American Studies Course Descriptions  
FALL ~ 2010

Revised: 7/6/10

AMST UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

Note: All classes are held on the GW Main Campus (Foggy Bottom) unless otherwise noted. Check the GW Schedule of Classes website for specific locations, discussion sections, and the most up-to-date information at http://my.gwu.edu/mod/pws/

AMST 055.10—Race, Gender, & Law  
Jennifer Nash  
MW 2:20-3:10  
This course studies the relationship between race, gender, and law by asking two intimately related questions: How does law construct race and gender? How do race and gender shape law? Over the course of the semester, we will study the foundational civil rights cases which have shaped our contemporary understanding of racial and gender equality, become familiar with critical approaches to law (including critical race theory and feminist legal theory), and apply our knowledge to analyzing contested sites, including: the growth of the prison industry, domestic violence law, sexual harassment law, and reproductive rights. Students must also register for a discussion section to satisfy the course requirement.

AMST 055.11—Film & Politics  
Elisabeth Anker  
R 5:10-7:00 (lecture) & R 7:10-9:40 (film)  
Note: The lecture time is listed from 5:10-7:00pm, but it will only run until 6:30pm so that students can grab a bite before the film showing at 7:10pm. This class addresses the relationship between politics and film by examining how American films interpret and challenge political power in America. We pair film analysis with readings in political theory to interrogate the operations of power in political life. Exploring films thematically, first we examine those that shape conventional interpretations of political power in America, including concepts of limited government, popular sovereignty, and liberal individualism. Next, we consider films that challenge these ideas by offering alternate conceptions of how power functions, while addressing questions of ideology, surveillance, domination, and biopolitics. The last section investigates particular genres—melodrama, the western, and film noir—that reshape and rearticulate these themes within American political culture. Throughout, we will focus on how to read the visual language of film and the written texts of political theory. Students must also register for a discussion section to satisfy the course requirement.

AMST 055.12—Race & the City  
Sandra Heard  
WF 11:10-12:25  
This undergraduate seminar will examine the ways that African-American and other nonwhite identities have been intricately linked to the formation and representation of urban spaces in the US from the antebellum period through the 20th century. We will look at consumer culture’s role in forging racial and ethnic identities in American cities. For example, what was the social and political significance of the black dandy (or the well-dressed African American) during the mid 1800s? How did blackface minstrelsy shape nonwhite, working-class identity during the same era? We will also explore how varied
social groups have claimed and reproduced urban space through conflict and ideological struggles in the press, popular culture, public events and everyday practices at the street level. Additionally, we will investigate how identity is formed through movement and contact with “other” selves or bodies in the public sphere. The focus on identity formation and its relationship to the making and representation of urban and (sub)urban landscapes will ultimately require students to interrogate the types of interactions that are needed to produce and maintain democratic space.

AMST 144.80—Explorations in Historic Geography
Eric Lindstrøm
T 5:10-7:00
Examination of selected themes in the cultural geography of the United States over the course of its history, in relation to an overview of the historical geography of the country.

AMST 162.80—US Religion & Politics
Joseph Kip Kosek
TR 3:55-4:45
This course explores the history of religion in American politics and public life. Main themes include: religious and secular visions of the nation; religion’s role in promoting or preventing bigotry, conflict, and violence; the separation of church and state; religious factors in racial and gender politics; the use of religious resources in reform movements; and the relationship of religion and democracy. Likely subjects of study include: The Constitution, the Civil War, immigration, World War II, the civil rights movement, the New Christian Right, and American Islam. Students must also register for a discussion section to satisfy the course requirement.

AMST 167.85—History of Jewish People in America
Lauren Strauss
TR 9:35-10:50
This course turns a wide lens on the American Jewish community from its colonial beginnings to the present day. Drawing on a variety of sources – personal memoirs, government documents, photographs, cookbooks, academic articles, poems, songs, and movies – the course follows the development of Jewish communal institutions and poses challenging questions about the nature of Jewish and American identity in the modern world. From Colonial America through the Civil War and the late 19th c., to the upheavals of the 20th c. and beyond, students will explore one of the most complex and vibrant communities in Jewish and American history.

