

Spring 2017 - Inside Course Descriptions

AMST 30108 American Capitalism

M/W 8:00-9:15AM

Korey Garibaldi

This course offers a broad overview of American capitalism from the early nineteenth century to the late 1980s. It introduces students to the cultural and social phenomena that accompanied the economic transformation of the U.S. from a newly-independent British colony to the most influential economic power in the world. The course will consider a wide range of historical developments related to the expansion and contraction of the American capitalism between this period, including: massive population shifts, territorial expansions, technological changes, legal debates, wars, and economic flux. As a class we will examine a mix of scholarly sources and primary materials (including cultural works such as novels and films) to synthesize both the historical and cultural characteristic of American capitalism. In addition to three short writing assignments connecting two or more course readings, students will develop and 8 – 10 page final paper at the end of the semester.<>

AMST 30112 Witnessing the Sixties

T/R 11:00AM-12:15PM

Ben Giamo

The purpose of this course is twofold: to examine the social context and cultural change of the sixties, on the one hand, and on the other to explore the various journalistic and aesthetic representations of events and movements. Much that was written during the period was ephemeral. There are, however, certain lasting accounts of the sixties by authors who command respect today, writers and artists whose new publications or publications about them get front-page reviews in the New York Times Book Review section. We will focus on the manner in which each author witnessed the sixties as well as the unique interaction between personal depiction, social event, and cultural meaning. We will examine fresh styles of expression, such as the new journalism popularized by Tom Wolfe, the lyrics and songs of Bob Dylan, as well as writing that highlights liberation, protest, social justice, solipsism, and spontaneity. Major topics for consideration include the counterculture and the movement—a combination of civil rights, anti-war protest, and second-wave feminism. These topics will sharpen our interest in history, politics, foreign affairs, music, literature, and documentary.

AMST 30116 American Ruins

M/W 12:30-1:45PM

Erika Doss

American ruins are increasingly visible today, from images of urban decay and piles of debris in Detroit and Gary to movies and novels (*The Book of Eli*, *The Road*) depicting post-apocalyptic "ruin-scaping" of abandoned towns, derelict factories, crumbling monuments, and deserted shopping malls, variously populated by zombies, vampires, and survivalists. Ruins typically signify "disaster," "failure," "defeat," and "the past." Why, then, in a nation that has repeatedly defined itself in terms of promise, progress, and success—the American Dream—are visions of ruin, real and imagined, so prevalent today? This class explores the history and meaning of American ruins, relating contemporary fascination with ruins ("ruin porn") to currently held attitudes about modernity, technology, citizenship, consumerism, the rule of law, and the environment. Course materials include novels, films, and photographs; coursework includes fieldtrips (to Detroit and Gary), essays, and discussion.

AMST 30140 Multi Media Journalism

M/W 11:00AM-12:15PM

Michael Reilly

The 21st century journalist needs to be comfortable with what is called "writing across the media" and can no longer be selective about which form of communication to build a career around. In many newsrooms, print journalists are now expected to perform on radio or in front of TV cameras, while the bylines of electronic journalists are turning up in newspapers and magazines. Such media "convergence" is already more the norm than the exception. On top of that, the Internet has become a major medium in its own right, encompassing different styles of communication. While the focus of this course will be on writing, it will expose students to a variety of media in an effort to prepare them for the reality of modern communications careers.

AMST 30141 Native American Literature

T/R 12:30-1:45PM

Robert Walls

Native Americans have long been trapped in a betwixt and between state, caught by the forces of past and present, tradition and assimilation, romanticization and caricature. Yet

through it all, Native voices have continued to speak of the Indian experience with great power and eloquence. This course will introduce Native American literature as a distinctive contribution to American and world literature. We will examine a wide range of expressive culture from the last century, including novels, poetry, graphic stories, children's literature, film, digital media, autobiographies, performances of oral literature, and music. Through the passion, creativity, and humor of Indian authors, we will learn something of the historical experience of Native men and women, and how they have reacted to massacres and mascots, racism and reservations, poverty and political oppression. Above all, we will try to understand how indigenous authors have used literature to engage crucial issues of race and culture in the United States that continue to influence their lives: identity, self-discovery, the centrality of place, cultural survival, and the healing power of language and spirituality. Class discussions will incorporate literary, historical, and ethnographic perspectives of Native expressive culture and the agency of authors as artists and activists vis-à-vis the wider American literary tradition. Authors include Sherman Alexie, Nicholas Black Elk, Louise Erdrich, D'Arcy McNickle, N. Scott Momaday, Linda Hogan, Winona LaDuke, and Leonard Peltier.

