

# AMERICAN STUDIES (AMS)

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## **AMS SCE Senior Capstone Experience 2 Credits**

Offered every Spring semester. Graduating American Studies majors will complete an independent research project under the guidance of a American Studies faculty member of their choosing.

**Term(s) Offered:** All Terms, All Years

## **AMS 194 Special topics 4 Credits**

View Available Sections for titles and descriptions of Special Topics offered this semester.

**Term(s) Offered:** All Terms, All Years

## **AMS 209 Introduction to American Culture I 4 Credits**

Taught in the fall semester, the course is concerned with the establishment of American Literature as a school subject. Texts that have achieved the status of classics of American Literature, such as Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Thoreau's *Walden*, and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, are read in the context of the history and politics of their achieving this status. Texts traditionally excluded from the canon of American literature, in particular early Hispano- and FrancoAmerican texts, are considered in the context of their relative marginality to the project of establishing American Literature in the American academy. Other-than-written materials, such as modern cinematic representations of the period of exploration and colonization of North America, as well as British colonial portraits and history paintings, are studied for how they reflect on claims for the cultural independence of early North America. Other-than-North-American materials, such as late medieval and early Renaissance Flemish and French still lifes, as well as the works of nineteenth-century European romantic poets and prose writers, are sampled for how they reflect on claims for the exceptional character of North American culture.

**Cross-listed as:** AMS 209/ENG 209

**Term(s) Offered:** Fall, All Years

## **AMS 210 Introduction to American Culture II 4 Credits**

Taught in the spring semester, the course is concerned with the establishment of American Studies as a curriculum in post-World War II American colleges and universities. Readings include a variety of written texts, including those not traditionally considered literary, as well as a variety of other-than-written materials, including popular cultural ones, in accordance with the original commitment of American Studies to curricular innovation. Introductions to the modern phenomena of race, gender, sexual orientation, generation, and class in the U.S. culture are included. A comparatist perspective on the influence of American culture internationally and a review of the international American Studies movement in foreign universities is also introduced.

**Cross-listed as:** ENG 210/AMS 210

**Term(s) Offered:** Spring, All Years

## **AMS 213 African Am Literature & Culture I 4 Credits**

This course is a survey of African American literature produced from the late 1700s to the present. It is designed to introduce students to the key writers, texts, themes, conventions, and tropes that have shaped the African American literary tradition. Authors studied may include Frederick Douglass, Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Ellison, Gwendolyn Brooks, Toni Morrison and Walter Mosley. Counts for American Studies major, Black Studies minor, Communication and Media Studies major, and Humanities distribution.

**Cross-listed as:** ENG 213/AMS 213

**Term(s) Offered:** Spring, All Years

## **AMS 214 African Am Lit & Culture II 4 Credits**

This course surveys African American authors from the Harlem Renaissance to the present. It is designed to expose students to the writers, texts, themes, and literary conventions that have shaped the African American literary canon since the Harlem Renaissance. Authors studied in this course include Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Gwendolyn Brooks, James Baldwin, and Toni Morrison. Counts for American Studies major, Black Studies minor, Communication and Media Studies major, and Humanities distribution.

**Cross-listed as:** ENG 214/AMS 214

**Term(s) Offered:** Spring, All Years

## **AMS 222 Body, Nature and Nation in American Art 4 Credits**

Although this art history course sketches in the art of the early colonies, its main body begins at the period of the American Revolution. Lectures and discussion explore the changing significance of the visual arts in American life and culture through the 1930s. Field trips to museums in Washington. This course is cross listed under American Studies.

**Requisites:** Pre or co-req: Take ART 200 or ART 110

**Term(s) Offered:** Fall, Odd Years

**AMS 275 Prisons, Punishment, and Social Control 4 Credits**

In this course, we will examine both overt and covert forms of surveillance, control, and confinement in historical and contemporary contexts. We will consider less repressive forms of control, which are often invisible to us even as they powerfully shape and define our lives, as well as more repressive forms of state power. An anthropological lens helps us consider the many ways that prisons and punishment are deeply entrenched in U.S. culture, social life, and political-economy. We draw upon a variety of theoretical frameworks, including Foucault, Marxism, critical race theory, disability studies, and others, each of which offers a unique way to make sense of our course topics. Rather than approach the prison as a set of buildings and experiences over there (apart from un-incarcerated life), we ask how the same social processes that make prisons possible are woven into many aspects of our social, cultural, political, and economic experiences. We will pay particular attention to the intersections of race, class, and gender with prisons /social control throughout U.S. history. Finally, we explore the creative ways that people critique, resist, imagine, and organize for more liberatory futures.

