist attacks on Catholicism, the role of religion in the slave community, revivalism, fundamentalism, the social gospel, and contemporary controversies over evolution, prayer in the public schools, and the impact of race, gender, and class. 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor.

**Note(s):** Fulfills humanistic inquiry.

**AM 355 - Magazines and Modernity**

Credits: 4

A study of early twentieth-century American magazines as both reflecting and shaping modern culture. The course focuses on such topics as the rise of modern advertising; the shaping of gendered, classed, and racialized readerships; and the popular advancement, and occasional subversion, of dominant ideological perspectives of nation, domesticity, labor, and/or consumption. It also considers the enormous influence of certain turn-of-the-century editors and their business policies, including the sophisticated relations they created among internal magazine elements so as to streamline their cultural messages. In addition to substantial theoretical and historical reading and regular short research and writing assignments, each student is responsible for a major semester-long project that involves intensive study of a period magazine in the Scribner collection.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 356 - Sports Cinema**

Credits: 4

An exploration of feature films and documentaries about sports to understand and appreciate-aesthetically, historically, culturally-the visual discourse of sports. Students will interrogate the cultural context of sports as expressed through visual media and will critically assess films as modes of communication that have their own codes and conventions. Films include Leni Riefenstahl's Olympia (1938), which chronicles and celebrates the 1936 Berlin Olympic games, and several "classic" sport films-among them, Raging Bull (1980) and Hoop Dreams (1994). Students are required to attend a weekly evening film screening.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 360D - American Cultural Periods**

Credits: 4

(Fulfills humanistic inquiry.)

**AM 360E - Disorderly Women**

Credits: 3

(Fulfills humanistic inquiry.)

**AM 361 - American Material Culture**

Credits: 4

Introduction to the material aspects of American culture and the variety of ways in which artifacts-three-dimensional objects, the built environment, design and architectural styles, technological processes and production, decorative and folk arts-serve as social and cultural documents. The course centers on the cultural attitudes and values embodied in as well as shaped by the production, utilization, and conservation of material objects. Readings, discussions, museum and other field trips, and object-oriented research projects assist students in enhancing their visual literacy and in making connections between material culture and the larger culture.

**Note(s):** 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor. Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 362 - American Autobiography**

Credits: 3

An examination of American culture through the lives of specific people as recorded in their autobiographies. The course explores autobiography both as an act of self-creation and as a reflection of culture. Various autobiographies are examined for their revelations about choices, crises, values, and experiences of representative people in particular periods of the American past.

**Note(s):** 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor. Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 363 - Women in American Culture**

Credits: 4

An examination of the changing position of women in American culture and society from the seventeenth century to the present. Topics will include the developing familial, economic, sexual, educational, and political roles of women, as well as consideration of the suffragist and feminist movements. Issues of race, class, and ethnicity will be included, and resources from a variety of disciplines will be used, including material culture, history, literature, politics, sociology, and economics.

**Note(s):** 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor. Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 365A-D - American Cultural Periods**

Credits: 1-4

Examination of specific cultural periods, each of which has had a particular significance for the development of American culture. The course will explore the major social, political, economic, intellectual, and aesthetic issues of the period, using the resources of literature, history, music, art, government, sociology, and popular culture.

**Note(s):** 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor. May be repeated for credit with a focus on a different period. Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 366 - The 1920s**

Credits: 3

An intensive examination of the "roaring twenties," with special attention to the impact of class, race, and gender on the development of American culture in the period. The course focuses on a series of controversies illuminating some of the conflicting forces at work in American society, including debates over immigration, Prohibition, evolution, sexuality, and the role of women in society. It will examine some of the major intellectual, social, and cultural issues of the era.

**Note(s):** 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor. Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 367 - The 1950s**

Credits: 3

An interdisciplinary analysis of the decade of the 1950s in America. Using a wide variety of primary and secondary sources, including fiction, film, music, biography, autobiography, poetry, sociology, drama, and social criticism, the course explores the distinctive culture of this decade. It focuses on the ways different groups of Americans experienced the period, studying conformity and consumerism, the beatniks, rock and roll, and the silent generation, as well as the roots of the protest movements and the counterculture of the 1960s.

**Note(s):** 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor. Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 368 - The 1960s**

Credits: 4

A consideration of the major events of the 1960s, including the New Frontier, the Cuban missile crisis, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the war in Vietnam, the civil rights movement, the sexual and gender revolutions, the rise of rock and roll, the counterculture, the moon landing and other landmarks of the decade. The course considers not only what happened during those climactic years, but why such events were so important to American development, and how perceptions about the 1960s have changed over time.

**Note(s):** 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor. Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 371A-D - Independent Study**

Credits: 1-4

A program of individual reading, research, and writing which qualified majors design in consultation with and under the direction of the American studies faculty. An independent study allows an in-depth examination of a topic not treated extensively in regular departmental course offerings. Students meet with faculty on a regularly scheduled basis to discuss and analyze readings and research in primary and secondary sources.

**Note(s):** 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor.

**AM 374 - Senior Seminar**

Credits: 4

Exploration of primary and secondary sources in the interdisciplinary examination of a particular topic in American culture. Students will design a major research project, conduct original research, and write a thesis, which may be used as the basis for an honors thesis. Required of all senior majors.

*Prerequisites:* AM 101W or AM 101 and AM 221.

**Note(s):** Open to American Studies majors unless with instructor permission; normally taken in fall semester of senior year. Fulfills Social Sciences requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry and Senior Experience Coda requirements.

**AM 375 - Honors Thesis**

Credits: 4

Independent study and research leading to a thesis examining a topic relevant to American civilization from an interdisciplinary perspective. Required of candidates for department honors. Participation by invitation of the department to students with strong records in the major or by petition of a student with special research interests.

*Prerequisites:* AM 374. Open to American Studies majors only.

**Note(s):** Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

**AM 376E - Disorderly Women**

Credits: 3

(Fulfills humanistic inquiry.)

**AM 376R - Topics in American Culture**

Credits: 4

**AM 399A-D - Professional Internship In American Studies**

Credits: 1-4

Professional experience at an advanced level for juniors or seniors with substantial academic and cocurricular experience in the major. With faculty sponsorship and departmental approval, students may extend their educational experience into such areas as historic preservation, museum administration and education, journalism and communications, urban planning, teaching, public administration, and other related fields.

*Prerequisites:* Open to junior and senior majors and minors.

**Note(s):** No more than three semester hours may count toward the major. Must be taken S/U.