

# American Studies

AN INTERDEPARTMENTAL MAJOR

Director: *Imber (Sociology)*

Assistant Professor: *Fisher*

Fellow: *Jeffries*

Advisory Board: *Cain (English), Creef (Women's Studies), Koderer (Religion), Lee (English), Reverby (Women's Studies), Shetley (English)*

American Studies is the academic area of inquiry that seeks an integrated and interdisciplinary understanding of American culture. Rooted in the traditional disciplines of literature and history, the field has evolved from its establishment in the 1930s to include artifacts, methodologies, and practitioners drawn from a wide variety of disciplines within the humanities, including political science, sociology, religion, anthropology, music, art history, film studies, architecture, women's studies, and other fields of inquiry.

The American Studies major seeks to understand the American experience through a multidisciplinary program of study. The requirements for the major are as follows: Nine units of course work are required for the major, at least six of which should be taken at Wellesley College. These courses include AMST 101, which should be completed before the end of the junior year; at least two courses in historical studies; one course in literature; one course in the arts; and one course from any one of the following three areas: social and behavioral analysis; or epistemology and cognition; or religion, ethics, and moral philosophy. Students are also expected to take at least two 300-level courses, one of which should be AMST 317, taken in the junior or senior year. AMST 350, 360 and 370 do not count towards this requirement.

To ensure some concentration in a field of American society and culture, at least three courses should be elected in one department. In consultation with the director, a student may choose to focus her concentration in an area or field, such as law, women, or Asian America, assembling her group of three or more courses in this topic from two or more departments. American Studies majors with an Asian American concentration are encouraged to take courses that specifically address Asian American issues, such as AMST 151, ENG 269, WOST 248, WOST 249.

Within this structure, students are encouraged to explore the diversity of American culture and the many ways to interpret it. Most courses at the College that are primarily American in content may be applied to the American Studies major. American Studies majors are encouraged to take as part of, or in addition to, their major courses, surveys of American history, literature, and art (for example, HIST 203/204, ENG 262/266, ARTH 231/232) and a course on the American Constitution and political thought (for example, POL4 340). In addition, students are urged to take one or more courses outside the major that explore the theory and methods of knowledge creation and production (for example, ECON 103/SOC 190, PHIL 345, POL 199, QR 180, SOC 301).

## **Honors**

The only route to honors in the major is writing a thesis and passing an oral examination. To be admitted to the thesis program, a student must have a grade point average of at least 3.5 in all work in the major field above the 100 level; the department may petition on her behalf if her GPA in the major is between 3.0 and 3.5. See Academic Distinctions.

## **AMST 101 Introduction to American Studies**

*Fisher*

An interdisciplinary examination of some of the varieties of American experience, aimed at developing a functional vocabulary for further work in American Studies or related fields. After a brief, intense review of American history, the course will direct its focus towards important moments in that history, investigating each of them in relation to selected cultural, historical, artistic, and political events, figures, institutions, and texts.

Prerequisite: This course is required of American Studies majors and should be completed before the end of the junior year.

Distribution: Historical Studies

Semester: Fall                      Unit: 1.0

## **AMST 151 The Asian American Experience**

*Creef (Women's Studies)*

An interdisciplinary introduction to the study of Asian Americans, the fastest-growing ethnic group in North America. Critical examination of different stages of their experience from the "coolie labor" and "yellow peril" to the "model minority" and struggles for identity; roots of Asian stereotypes; myth and reality of Asian women; prejudice against, among, and by Asians; and Asian contribution to a more pluralistic, tolerant, and just American society. Readings, films, lectures, and discussions.

Prerequisite: None

Distribution: Historical Studies or Religion, Ethics, and Moral Philosophy

Semester: Spring                      Unit: 1.0

## **AMST 152 Race, Ethnicity, and Politics in America**

*Jeffries*

The politics of race and ethnicity in America are constantly shifting, due to demographic, political, and economic transformations. However, fundamental questions about the nature of racial and ethnic divisions in America help frame the investigation of race and ethnicity across historical contexts. Some of the questions that will guide our discussions are: Are racial and ethnic hierarchies built into American political life? Are episodes and regimes of racial injustice the result of economic structure or a shameful absence of political will? How do gender and class influence our understandings of racial and ethnic categorization and inequality? To what extent is racial and ethnic identification a matter of personal choice?