AMST 30143 Fashioning Identities in Colonial America

M/W 11:00AM-12:15PM

Sophie White

Did Puritans really only wear black and white, or did they wear fashionable lace, silk ribbons and bright colors? Did early settlers wash their bodies to get clean? What role did fashion play in the making of the American Revolution? And how did slaves and Native Americans adorn their bodies? This course will address such questions by focusing on dress and material culture. We will consider the role of dress in the construction of colonial identities, and examine the ways that bodies operated as sites for negotiating class and ethnic encounters.

AMST 30152 Art in America

M/W 9:30-10:45AM

Erika Doss

This course examines American visual and material cultures from the pre-colonial era to the present day. Providing a broad, historical account and considering a variety of media from paintings and sculptures to quilts, photographs, world's fairs, and fashion styles, this survey explores American art within the context of cultural, social, economic, political, and philosophical developments. In particular, it considers the role that American art has played in the formation of national identity and understandings of class, race, gender, and ethnicity.

AMST 30160 America in the 20th Century

M/W 9:30-10:45AM

Annie Coleman

In February of 1941 Time editor Henry Luce urged Americans to defend democratic values, assert influence upon the world, and make the 20th century the "American Century." This term is now so widely embraced that even gonzo journalist Hunter Thompson subtitled his memoir (Kingdom of Fear) "Loathsome Secrets of a Star-Crossed Child in the Final Days of the American Century." This course will trace the rise of America's political, economic, and cultural power from the 1890s through the 1990s, along with the conflicts and protests surrounding labor, race, gender, war, and the environment that accompanied that rise. How has this dynamic historical context, we will ask, served as both the backdrop for and the product of American culture? From muckraking journalism and automobile ads to Cold War films and Hip Hop -- from Progressive to Neoliberal Eras -- we will examine how 20th century politics, society, and culture mutually informed one another to create the American Century. Assignments will include midterm and final essay exams, as well as shorter written and multimedia assignments on a variety of topics.

AMST 30162 Latinos in American Film

T/R 3:30-4:45PM

Jason Ruiz

AMST 31162 LAB

Thursday 5:05-6:20PM

This course will survey the history of representations of Latinos in American cinema from the silent era to the present. We will examine how stereotypes associated with Latinos have been produced, reinforced, and challenged in American films - from greasers and Latin lovers to gangsters, kingpins, and border crossers. We will explore the fascinating contradiction that, despite a long history of misrepresentation and under representation, Latinos have made significant contributions to Hollywood and independent cinema. We will also examine the rise of Latino directors in recent years and their drive to reframe the Latino image for American audiences. Screenings will range from the silent epic *Martyrs of the Alamo* (1915) to more recent films such as *Maria Full of Grace* (2004). Our interdisciplinary approach to the subject will draw upon readings from history, film theory and criticism, and ethnic/American studies. Students will take a midterm exam and make class presentations.

AMST 30166 Magazine Writing

M/W 3:30-4:45PM

Jason Kelly

This course will examine various forms of magazine journalism, from the direct presentation of information to narrative journalism to the art of the first-person essay. The class, requiring students to complete a variety of written assignments while performing in a workshop setting, will emphasize those storytelling techniques essential to writing for publication.

AMST 30175 Tale of Two Depressions

T/R 2:00-3:15PM

Ben Giamo

It was the worst hard time of the last century. It is now the worst hard time of the new century.

This interdisciplinary course will be team-taught by professors of American Studies and Economics. Perspectives, materials, and methods from these respective fields will be presented, interrelated, and otherwise employed to enrich our understanding of the causes, conditions, and consequences of two economic depressions: 1929-1941, and 2007 to the present. Throughout, we will be concerned with the similarities and differences between the two depressions and the crises that precipitated and sustained them. What was going on then, and what is going on now that has proved so decisive? How do we come to terms with the two turbulent periods in question and their connections with respect to culture, economics, politics, and society? What is the impact of these crises on the nation and its direction? How do our understandings of what happened then help us make sense of what is happening today, and what questions today assist us in analyzing a now-distant but crucial set of historical events?

In order to analyze the respective depressions, we will examine historical contexts, economic factors, developments in the financial system, public policy, documentary accounts, literary and theatrical representations, popular culture, and social dissent. Course texts include *The Great Depression* and *Letters from the "Forgotten Man,"* *You Have Seen Their Faces*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Cradle Will Rock*, *Winner-Take-All Politics*, *Cosmopolis*, *Give Us Liberty: A Tea Party Manifesto*, and *The Occupy Handbook*. Two documentary films will be viewed: *The Crash of 1929* and *Inside Job* as well as two feature films: *Modern Times* and *Wall Street*.