AMST 167W.80—World War II (WID)
Thomas Guglielmo
TR 9:35-10:25
This course will examine the history of America’s World War II experience and how this history has since been remembered — officially, culturally, and personally. It will focus on five overlapping topics — service in the armed forces, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the lives of women, Japanese American internment, and race relations. Students must also register for a discussion section to satisfy the course requirements. This course satisfies a WID requirement.

AMST 167W.85—US & Middle East Cultural Encounters (WID)
Melani McAlister
TR 12:45-1:35
This course explores the ways that people in the United States have imagined and engaged the Middle East as well as how people in the Middle East have imagined and engaged the United States. We will use movies, novels, travel narratives, and the news media, among other sources, to explore the ways that people in these regions have understood, and misunderstood, each other. We will also examine key instances of foreign policy encounter or conflict, such as the Iran hostage crisis and the Iraq war, attending to how culture and
policy inform each other. Students must also register for a discussion section to satisfy the course requirements. This course satisfies a WID requirement.

**AMST 168W.10—Cultural Criticism in America (WID)**
Melani McAlister
TR 3:45-5:00
This seminar introduces students to major methods for understanding and interpreting cultural materials. We will explore how and why culture—particularly mass culture such as film, television, photography, music, fashion, and advertising—plays such a significant role in our lives. At various point in the semester, we will examine: 1) the ways that we experience culture and ground our identities in it; 2) the ideological messages and stereotypes that circulate in cultural products; 3) the institutional, corporate, and individual production of cultural products and spaces; and 4) the ways that different audiences interpret the culture they consume. This course is writing-intensive and discussion-oriented. This course satisfies a WID requirement. Restricted to AMST majors only.

**AMST 173.80—African-American History**
Erin Chapman
MW 12:45-2:00
In this course, we will explore the major themes and concepts emerging from the early history of the African and African American presence in the New World and in the new nation known as the United States of America. A major focus will be the emergence and evolving significance of the concept of racial difference and its intersections with imperialism, gender, sexuality, economy, nationality, and politics. We will approach the history of the development of the New World and the first century of the United States from the perspective of people of African descent. We will study Africans’ and African Americans’ experiences in slavery and freedom, the dynamic oppression they faced, the communities and institutions they built, and the politics and identities they formed in the process. We will thus explore the foundation of the modern world as we know it, with all of its complexities of race, sex, class, and political strife.

**AMST 175.80—American Architecture (1600-1860)**
Richard Longstreth
MW 12:45-2:00
This course examines selected aspects of the built environment in the US from the first period of European settlement to the eve of the Civil War. Stylistic properties, functions, common designs, technological developments, and urbanistic patterns are introduced as vehicles for interpreting the historical significance of this legacy. Buildings are analyzed both as artifacts and as signifiers of broader social, cultural, and economic tendencies. Other topics include the persistence and mixing of cultural traditions, the role of the designer, the influence of region, and architecture as a component of landscape. We examine colonial building and settlement patterns; the emergence of national expression; the rise of city building and of a commercial core; the growing specificity of building types for commercial, governmental, institutional, and religious functions; the enduring importance of the single-family house; the multi-faceted nature of eclecticism; evolving views of nature and landscape design; and the impact of technology. We focus on broad tendencies in design and their effect upon rural and urban landscapes, as well as works of Davis, Downing, Jefferson, Latrobe, Mills, Olmsted, Strickland, and Upjohn. The impact of peoples from Africa and the Caribbean, the British Isles, France, German states, the Netherlands, and Spain is examined during both the colonial and post-colonial periods. Grad students may take the course with permission of instructor.