**Term(s) Offered:** Other, Non Conforming

**AMS 294 Special Topics 4 Credits**

View Available Sections for titles and descriptions of Special Topics offered this semester.

**Term(s) Offered:** All Terms, All Years

**AMS 313 17th and 18th Century America 4 Credits**

The social, economic, and political structure of Colonial America; the background and development of the American Revolution; and the interaction of social and political life during the Confederation, Constitutional, and Federalist periods.

**Requisites:** Pre or co-req: HIS 111 or two 200 level History courses

**Term(s) Offered:** Other, Non Conforming

**AMS 322 The Arts in America 4 Credits**

Although the course sketches in the art of the early colonies, its main body begins at the period of the American Revolution. Lectures and discussion explore the changing significance of the visual arts in American life and culture through the 1930s. Field trips to museums in Washington.

**Requisites:** Pre or co-req: ART 110

**Term(s) Offered:** Fall, Odd Years

**AMS 345 The African American Novel 4 Credits**

This course examines the origin and development of the African American novel. We will begin with the earliest novels and conclude with an analysis of contemporary novels by African American writers. We will examine novels from multiple genres and give careful attention to the intersection of race, gender, class and environment in representative novels of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries.

**Cross-listed as:** AMS 345/ENG 345

**Term(s) Offered:** All Terms, Non Conforming

**AMS 347 American Environmental Writing 4 Credits**

The study of writing from an environmental perspective is both an emerging field in literary criticism and a rich tradition in American literary history. What does it mean to be green from a literary point of view? This course explores that question in looking at classic and contemporary authors of American environmental writing, from Henry David Thoreau to Annie Dillard to recent examples of eco-criticism. Though the primary focus is on nonfiction prose, the traditional home of nature writing, the course also explores environmental perspectives in poetry, fiction, and film as well as cross-disciplinary connections with the natural sciences and social sciences.

**Cross-listed as:** ENG 347/AMS 347/ENV 347

**Term(s) Offered:** Fall, All Years

**AMS 360 Lit. of Europn Colonies & US 4 Credits**

Alvar Nunez Cabeza De Vaca, Pere Jogues, Rowlandson, Marrant, Wheatley, Bradstreet, Franklin, Jefferson, Brockden Brown, Poe.

**Cross-listed as:** ENG 360/AMS 360

**Term(s) Offered:** All Terms, Non Conforming

**AMS 362 Literary Romanticism in the U.S. II 4 Credits**

Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, Dickinson.

**Term(s) Offered:** Fall, All Years

**AMS 363 Gilded Age & American Realism 4 Credits**

This course examines key prose fiction of the Gilded Age of American literary history, and culture (roughly 1878 - 1901). Careful attention will be given to various treatments of Big Business, industrialization, urbanization, regionalism and social inequality in the work of Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, Kate Chopin, Frances E.W. Harper, Charles Chestnutt, and others.

**Term(s) Offered:** Spring, Odd Years

**AMS 370 The Harlem Renaissance 4 Credits**

This interdisciplinary course examines the literature and intellectual thought of the Harlem Renaissance, a period in African American history that covers, roughly, the 1920s and 1930s. This course will offer more than a cursory introduction to a cultural movement. Instead, students will study key figures and texts at length, including the works of Wallace Thurman, Langston Hughes, Alain Locke and Zora Neale Hurston. By the end of the course, students should be able to explain the different conceptualizations of the black aesthetic that were prevalent during this movement, and articulate how the confluence of race, class and gender have impacted literary productions of the period.

**Cross-listed as:** ENG 370/AMS 370/CMS 370

**Term(s) Offered:** Other, Non Conforming

**AMS 371 Faulker & Modernism in U.S. 4 Credits**

The course will concentrate on the novels of Faulkner as exemplifying modernism.

**Term(s) Offered:** Other, Non Conforming

**AMS 374 North American Indians 4 Credits**

Although pre-Columbian North America did not see the rising and falling of states that unified people through a single language or economy, it is extraordinarily rich in histories. The archaeology of North America aims to understand the diversity of histories lived by peoples from the Atlantic to Alaska, from the Plains to the Bayou, from nomadic hunting and gathering groups to large-scale horticulturalists. We will explore the human experience on the continent north of Mexico from the first footsteps on the continent to the impact of European contact to the relationship between archaeologists and American Indians today. By the end of this course, you will have an understanding of the history of archaeology in North America and the diverse prehistoric Native American cultures. You will have a good handle on the issues faced by and methods utilized in reconstructing past settlement patterns, subsistence strategies, religious practices and social and political organization.