Prerequisite: None

Distribution: Social and Behavioral Analysis

Semester: Fall                      Unit: 1.0

### **AMST 212 Korean American Literature and Culture**

*Widmer (East Asian Languages and Literatures)*

**NOT OFFERED IN 2008-09.** The course introduces a group of fictional writings by Korean American writers. At the same time, it presents a series of articles on issues involving Korean Americans. The point of both sets of offerings is to introduce issues affecting Korean Americans and set them into the spectrum of other aspects of American life. The reflections of class participants will be especially welcome, indeed essential in fleshing out the themes introduced through the readings and other means. Comparisons to developments within Korea will occasionally be introduced, but they are not of primary concern.

Prerequisite: None

Distribution: Language and Literature

Semester: N/O                      Unit: 1.0

### **AMST 240 The Rise of an American Empire: Wealth and Conflict in the Gilded Age**

*Fisher*

An interdisciplinary exploration of the so-called Gilded Age and the Progressive era in the United States between the Civil War and World War I, emphasizing both the conflicts and achievements of the period. Topics will include Reconstruction and African-American experience in the South; technological development and industrial expansion; the exploitation of the West and resistance by Native Americans and Latinos; feminism, "New Women," and divorce; tycoons, workers, and the rich-poor divide; immigration from Europe, Asia, and new American overseas possessions; as well as a vibrant period of American art, architecture, literature, music, and material culture, to be studied by means of the rich cultural resources of the Boston area.

Prerequisite: None

Distribution: Historical Studies

Semester: Spring                      Unit: 1.0

### **AMST 315 Beats, Rhymes, and Life: Hip-Hop Studies**

*Jeffries*

This course offers an intensive exploration of "hip-hop" studies where students learn about the history of hip-hop as a social movement and art form comprised of the following four elements: DJing, MCing, break dancing, and graffiti art. Once a common understanding of hip-hop's genesis and history is established, attention is turned to how hip-hop is studied in the academy. This section of the course features a wide range of interdisciplinary studies of hip-hop music and culture in order to demonstrate the different methodological and theoretical frames used in hip-hop scholarship. In the final section of the course, we focus on hip-hop-related debates and discussions in popular culture, such as black authenticity, non-black consumption of hip-hop, concerns about the new black "hyperghetto," prison, and the representation of sexism and gender scripts within hip-hop culture.

Prerequisite: Permission of the instructor. Preference given to American Studies majors and juniors and seniors.

Distribution: Social and Behavioral Analysis

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Semester: Spring            Unit: 1.0

**AMST 317 Seminar. Advanced Topics in American Studies**

*Shetley (English)*

**Topic for 2008-09: Westerns and Weepers.** Westerns and “women’s pictures” were staples of American filmmaking for decades; they were produced side-by-side throughout the heyday of the Hollywood studio system. Yet these two modes of filmmaking seem at first diametrically opposed, in terms of the audiences they address, the world they represent, and the values they espouse. This course will explore these two genres as potent shapers and definers of our ideas about American society, about masculinity and femininity, and about the possibilities of moral action. Among the films that may be studied are: *Stagecoach*; *Red River*; *Shane*; *High Noon*; *Ulzana’s Raid*; *Unforgiven*; *Imitation of Life*; *Stella Dallas*; *Mildred Pierce*; *Now, Voyager*; *All that Heaven Allows*.

Prerequisite: Permission of the instructor. Enrollment is limited and preference is given to American Studies majors.

Distribution: Arts, Music, Theatre, Film, and Video

Semester: Fall            Unit: 1.0

**AMST 317/ARTH 340 Seminar. Disneyland and American Culture**

*Bedell (Art History)*

One of the most visited tourist attractions in the world, subject of thousands of books and articles, adored by millions yet reviled by many intellectuals, Disneyland has occupied a prominent place in American culture since it opened in 1955. This seminar will examine Disneyland as an expression of middle class American values, as a locus of corporatism and consumerism, as a postmodern venue, as a utopia, and as an influence upon architecture and urban design. In a broader sense, we will use Disney to explore the ideals, the desires, and the anxieties that have shaped post-World War II American culture. *Students may register for either AMST 317 or ARTH 340 and credit will be granted accordingly.*

Prerequisite: Permission of the instructor. Enrollment is limited and preference is given to Art and American Studies majors.

Distribution: Arts, Music, Theatre, Film, and Video or Historical Studies

Semester: Spring            Unit: 1.0

**AMST 350 Research or Individual Study**

Prerequisite: Open by permission of the director to juniors and seniors.