**AMST 180W.10—Identity & American Culture (WID)**
Prof. Chad Heap
R 12:45-3:15
This research seminar explores the historical relationship between identity and American culture. Students will undertake original, independent research on the cultural construction of identity in a
particular historical period and/or the ways that identity has shaped the development of particular cultural products or processes. Topics of inquiry might include (but are not limited to) the emergence or historical transformation of particular racial, sexual, gender, religious, class, or national identities and cultures; the development of subcultures or subcultural products and performances; the visual and discursive production of race, sexuality, nationality or other identity categories in popular culture, medicine or law; and the politicization of identity in American culture. Each student will write a substantial research paper based on primary source materials and grounded in relevant, existing scholarship. Students may focus on either historical or present-day topics, but all research projects must make productive use of at least one local archival collection. This course satisfies a WID requirement. Restricted to AMST majors only, except with permission of the instructor.

AMST 180W.11—Reading Cold War Culture (WID)
James Miller
R 3:30-6:00
This research seminar focuses on the American 1950s through an examination of its portrayal in historical and contemporary texts. Topics will range from the contemporary TV series "Mad Men" to Sloan Wilson's "The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit," as well as the Army-McCarthy Hearings, the film "Good Night and Good Luck," the Bomb, the Beats, Sci-Fi Movies of the period, and other related topics. Students will write a substantial research paper based on independent research in primary sources. This course satisfies a WID requirement. Restricted to AMST majors only.

AMST 198W.10—Cultural History of New Deal Era (WID)
Joan Fragaszy Troyano
W 2:00-3:50
This research seminar will introduce students to the methods and sources of cultural history through readings and original research focused on the United States during the New Deal era. In the 1930s the federal government sponsored thousands of writers, artists, photographers, social scientists, and government programs to document and represent the people, places, and traditions of the US. These programs produced an astounding amount of materials, and much of it is archived in the Washington, DC area. We will learn how scholars have used oral, textual, and visual sources to understand the US in this period. Then you will prepare an original research project to explore the questions and sources you find most interesting. This course satisfies a WID requirement.

AMST 772.80 – Race, Medicine, & Public Health: African American Experiences
Vanessa Northington Gamble
MW 12:45-2:00
This course focuses on the experiences of African Americans as patients and health care providers to examine the history of the relationship between race, American medicine, and public health. The course will emphasize the importance of understanding the historical roots of contemporary policy dilemmas such as racial and ethnic disparities in health and health care. This course is open to third & fourth year undergraduates, and graduate students.

AMST 801.10—The Sixties
Suleiman Osman
WF 9:35-10:50
This course will examine American society, culture, and politics during the dramatic decade of the 1960’s. Topics will include the New Frontier, the Great Society, the civil rights movement, the student movement, the Vietnam War, the counterculture, feminism, and the rise of the New Right. This course is restricted to first-year undergraduates.
AMST 801.11—Spaces, Places & Things
John Vlach
WF 2:20-3:10
This course will provide students with the skills to interpret the cultural messages imbedded in our material surroundings. This vast subject area, generally referred to as material culture, is made up of all sorts of humanly created artifacts ranging from specific objects to vast landscapes. The things around us can be read as texts in ways that parallel the way we draw meaning from books. These material “texts” are particularly important as evidence of cultural values in view of the fact that so few people actually leave written records about their everyday experience. Students will be introduced to the methods of material cultural analysis. We will engage in observing, recording, describing, and interpreting various classes of artifacts, including places and objects. We will look for what these spaces, places, structures, and things might tell us about their designers, makers, and users. Finally, we will try to assemble these particular messages into a collective portrait of social life in the United States. *This course is restricted to first year undergraduates.*

AMST 801.12—Devotion, Politics & Performance
Elaine Peña
MW 12:45-2:00
Performance does not happen exclusively on stage or on the silver screen. Globally and locally, we interweave performances of class status, race, gender, sexuality, morality, and nationality into the fabric of our everyday lives. This course examines how communities across the Americas and the Caribbean use devotional performances—pilgrimage, prayer, dance, shrine maintenance—to survive the hardships that accompany migration: economic uncertainty, xenophobia, family separation, diminishing human rights, and the socio-emotional effects of displacement. *This course is restricted to first-year undergraduates.*

**Graduate Courses—continued on next page**
AMST GRADUATE COURSES

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AMST 201.10—Scope & Methods: American Studies
Suleiman Osman
F 2:10-4:00
This course is an intensive introduction to the history, debates, and methodologies that are central to the field of American Studies. Students will analyze key texts, explore ways to redefine the canon of American Studies scholarship, and begin to formulate ideas for future research. Restricted to graduate students in American Studies.