**Term(s) Offered:** Fall, Odd Years

**AMS 377 2PACalypse Now! 4 Credits**

There's something about Heart Of Darkness -- neither the most readable nor the most teachable of books, even of Conrad's books. And there's something about Conrad, too, a native Pole for whom English was a third language, a third language that he evidently spoke so poorly that when conversing with his American literary friend Henry James they both reverted to what was for both of them a second language: French. The course tries to explore what it is that has attracted so many white male Anglophone intellectuals -- and prompted the condemnation of one African writer, the mockery of one black rapper, and perhaps, the rivalry of a prominent, brown, novelist -- over the more than hundred years now since the original publication of Heart of Darkness in 1899 in England in Blackwood's Magazine. Class texts include Conrad's novella, Coppola's Apocalypse Now, Tupac's TUPACalypse Now, Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! (which contains a prominent allusion to Heart of Darkness), Chinua Achebe's essays, V.S. Naipul's A Bend in the River, a sampling of the blizzard of journalistic quotations of the novel's title and of its most famous, four-word, speech, plus some theorizings of race and gender that might shed light on why the book has managed to appeal so strongly to a relatively homogenous cohort of readers and adaptors.

**Cross-listed as:** ENG 377/AMS 377

**Term(s) Offered:** Fall, Non Conforming

**AMS 394 Special Topics 4 Credits**

View Available Sections for titles and descriptions of Special Topics offered this semester.

**Term(s) Offered:** All Terms, All Years

**AMS 397 Independent Study 4 Credits**

An agreement between a sponsoring faculty and a student letting the student study a topic of interest not offered at WC. 45 hours are required per credit.

**Term(s) Offered:** All Terms, All Years

**AMS 400 The American Studies Seminar 4 Credits**

This course, required for the major, is offered every Fall semester. The course will include a review of American Studies' institutional background, in particular the nativist origins of American Studies at Yale and the more genteel nationalist consolidations established by the post-war Harvard American Civilization Program. Specific topics and readings will vary yearly but will always be chosen from among 1.) those that helped establish the cross-disciplinary foundations of American Studies; 2.) several texts, both literary and social-scientific, that have become iconic in the discipline; and 3.) texts critical of the chauvinist tendencies inherent in the origins of the discipline. Students in the seminar will be encouraged to develop independent research projects that can mature into Senior Capstone Experiences. American Studies majors will take the American Studies Seminar in the first semester of their senior years to give them a running start into the Senior Capstone Experience (AMS SCE) that they will complete in the spring semester. Because the curriculum for the course will change yearly, American Studies majors may take AMS twice, and because the focus of the course will be on how to develop and execute research papers, it should be of interest to students facing a senior thesis SCE in other humanities and social science majors as well. The course will either be taught by the Director of American Studies or be team-taught by the Chair of American Studies and another American Studies faculty member.

**Term(s) Offered:** Other, All Years

**AMS 414 Comparative Cultural Encounters 4 Credits**

This seminar examines interactions among native, European, and African peoples during the initial centuries of North American colonization. Situating the American colonies within a broader Atlantic World and offering a comparative approach, the course investigates processes of cultural conflict, exchange, adaption, and transformation. One year in introductory sequence in history required.

**Requisites:** Pre or co-req: HIS 111 or two 200 level History courses

**Term(s) Offered:** Other, Non Conforming

**AMS 470 Toni Morrison 4 Credits**

In this seminar, students will study the works of Toni Morrison, the first African American and the second American woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. Students will examine important motifs, tropes and themes of Morrison's novels (The Bluest Eye, Beloved and Jazz, to name a few), along with some of her notable critical essays. By the conclusion of this course, students should be well versed in Morrison's writings and have a basic understanding of contemporary critical practices used to interpret her work.

**Cross-listed as:** ENG 470/AMS 470

**Term(s) Offered:** Fall, Non Conforming

**AMS 490 American Studies Internship 4 Credits**

A learning contract is developed prior to enrollment in an internship. Evaluation of student performance is completed by the faculty mentor based on the fulfillment of the contract terms and written evaluation by the internship site supervisor. Students must work at least 45 hours for each internship credit and be enrolled in the course prior to beginning work. Graded A-F or Pass/Fail.

**Term(s) Offered:** All Terms, All Years

**AMS 494 Special Topics 4 Credits**

View Available Sections for titles and descriptions of Special Topics offered this semester.

**Term(s) Offered:** All Terms, All Years