Distribution: None

Semester: Fall, Spring    Unit: 1.0

**AMST 360 Senior Thesis Research**

Prerequisite: By permission of director. Students eligible for honors work and considering doing a thesis during their senior year should plan to identify a thesis advisor, specify their project, and aim to begin work before the end of their junior year. See Academic Distinctions.

Distribution: None

As of 5/1/2008

Semester: Fall, Spring Unit: 1.0

**AMST 370 Senior Thesis**

Prerequisite: 360 and permission of department.

Distribution: None

Semester: Fall, Spring Unit: 1.0

**Related Courses**

The following is a list of courses that may be included in an American studies major. If a student has a question about whether a course not listed here can count toward the major, or if she would like permission to focus her concentration on a topic studied in more than one department, she should consult the director.

**AFR 201** The African American Literary Tradition

**AFR 206** Introduction to African-American History, 1500-Present

**AFR 207** Images of Africana People through the Cinema

**AFR 212** Black Women Writers

**AFR 217** The Black Family

**AFR 222** Images of Women and Blacks in American Cinema

**AFR 225** Introduction to Black Psychology

**AFR 229** Rap Music and the African American Poetical Tradition

**AFR 239** Islam in Black America: From Slavery to the Present

**AFR 244** Multiracial People in America

**AFR 266** Black Drama

**AFR 310** Seminar. Black Literature. Topic A: Three Writers of the Harlem Renaissance; Topic C: Writers from the Diaspora

**AFR 340** Seminar. Topics in African American History

**ANTH 220** Identity and Community Formation: Asian American Perspectives

**ARTH 205** Breaking Boundaries: The Arts of Mexico and the United States

**ARTH 225** Modern Art Since 1945

**ARTH 226** History of Photography: From Invention to Advertising Age

**ARTH 228** Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Architecture

**ARTH 230** Frank Lloyd Wright and the American Home

**ARTH 231** Architecture in North America

**ARTH 232** American Painting

**ARTH 236** Art, Architecture, and Culture in the Ancient Americas

**ARTH 320** Seminar. American Architecture

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**ARTH 336** Seminar. Museum Issues  
**ARTH 340** Seminar. Topics in American Art  
**ECON 204** U.S. Economic History  
**ECON 215** Tax Policy  
**ECON 225** Urban Economics  
**ECON 232** Health Economics  
**ECON 238** Economics and Politics  
**ECON 243** The Political Economy of Gender, Race, and Class  
**ECON 310** Public Economics  
**ECON 318** Economic Analysis of Social Policy  
**EDUC 117** Diversity in Education  
**EDUC 212** Seminar. History of American Education  
**EDUC 215** Understanding and Improving Schools  
**EDUC 216** Education and Social Policy  
**EDUC 307** Classroom Ethnography and Discourse Analysis  
**EDUC 312** Seminar. History of Childhood and Child Welfare  
**EDUC 334** Seminar. Education, Immigration, and Social Mobility  
**EDUC 335** Urban Education  
**EDUC 339/POL1 339S** Seminar. The Politics of Urban Public Schools  
**ENG 114** Masterworks of American Literature  
**ENG 251** Modern Poetry  
**ENG 253** Contemporary American Poetry  
**ENG 262** American Literature to 1865  
**ENG 263** American Literature and Social Justice  
**ENG 266** American Literature from the Civil War to the 1930s  
**ENG 267** American Literature from the 1940s to the Present  
**ENG 269** Asian American Literature  
**ENG 281** American Drama and Musical Theater  
**ENG 283** Southern Literature  
**ENG 282** Topics in Literary Criticism. Topic A for 2008-09: Missing Persons: the Detective Story and American Literary Identities  
**ENG 286** New Literatures I. Lesbian and Gay Writing from Sappho to Stonewall

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**ENG 320** Literary Cross Currents. Topic for 2008-09: Queer Modernisms (fall) and Ernest Hemingway and Orson Welles (spring)