AMST 232.10—Cultural Theory & American Studies
Elisabeth Anker
F 10:00-12:00
This class will serve as an introduction to critical theory, with a focus on themes pertinent to the work of cultural analysis. We will examine key concepts and debates on power, identity, cultural production and consumption, the public sphere, spectacle, biopolitics, capitalism, and the practice of critique. Readings will include texts by Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Giorgio Agamben, Slavoj Žižek, and Jacques Rancière. Restricted to graduate students in American Studies.

AMST 250.10—American Material Culture
Katherine Ott
W 1:30-3:30 (Smithsonian)
This class is an introduction to the major theories, issues, and diverse viewpoints and practices in the field of material culture. Material culture refers to the objects and artifacts that populate the tactile and visual environment. Material culture is a form of evidence poorly understood and often dismissed, yet it is the primary component of the sensory world – it is through objects and images that people learn about and integrate themselves into the human community. Material culture carries and creates meaning. Some artifacts, such as the refrigerator, the spinning wheel, and the contraceptive pill, initiate new systems and support cultural transitions. Other objects, such as a wedding ring or a judge’s gavel, convey complex symbolic meanings. Still others, such as photographs and clothing, create personal identity. We will study the range of these relationships with material things. The class is taught by a Smithsonian history curator and meets off-campus; contact Prof. Ott at ottk@si.edu for location details.

AMST 257.80—American Folklife
John Vlach
W 6:10-8:00
This course will present the materials of American folk culture concentrating particularly on folk architecture, folk crafts, and folk art. The major organizing themes of the course are regionalism and local cultural values. During the first half of the course we will assess the entire nation in terms of architectural expression. Then we will focus on the topical insights that can be gained by the analysis of objects in their social contexts. Course requirements include assigned readings and a major term paper (~ 20 pages).
AMST 272.80—American Social Movements
Thomas Guglielmo
T 2:10-4:00
This course will explore the history of social movements in the United States, with emphasis on civil rights, feminism, conservatism, and labor. We will examine their local, national, and transnational contexts, their historical trajectories, and their larger impact on American life.

AMST 273.80—Women in American History
Cynthia Harrison
R 3:30-6:00
This course will address important works in American women's history and the evolution of the field in historiographical context.

AMST 277.80—Historic Preservation: Principles and Methods
Richard Longstreth
MW 4:10-6:00
This course addresses the scope and purpose of the preservation movement in the US, focusing on developments since the 1960s. Topics include the development of ideas and approaches to preservation at home and abroad since the late 18th century; the legal framework developed at the national, state, and local levels to foster preservation; the dynamics between public- and private-sector preservation organizations; and key facets of the research process essential to determine significance and set priorities to protecting historic properties. Both pragmatic and conceptual aspects are explored, as are the implications of preservation practice on broader realms, ranging from our attitudes toward the past to the tangible benefits for a community or business. Preservation must be a practical line of work imbued with political, technical, and economic expertise, but its ultimate worth is as a form of cultural expression. Classroom lectures and discussions are supplemented by visits from a number of prominent figures in the field—both nationally and locally—who afford behind-the-scenes insight, current initiatives, and challenges. For further information, visit the AMST Historic Preservation webpage at http://www.gwu.edu/~amst/histpres/pres.htm or contact Prof. Longstreth at rwl@gwu.edu

AMST 280.10—Field Methods: Architectural Documentation
Orlando Ridout
R 4:10-6:00
In-depth thematic study of the cultural landscape, focusing on the basic field techniques and skills necessary to analyze and interpret accurately the fabric of historic buildings and their settings. Additional attention given to major thematic issues of both rural and urban landscapes. Topics considered include housing, agriculture, industry, and the architectural legacy of African American culture. A variety of building types and complexes are examined firsthand, with emphasis on the broader issue of interplay between natural and cultural landscapes. Intensive study is conducted on a single site, with members of the class divided into recording teams. Research methods based on building fabric and the physical landscape are the primary focus; work in the field constitutes a major component of the course. Schedule will include four one-day field trips on Saturdays or Sundays as selected by class members.