AMST 30190 Religion in America

T/R 2:00-3:15PM

Thomas Tweed

This course introduces students to the history of religion in the lands that became the United States. It focuses on how diverse peoples imagined and transformed the landscape, interacted with one another at different sites, and moved within and across borders. It is divided into two main sections. We begin --and end--by asking: How should we tell the story of religion in America? To help students clarify their thinking and provide them with a wide variety of intriguing sources, the next two sections introduce different ways to tell that story--by chronology or theme. Section one provides an historical overview, telling the story of U.S. religion by tracing chronological shifts, and we turn in the next section to explore a series of theses drawing on varied sources from multiple groups and historical periods. The topics we discuss in that section include gender, sexuality, science, class, race, ethnicity, violence, politics, pluralism, and law. Along the way, students plan and write a research paper on a topic of their choice and present their findings to the class. At the end, we circle back to the questions we posted at the start--how do we tell the story of U.S. religion?--as we write our own narrative on the last day of class.

AMST 30192 Sports and American Culture

M/W 12:30-1:45PM

Annie Coleman

From pick up soccer and the Baraka Bouts to fantasy football and the Olympics, sports articulate American identities, priorities, aspirations, and concerns. They reflect our dominant values but also highlight our divisions and serve as a means to question those values. Athletes, organizers, spectators, fans, and the media all have a stake. This course will examine sport's role in American society and culture thematically, covering the late 19th century to present and paying special attention to sport as a physical performance (including issues of danger, drugs, disability, spectatorship, and fandom), sport as an expression of identity (the construction of race, gender, class, community, and nation), sport as a form of labor (with issues of power and control, safety, and amateurism), and sport as a cultural narrative (how do writers, historians, and the media attach meaning to it?). We will examine history, journalism, documentary film, and television coverage; topics will range from Victorian bicyclists and early college football to Lance Armstrong and Title IX. Requirements include reading and regular discussion, a variety of short analytical papers, and a culminating project in which students will research and analyze a topic of their own choice.

AMST 30194 Transnational America

M/W 2:00-3:15PM

Perin Gurel

What does American Studies have to do with the rest of the world? A lot. The movement of people, ideas, and products across our national borders have influenced both the United States and the world around us. (Think immigration, commerce, study abroad programs, cultural fads like belly dance and Gangnam style, but also, imperialism, terrorism, and drones.) In this course, we will explore both the presence of the world in the United States and the presence of the United States in the world, with a focus on the politics of culture. How have Americans imagined the world and how have non-Americans imagined the United States? Is there such a thing as "cultural imperialism" or "Americanization" and how does it work? How has culture influenced U.S. foreign policy and how have U.S. foreign policy makers and non-governmental groups sought to influence culture, both within the United States and elsewhere? The course has a chronological emphasis, beginning with the Spanish-Cuban-American war (1898) and U.S. imperialism in the Pacific, going on to the post-WWI "Wilsonian Moment", WWII, "the American Century" and the Cold War, and the War on Terror. Even more important, however, is its thematic emphasis on the connections between culture and policy. Requirements include discussion, reading responses, and a final research-based paper.

AMST 30196 Dearly Beloved

T/R 11:00AM-12:15PM

Pamela Butler

Although we often think of marriage as a "natural" or timeless institution, the social, political, and economic meanings of marriage in the US have actually changed dramatically and often over the last two centuries, and varied across America's diverse social and geographic spaces. This course explores those changes and differences, asking what role marriage has played in the definition and re-definition of categories like citizenship, capitalism, gender, race, love, and family in the US. As we chart the history of marriage as an institution, we'll focus in particular on the relationship between marriage and the state, and on protest movements since the 19th century that have questioned or challenged the politics of marriage, including abolitionist, anarchist, feminist, Marxist, civil-rights, and queer political thought and activism.

AMST 43144 Humor and Power Senior Seminar

M/W 11:00AM-12:15PM

Perin Gurel

AMST Senior Majors Only

How many American Studies seniors does it take to analyze a joke? By studying humor seriously in its historical and sociocultural contexts, this senior seminar will introduce students to critical approaches to humor and power in the United States. Instead of taking humor and laughter for granted as self-evident phenomena, we will consider how practices of humor might intersect with structural hierarchies, including those of race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and religion. Students will engage with a wide variety of sources, including primary documents such as films and political cartoons, theories of humor, and critical scholarship on key American texts of humor. We will also explore vernacular theories about the value of having "a sense of humor" and explore how entire groups of people have historically been excluded from this category. The senior seminar is designed to be a capstone experience for American Studies majors. Readings and assignments will explore course themes in the context of American Studies as a field. Requirements will include seminar-style discussions of course readings, a theory handout and presentation, a final project of 20- 25 pages (or equivalent), and a presentation of that project in class.