American Studies Course Descriptions
FALL 2011

Revised: 3/22/11

Note: Check the GW Schedule of Classes website for class locations and the most up-to-date information at http://my.gwu.edu/mod/pws/

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

AMST 1000.10 – DC: Black Culture in the Nation’s Capital
Jim Miller
W, 12:45–3:15
This seminar will examine aspects of African American life and history in Washington, D.C., from the period now known as the Harlem Renaissance to the present. The seminar will consist of encounters with literature, visual culture, music and film, as well as visits to historic sites and other venues in the D.C. area. Registration restricted to CCAS freshman only.

AMST 1000.11 – American Popular Culture Post 9-11
Elisabeth Anker
WF, 9:35–10:50
This course will critically examine how films, literature, television, cultural theory, public discourse, news and graphic novels interpret the dramatic shifts in American public life after 9/11. Together we will question how important events are represented and refugured in American cultural material, and also analyze what this material can show us about the times in which we live. This seminar will be conducted in a discussion format. First, we will explore how varied cultural media have interpreted 9/11 and its aftermath. Second, we will engage material that grapples with the current Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Throughout the course we will examine how various cultural products have investigated, and perhaps contributed to, a national climate of fear, uncertainty, and violence. Given the themes of this course, we will also pay close attention to current events, and in particular to how cultural tropes are employed to make sense of them. Registration restricted to CCAS freshman only.

AMST 1050.10 – Race, Gender & Law
Jennifer Nash
MW, 11:10–12:00
This course studies the relationship between race, gender, and law by asking two intimately related questions: How does law protect citizens from race and gender based discrimination? How does law permit race and gender based discrimination? Over the course of the semester, we will read the foundational civil rights cases which have shaped our contemporary understanding of racial and gender equality, and become familiar with critical approaches to law (including critical race theory and feminist legal theory). We will end the semester by turning our attention to ongoing debates in law, including: the growth of the prison system, the death penalty, sexual assault law, and domestic violence law. Students must also register for a discussion section to satisfy the course requirement.

AMST 1050.11 – America in the Sixties
Suleiman Osman
TR, 12:45–1:35
This course will examine American society, culture, and politics during the dynamic and contentious decade of the 1960s. Students will examine topics such as the civil rights movement, the student movement, the Vietnam War and anti-war movement, black power, the

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counterculture, feminism, the environmental movement, the Great Society, and the rise of the New Right. Students will also examine how the memory of the 1960s continues to shape debates about political activism, foreign policy, and cultural consumption today. Students must also register for a discussion section to satisfy the course requirement.

AMST 2010.80 – Early American Cultural History
Teresa Murphy
MW, 9:35–10:25
This course starts with the argument that understanding culture is key to understanding American history. Culture can refer to art and literature—some of which we will explore in class. However, culture can also refer to popular forms of expression, including the way people act. With this broader perspective, we will study some of the major scholarship addressing the evolution of American culture—from the Colonial period through Reconstruction. For example, we will look at what scholars have to say about why minstrel shows were popular and about how Indian captivity narratives were used to justify the conquest of the West. To shape our analyses, we will examine old newspapers, read popular literature, and explore the museums here in Washington, DC—then develop our own opinions and arguments as we engage in small group discussions and complete class assignments. This is an upper division course, but it is geared toward freshman and sophomores who are looking for a challenge. Students must also register for a discussion section to satisfy the course requirement.

AMST 2380.80 – Sexuality in U.S. History
Chad Heap
TR, 2:20–3:10
This course examines the changing social organization and cultural meaning of sexual practices and desires in the US. Topics include the establishment of sexual norms in colonial America; the relationship between sex and slavery; the contested boundaries drawn between same-sex sociability and eroticism during the nineteenth century; early twentieth-century cultural conflicts centered around prostitution, cross-racial sex, and racial and sexual violence; the relatively recent emergence of heterosexuality and homosexuality as predominant categories of sexual experience and identity; and the development of women’s liberation and lesbian, gay, queer and transgender politics. Class time will consist of two weekly lectures and one smaller section meeting where students will discuss the week’s assigned readings and films. Students must also register for a discussion section to satisfy the course requirement.