AMST 284.10—American Cool
Frank Goodyear
M 6:10-8:00
When African-American jazz musicians named the state of mind known as "being cool" in the early 1940s, they referred to an ideal, balanced state of mind, a relaxed intensity. A "cool" jazz musician wore a blank facial expression—a mask—that projected rebellion against the status quo, an aloof indifference towards authority, and a dedication to one's art form. These same ideals were appropriated by the white American counterculture under the terms "hip" and "cool"—first, in the 1950s, among the Beat
Generation writers through jazz, slang, and bohemian life, and later, in the 1960s, through social protest and the hedonism of sex, drugs, and rock n' roll. By the 1970s, corporations began to appropriate cool, creating a "hip consumer" aesthetic that suggested anybody could be cool through the right style and material goods. Today some wonder whether "cool" is dead or, in light of so many distinct stylistic trends, whether "everything is cool." This course explores the origins and evolution of this cultural phenomenon, with an emphasis on the thirty-year period following WWII. As the practice and meaning of "being cool" has not remained static over time, we will investigate chronologically the early roots of this state of mind, its codification in the 1940s, and its continuing evolution to the present-day. The course also argues that there is a distinct connection between the concept of "being cool" and the visual mediums of photography and film. The unique ability of photography and film to capture performance and the dominance of these mediums at mid-century made them the lens through which "cool" was understood.

AMST 286.80—Interpretation in the Historic House Museum
Carol Stapp
T 11:10-1:00
Enjoy first-hand encounters with an astounding array of museums through five class trips (including Frank Lloyd Wright’s Pope-Leighey House and Woodlawn Plantation; the Woodrow Wilson House; George Washington’s Mount Vernon; Hillwood Estate, Museum and Gardens; and President Lincoln’s Cottage). You’ll meet knowledgeable practitioners, who’ll give you a behind-the-scenes perspective on the challenges of interpretation—from living history to virtual visits—in America’s home-grown museum type. A short report focused on a National Park Service site (Arlington House or the Clara Barton National Historic Site) provides the groundwork for a field project in conjunction with the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site. The field projects are presented to FDNHS staff, who join us on campus for a symposium and poster session at the end of the course. Please plan for sufficient travel time before and after the scheduled two-hour class; to supplement public transportation for sites at a distance, students organize car pools.

AMST 289.80—Race, Gender, and Popular Culture
Jennifer Nash
M 5:10-7:00
This seminar focuses on interdisciplinary approaches to studying popular culture and its fraught, contested relationship with race and gender. Over the course of the semester, we will develop a set of theoretical and methodological tools for studying the panoply of ways that popular culture makes use of fantasies and fictions of difference. We will ask questions like: How does "difference" lend meaning to popular culture? How are dominant ideas about race and gender produced through popular culture? How do we understand strategies of self-representation and alternative representation mobilized by minoritarian subjects? Topics to be discussed include: hip-hop, The Wire, "street lit" and debates about the "pornification" of American popular culture.

AMST 289.81—Transnational Methods
Elaine Peña
W 3:30-6:00
The literature on transnationalism has grown exponentially over the past decade. This course will look at early texts in the field and then move on to contemporary analyses in which scholars treat transnationalism from different disciplinary perspectives. We will also pay attention to how researchers claim and qualify the idea of transnationalism through particular sources and methodology.

AMST 290.10—Research in US Cultural History
Joseph Kip Kosek
R 2:10-4:00
This graduate-level research seminar requires each student to produce a scholarly article based on primary source research in some aspect of American cultural history. The goal is to write a manuscript of 8,000 to
10,000 words that could be submitted to an academic journal. Class meetings will focus on crafting a topic, doing primary research, assembling bibliographies, formulating arguments, using evidence, editing drafts, and writing clearly. Each class member should be ready to discuss potential paper topics at the first seminar meeting.