**ENG 363** Advanced Studies in American Literature. Topic for 2008-09: Herman Melville

**ENG 365/SOC 365** Images of the American City

**EXTD 126** Maritime History

**FREN 229** America Through French Eyes: Perceptions and Realities

**HIST 203** History of the United States, 1607 to 1877

**HIST 204** History of the United States in the Twentieth Century

**HIST 251** Continent in Crisis: North America During the Age of Revolution

**HIST 252** Race, Ethnicity, and Difference in Early America

**HIST 253** First Peoples: An Introduction to Native American History

**HIST 257** Women, Gender and the Family in American History

**HIST 258** Freedom and Dissent in American History

**HIST 291** Marching Toward 1968: The Pivotal Year

**HIST 292** The Era of the Civil War and Reconstruction

**HIST 316** Seminar. Authority and Authenticity in Native American History

**HIST 317** Seminar. The Historical Construction of American Manhood, 1600–1900

**HIST 326** Seminar. American Jewish History

**HIST 390** Seminar. Race, Law, and Culture in Louisiana, 1699-1904

**MUS 120** Jazz Theory

**MUS 209** A History of Jazz

**PHIL 210** Philosophy of Business

**PHIL 222** American Philosophy

**POL1 200** American Politics

**POL1 210** Political Participation and Influence

**POL1 212** Urban Politics

**POL1 213** Washington Decision-Making (Wintersession)

**POL1 215** Courts, Law, and Politics

**POL1 311** The Supreme Court in American Politics

**POL1 313** American Presidential Politics

**POL1 314** Understanding How Congress Works

**POL1 315** Public Policy and Analysis

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**POL1 316** Mass Media in American Democracy  
**POL1 317** Health Politics and Policy  
**POL1 318** Religion and Politics in Contemporary America  
**POL1 319S** Seminar. Campaigns and Elections  
**POL1 320S** Seminar. Inequality and the Law  
**POL1 324S** Seminar. Gender and Law  
**POL1 330S** Seminar. African Americans and the U.S. Political System  
**POL1 331S** Seminar. Political Organizing: People, Power and Change  
**POL1 333S** Seminar. Ethics and Politics  
**POL1 334** Disability in American Society: Politics, Policy, and Law  
**POL1 335S** Seminar. The First Amendment  
**POL1 336S** Seminar. Judicial Politics  
**POL1 337S** Seminar. The Politics of Minority Groups in the United States  
**POL1 338S** Seminar. Representation  
**POL1 339S/EDUC 339** Seminar. The Politics of Urban Public Schools  
**POL3 227** The Vietnam War  
**POL3 328S** Seminar. Selected Topics in World Politics: Anti-Americanism as Politics and Performance  
**POL4 340** American Political Thought  
**PSYC 230** Psychology of Law  
**REL 218** Religion in America  
**REL 220** Religious Themes in American Fiction  
**REL 221** Catholic Studies  
**REL 319** Seminar. Religion, Law, and Politics in America  
**SOC 205/WOST 211** American Families and Social Equality  
**SOC 209** Social Inequality  
**SOC 212** Comparative Sociology and Demography of the Family  
**SOC 218** Religion in Contemporary Society  
**SOC 306/WOST 306** Women and Work  
**SOC 311/WOST 311** Seminar. Family and Gender Studies: The Family, the State, and Social Policy  
**SOC 314** Medical Sociology and Social Epidemiology  
**SOC 333** Seminar. Special Topics in Popular Culture

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**SOC 348** The Sociology of Conservatism  
**SOC 365/ENG 365** Images of the American City  
**SPAN 245** Ethnic Passions  
**SPAN 255** Chicano Literature: From the Chronicles to the Present  
**SPAN 305** Seminar. Hispanic Literature of the United States  
**THST 210** Echoes of the Homeland  
**WOST 211/SOC 205** American Families and Social Equality  
**WOST 214** Women, Reproduction and Health  
**WOST 216** Women and Popular Culture: Latina Nannies and the Latina Sex Pot  
**WOST 217** Growing up Gendered  
**WOST 219** Gender in the Workplace  
**WOST 220** American Health Care History in Gender, Race, and Class Perspective  
**WOST 222** Women in Contemporary American Society  
**WOST 223** Gendering the Bronze Screen: Representations of Chicanas/Latinas in Film  
**WOST 248** Asian American Women Writers  
**WOST 249** Asian American Women in Film and Video  
**WOST 305** Seminar. Representations of Women of Color  
**WOST 306/SOC 306** Women and Work  
**WOST 307** Imaging Asian/Asian American Women  
**WOST 308** The Changing Law, the New Family, and the State  
**WOST 311/SOC 311** Seminar. Family and Gender Studies: The Family, the State, and Social Policy  
**WOST 315** Seminar. Coalitions, Institutions, and Individual Identities  
**WOST 317** Seminar. History of Sexuality: Queer Theory  
**WOST 324** Seminar. History, Memory, and Women's Lives  
**WOST 326** Seminar. Crossing the Border(s): Narratives of Transgression