AMST 2490W.80 – Latinos in the United States
Elaine Pena
TR, 11:10–12:00
The U.S. Census Bureau projects that Latinos will make up the majority in the United States by 2050. But who are Latinos? What does that term mean now and how has it changed over time? How does the term Latino affect the communities it seeks to represent? Throughout the semester, we will critically analyze the evolution of the term and its impact on discussions of race, identity, and citizenship expectations in the United States. We will engage ethnographic and historical analyses, literary works, and films that explore Latino community formation in geographic regions across the nation. One of the goals of this course is to not only identify how historical, political, and economic changes have shaped the term Latino in the United States but also connect those processes to shifts in immigration policy. This course will satisfy a WID requirement. Students must also register for a discussion section to satisfy the course requirement.
AMST 2490W.85 – World War II in History and Memory
Tom Guglielmo
TR, 9:35–10:25
This course will examine the history of Americans’ World War II experiences and how those experiences have since been “remembered”—officially, culturally, and personally. It focuses on six overlapping topics—soldiers, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Holocaust, women, Japanese American internment, and race relations. This course will satisfy a WID requirement. Students must also register for a discussion section to satisfy the course requirement.

AMST 2520.80 – American Architecture 1600-1860
Richard Longstreth
MW, 9:35–10:50
This course examines selected aspects of the built environment in the United States from the first period of European settlement to the eve of the Civil War. Stylistic properties, functions, common patterns of design, technological developments, and urbanistic patterns are introduced as vehicles for interpreting the historical significance of this legacy of both exceptional and representative examples. Buildings are analyzed both as artifacts and as signifiers of broader social, cultural, and economic tendencies. Other topics introduced include the persistence and mixing of cultural traditions, the role of the designer, the influence of region, and architecture as a component of landscape. Among the facets of the built environment that are examined are the multi-faceted nature of 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. Detailed examination is made of the contribution made by many celebrated figures in design, including Alexander Jackson Davis, Andrew Jackson Downing, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Robert Mills, Frederick Law Olmsted, William Strickland, and Richard Upjohn. At the same time, attention is given to broad tendencies in design and their effect upon rural and urban landscapes. 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. Lectures are profusely illustrated.

AMST 3352W.80 – Women in the United States
Teresa Murphy
MW, 2:20–3:10
This course will examine the history of women in the United States from pre-Columbian settlement until Reconstruction. We will pay particular attention to the ways in which gender has been an important component in the construction of power relationships; the ways in which issues of race and class have affected the relationships among women; and the ways in which ideas about gender have evolved during the past several centuries. This course will satisfy a WID requirement. Students must also register for a discussion section to satisfy the course requirements.

AMST 3362.80 – Black Women in U.S. History
Erin Chapman
TR, 12:45–2:00
In this course, we will explore the history of African American women’s labor, leisure, institution-building, and activism from the antebellum period through the early 1980s. In addition, we will investigate the complexities of gender, sexuality, and class as they have shaped African American women’s experiences, the idea of race, racial identity and racism, and U.S. society. We will cover slavery, abolitionism, Reconstruction, the Women’s Era, the New Negro Era, Civil Rights, Black Power, and Black Feminism, with an eye toward both African American women’s
participation and the gender politics of racial advancement efforts. Readings will include biography and histories of specific moments and movements and primary texts such as speeches, essays, poetry, and fiction. Requirements will include reading responses and a final examination. Themes will include: intersections of race, gender, class, and sexuality in U.S. history; politics of gender in African American history; praxis (activism and ideologies) black women have developed to advance their own interests in U.S. society; African American women’s experiences and voices.

**AMST 3900.10 – Critiquing Culture**  
Melani McAlister  
WF, 11:10–12:25  
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 reading intensive and discussion-oriented. Registration restricted to American Studies majors; minors admitted with permission of instructor.

**AMST 3901.10 – Examining America**  
Elaine Pena  
TR, 2:20–3:35  
This course invites students to examine America using transnationalism as an optic. A wide array of experiences and itineraries, exchanges and networks, social movements and communities are today referred to as transnational. The United States is deeply invested in maintaining those long-standing strategies of social reproduction and economic advancement. But how does that affect American identity? For example, does the transnational flow of capital, people, ideas, and cultural values impact understandings of American exceptionalism, influence constructions of the nation, or determine who can be American? We will consider these questions using a variety of interpretive tools—including social histories, cultural studies, literary texts, and ethnographic analyses. We will also place these discussions within the broader context of American Studies to understand when these concerns emerged in the field and how scholarly debates have changed over time. Registration restricted to American Studies majors; minors admitted with permission of instructor.