**AMST 772.80 – Race, Medicine, & Public Health: African American Experiences**  
Vanessa Northington Gamble  
MW 12:45-2:00  
This course focuses on the experiences of African Americans as patients and health care providers to examine the history of the relationship between race, American medicine, and public health. The course will emphasize the importance of understanding the historical roots of contemporary policy dilemmas such as racial and ethnic disparities in health and health care. *This course is open to third & fourth year undergraduates, and graduate students.*

**AMST 295.10 – Independent Study**  
*Departmental approval required to register; contact your advisor or amst@gwu.edu*

**AMST 299.10 – Thesis Research**

**AMST 300.10 – Thesis Research**

**AMST 398.10 – Advanced Reading & Research**

**AMST 399.10 – Dissertation Research**

*Additional graduate courses in affiliated departments—continued on next page*
GRADUATE COURSES: AFFILIATED DEPARTMENTS

The following is a list of additional Graduate courses in other departments related to the field of American Studies (please consult CCAS Schedule of Classes to confirm details at http://my.gwu.edu/mod/pws/). When in doubt, be sure to confirm your choices with your advisor. Also, when a course in another department is restricted to its own graduate students, you will need to get permission from the instructor to take that course. For course descriptions, visit the department websites.

Anthropology
ANTH 202: Proseminar: Sociocultural Anthropology (Feldman)
ANTH 220: Anthropology of Development (Gow)
ANTH 222: Tourism, Heritage, Development (Timura)
ANTH 222: Development, Human Rights, Humanitarianism (Unknown)
ANTH 222: Health and Healing Change in Latin America (Unknown)
ANTH 257: Gender and Sexuality (Unknown)

Art History
AH 256: Seminar: American Art in 20th Century (Dumbadze)
AH 256: Seminar: American Art in 20th Century (Goodyear)
AH 256: Seminar: American Art in 20th Century (Dumbadze)
AH 258: Seminar: Historiography (Bjelajac)

English
ENGL 203: Intro to Literary Theory (Lopez)
ENGL 205: Advanced Literary Theory (Harris)
ENGL 208: Transnational England (Hsy)
ENGL 261: Selected Topics in Criticism (Wald)

Geography
GEOG 201: Geographic Thought & Methods (Rain)
GEOG 223: Seminar: Population & Health (Chacko)
GEOG 244: Urban Sustainability (Benton-Short)
GEOG 261: Latin American Geopolitical Trends (Price)
GEOG 290: Principles of Demography (Boulier)
GEOG 293: Middle East Geography (Atia)

History
HIST 220: American Business History (Becker)
HIST 221: History of International Economic Systems (Aaronson)
HIST 261: Rdg/Rsch Sem: Modern Latin American (TBD)
HIST 274: Readings Seminar: 19th Century US History (Stott)
HIST 282: History of US Foreign Policy, 1775-1975 (Hershberg)
HIST 283: Rdg/Rsch Sem: Recent US History (Ribuffo)
HIST 297: War & Memory in the Middle East (Khoury)
HIST 297: Modern Middle East History (Robinson)
HIST 297: American Communism & Anti-Communism (Arnesen)
HIST 297: Global Civil War (Zimmerman)

Museum Studies
MSTD 297: Historic House Interpretation (Rice)
School of Media and Public Affairs
SMPA 272: Media Bias, Power & Democracy (Entman)

Sociology
SOC 230: Sociological Research Methods (TBD)
SOC 238: Sem: Development of Sociological Theory (Brantley & Lengermann)
SOC 245: Race Relations (Wenger)
SOC 250: Urban Sociology (Marschall)
SOC 258: Deviance and Control (Weitzer)
SOC 262: Corrections (Buntman)
SOC 268: Race, Gender and Class (Ken)

Women's Studies
WSTU 230: Global Feminisms (Ramlow)
WSTU 241: Woman and the Law (Harrison)
WSTU 270: Sem: Global Domestic Labor Studies (Moshenberg)