**AMST 3950.10 – The Civil War and American Popular Culture**  
Brian Santana  
MW, 4:45–6:00  
This readings course explores the way Americans remember and invoke the Civil War in literature, film, and a variety of other popular culture forms. We will begin in the 1860s and progress forward to the present day in an effort to address two deceptively simple questions: How has the narrative of the Civil War changed over time, and what are the political implications of these different narratives? Specific topics for discussion include the role of slavery in national narratives of reunion, cultural uses of martyrdom, Civil War narratives and gender norms, confederate revivalism, and debates surrounding the sesquicentennial. Students will learn to analyze a wide range of cultural materials as meaningful historical documents. Possible texts include, films, such as *Gone with the Wind* (1939), *Raintree County* (1957), *The Undefeated* (1969), and *Ride with the Devil* (1999); literature, such as Samuel May’s *Some Recollections of the Anti-Slavery Conflict* (1869), Robert Penn Warren’s *John Brown: The Making of a Martyr* (1929), and Russell Banks’s *Cloudsplitter* (1999); and music by artists as varied as Joan Baez and Lynyrd Skynyrd.
AMST 3950W.11 – America in the 1990s
Ramzi Fawaz
TR, 4:45–6:00
This course will offer a cultural history of America in the 1990s, using media and popular culture, social movements, and key intellectual debates to reconstruct the cultural and political conflicts that came to define the last years of the 20th century. Not only did the decade signal the end of the Cold War, it also saw the ascendancy of the Clinton administration, the first Gulf War, the most severe racial conflicts since the Civil Rights era, the acceleration of globalization, and extraordinary advances in medicine and technology that continue to influence our everyday lives. By investigating these and other events that reshaped national identity in the 1990s, we will unpack the diverse ways people reinterpret, transform, and fantasize the American past. We will discuss a range of topics including the “Culture Wars,” the AIDS epidemic, feminism and gay liberation, the internet, the human genome project, mass consumerism, and national debates over violence and ethics in the global “war on terror.” In addition to regular reading and writing assignments, students will be required to watch an assigned film each week.

AMST 4500W.10 – Citizenship and American Culture
Elisabeth Anker
W, 12:45–3:15
This research seminar explores the cultural experience and practices of citizenship in America. Students will undertake original, independent research on this topic using a combination of historical research and cultural criticism. Possible projects might include the examination of different practices or norms of citizenship among different racial, sexual, gendered, religious, immigrant or class groups; modes of political activism or experiences of political exclusion; the performance of citizenship in particular cultural contexts; and the social construction of exemplary or disobedient citizens. Importantly, each project will need to define and defend what, exactly, citizenship means in the social, political and historical context they examine. Students will spend the semester writing a substantial research paper based on primary source materials and cultural analysis, and all papers must be grounded in relevant, existing scholarship. This course will satisfy a WID requirement. Registration restricted to American Studies majors only.

AMST 4500W.11 – War and American Culture
Tom Guglielmo
R, 12:45–3:15
This advanced research seminar focuses on war – especially World War II – and American culture. Each student will conduct her/his own intensive research project. The primary course goal is for each student to produce an article-length paper based on extensive original research. This course will satisfy a WID requirement. Registration restricted to American Studies majors only.

AMST 5772.80 – Race, Medicine, & Public Health
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.
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AMST 6100.10 – Scope and Methods: American Studies  
Suleiman Osman  
R, 4:10–6:00  
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. This course is restricted to graduate students in American Studies.

AMST 6190.10 – African American Cultural Studies  
Calvin Warren  
F, 1:00–3:00  
This seminar will explore the “conceptual architecture” of African American culture—how it is imagined, defined, and sustained. We will wrestle with certain conceptual issues in African American Cultural Studies, such as the relationship between archival practice and theoretical inquiry, difference/sameness, the complexity of cultural production, and fractured temporality (modernity). The seminar will examine diverse methodological approaches to these conceptual issues—ranging from Afrocentrism to deconstructive techniques. We will engage theoretical work from Hortense Spillers, Saidiya Hartman, Molefi Asante, Nahum Chandler, Fred Moten, bell hooks, Sharon Holland, Paul Gilroy, Lindon Barrett, and Maurice Wallace, among others. Registration restricted to graduate students.

AMST 6190.11 – Stewardship of Historic Resources  
Richard Bierce  
R, 6:10–8:00  
This course focuses on issues and techniques that are required to identify, diagnose, implement, and manage appropriate stewardship care for historic buildings, museum sites, and urban districts. Among the course objectives are fostering the ability to examine these resources closely, to develop knowledge about specific defects and deterioration commonly found in such resources, to provide tools and methods for preparing initial diagnoses, to prepare recommendations and action plans for appropriate intervention ranging from complex conservation strategies to straightforward maintenance, and to acquire an understanding of best practices in these realms, including the expertise required to ensure good stewardship care. The course will include lecture and class discussion to develop common basis of terms, definitions, standards and concepts to be employed in the study of the historic resources and field visits to at least two historic buildings, a historic site-museum, and to a historic district. For additional information, contact Mr. Bierce at crbierce@aol.com. Registration restricted to graduate students.
AMST 6190.80 – Theory and Emotions
Jennifer Nash
M, 3:30–6:00
This graduate seminar examines the recent affective turn in a range of theoretical traditions, including queer theory, feminist theory, and critical race theory. We will read a set of texts that study the relationship between feelings – grief, memory, trauma, anger, happiness, anxiety – and public life. Over the course of the semester, we will ask questions like: what does it mean to feel publicly? What are the cultural politics of emotion? How is affect linked to social, historical, and cultural experience? How is affect policed and regulated? Readings include: Ann Cvetkovich, Patricia J. Williams, Judith Butler, Anne Cheng, Avery Gordon, and Sara Ahmed. Registration restricted to graduate students.

AMST 6190.81 – Twentieth Century
Jim Miller
T, 6:10–8:40
A close reading of the major works of James Baldwin in biographical, historical, cultural, literary and critical contexts. Assignments include seminar presentations and a major essay on Baldwin within and against contemporary critical assessments of his work and legacy.

AMST 6210.10 – U.S. in a Global Context
Melani McAlister
W, 3:30–6:00
This seminar will examine the history of late 20th- and 21st-century US involvements on the world stage, looking at politics, culture and religion. We will consider US foreign policy and the politics of race; the transnational flow of culture and people; and the significance of religious identities that both defend and transcend national borders. We will work with case studies, including the US occupation of the Philippines; the politics of humanitarian intervention in the Nigerian/Biafran war (1967-70); the globalization of evangelical Christianity (with attention to Latin America); and US and global responses to 9/11. A fundamental premise of the session will be that state policy, cultural productions, religious practices, and social movements are intimately intertwined. The historical explorations and case studies will be paired with theoretical readings on transnationalism and globalization, affect, and cultural practice/performance. Registration restricted to graduate students.

AMST 6430.80 – Gender, Sexuality & American Culture I
Teresa Murphy
T, 6:00–8:00
This seminar focuses on how power was deployed in early America, from colonial settlement through the end of Reconstruction. The central premise of the course is that shifting ideologies of gender and sexuality were deeply tied to political change, the formation of racial ideologies, and imperial conquest. Through readings, we will examine how ideas of gender and sexuality were central to the organization of colonial contact and how those ideas varied in the English, French, and Spanish empires. We will explore debates about the relationship of gender and sexuality to the creation of race in the colonial world. We will analyze how challenges to patriarchy were related to the political revolutions that swept the western world in the 18th century. We will explore how alternatives to dominant ideals of sexual identity were expressed and how those alternatives challenged or were accepted by mainstream society. We will discuss how gender and sexuality were symbolically figured in the urban, industrial, and market transformations of the nineteenth century. And finally, we will explore how ideas of citizenship were intertwined with ideas of gender and sexuality. Registration restricted to graduate students.
**AMST 6495.80 – Historic Preservation: Principles and Methods**
Richard Longstreth  
MW, 4:00–6:00  
This course addresses the scope and purpose of the preservation movement in the U.S., focusing on developments since the 1960s. Topics investigated 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 nature of an 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. Throughout the course, 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. *Registration restricted to graduate students.*

**AMST 6709.80 – 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 members, who join us for a poster session at the end of the course. *This class meets off-campus for at least six sessions. Please plan for sufficient travel time before and after class.*

**AMST 6710.10 – American Material Culture**
Katherine Ott  
W, 1:30–3:30  
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. *Registration restricted to graduate students. The class is taught by a Smithsonian history curator and meets off-campus; contact Professor Ott at ottk@si.edu for location details.*
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, a dedication to one's art form, and an insisted upon self-expression. 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 World War Two. The practice and meaning of "being cool" has not remained static over time, and this graduate seminar will investigate chronologically the nineteenth and early twentieth-century roots of this state of mind, its codification in the 1940s, and its continuing evolution to the present-day. The class 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.

OTHER COURSES OF INTEREST

ENG 6100.10 – Intro to Literary Theory
Marshall Alcorn
T, 3:30–6:00

HIST 6001.10 – 20th Century Labor History
Eric Arnesen
M, 5:10–7:00

HIST 6001.11 – Race & Sex through African American Biography
Erin Chapman
R, 3:30–6:00

HIST 6001.12 – U.S. & the World in the 19th Century
Andrew Zimmerman
R, 3:30–6:00

HIST 6001.15 – Colonial America
David Silverman
R, 4:10–6:00

SOC 6268.80 – Race, Gender and Class
Ivy Leigh Ken
R, 4:10–6:00

WSTD 6220.10 – Fundamentals in Feminist Theory
Todd Ramlow
W, 7:10–9:00

WSTD 6230.10 – Global Feminisms
Rachel Riedner
M, 5:10–7:00

WSTD 6241.10 – Women and the Law
Cynthia Harrison
T, 7:10–9:40