

American Studies

Steering committee: Professors Staiti (art history, *cochair*), Weber (English, *cochair*); Associate Professors Brown (English), Renda (gender studies and history). Faculty on the Program: Professors Benfey (English), Crosthwaite (religion), Czitrom (history), Gudmundson (history and Latin American studies), Márquez (Latin American studies), Moseley (economics), Savoy (environmental studies, geography, geology), Staiti (art history), Young (English); Associate Professors Lee (art history), Morgan (history), Roth (sociology and anthropology), Smith (politics); Assistant Professor Day (English); Visiting Associate Professor Fox (complex organizations, fall only); Director of Art Museum Doezema.

Contact Persons

Cynthia Meehan, *senior administrative assistant*

Paul Staiti, *cochair*

Donald Weber, *cochair*

American studies is an interdisciplinary major that does not take its subject matter for granted. Instead, it provides opportunities for students to explore questions about the multiple meanings of America and the rich diversity of American identities from a variety of perspectives across the curriculum. How is America defined within different historical, cultural, social, and political contexts? How do these definitions change over time and space and in different communities? By working across the disciplines, students can address critical issues about the culture and society of the U.S. in the past and the present. By working across geographical borders, they can understand the U.S. within comparative and international frameworks.

Requirements for the Major

Credits

- A minimum of 40 credits dealing with the United States, chosen from the various departments represented by faculty on the program committee and by the suggested courses

Courses

- First-year students are encouraged to take one of the 100-level courses listed below.
- American Studies 201, Perspectives in American Studies
- American Studies 301, Senior Seminar
- 8 credits in survey courses, examples of which include:
 - Art 250, American Painting, 1880–1980
 - Art 255, American Art and Architecture, 1620–1880
 - English 240–241, American Literature I and II
 - History 170–171, The American People, 1500–1865 and The American People since 1865 or History 281–282, African American History to 1865 and African American History: 1865 to the Present

Majors should aim for chronological scope in the surveys.

- 8 credits at the 100 or 200 level from the surveys above or the courses suggested below
- 20 credits in 300-level courses (including American Studies 301)

Other

Within the above requirements, majors must study each of the following areas in at least one course at any level.

- 4 credits in the social sciences

- 4 credits in African American culture or society
- 4 credits in a course that critically assesses those experiences and peoples of the Americas not traditionally included in American studies. Examples include courses on the cultures of Latin America; American Indians; and Latino, Asian American, or other immigrant communities in the United States.

American studies is an interdisciplinary major. Students who pursue an interdisciplinary major automatically fulfill the College's "outside the major" requirement (see p. 8).

The committee chair advises all majors until they select appropriate faculty advisors from the committee. In designing individual programs, students should consider electing courses in the theory and methodology of specific disciplines, as well as in non-U.S. courses that allow her to view the American experience from a comparative perspective. Students are encouraged, in consultation with their advisors, to develop their own concentration within the major to give their studies focus. Concentrations may range widely according to individual interests, such as environmental and urban issues, media and popular culture, literature and the arts, immigration and ethnicity. Asian American studies may be selected as a concentration in conjunction with the Five College Certificate in Asian/Pacific/American Studies (see the Five College Consortium chapter).

A regular exchange program with Sussex University in England allows a limited number of juniors to study abroad each year in one of the premier American studies programs outside the United States. There are also opportunities for study and internships at other institutions, such as the Smithsonian and the Mystic Seaport Maritime Studies Program.

Requirements for the Minor

Credits

- A minimum of 16 credits

Courses

- American Studies 201, Perspectives in American Studies
- American Studies 301, Senior Seminar
- At least two other courses above the 100 level from the courses listed below

Course Offerings

201s Introduction to the Study of American Culture: Metaphors, Borders, Migrations

This course introduces students to American studies' interdisciplinary methods of inquiry and emerging themes and debates by focusing on spatial metaphors of "America" that have mediated popular and scholarly interpretations of U.S. culture and politics since the nineteenth century.

Drawing on a diverse archive of speeches, political documents, photography, film, music, and literature, we will examine the interplay of race, gender, and sexual meanings embedded in historical constructions of the westward frontier, the virgin wilderness, America's gateway, the border, the north and the south, and the midwestern heartland. Throughout the course, we will consider the role of multiple migrations and border crossings in an evolving cultural mapping of America.

Meets Humanities I-A requirement

I. Day

4 credits

295fs Independent Study

Does not meet a distribution requirement

The department, 1 to 4 credits

301fs Senior Seminar

Fall 2008

301f(01) Reimagining Los Angeles: Multiethnic Fictions of Tomorrowland

(Same as English 387) In Ridley Scott's 1982 science fiction film, *Blade Runner*, Los Angeles is a beleaguered metropolis overrun by immigrant "hordes" and menacing replicants, presenting a dystopic forecast of multiculturalism. By surveying major genres in relation to the racialized and gendered contexts of migration, labor, and urban redevelopment, this course focuses on alternative construc-

tions of Los Angeles in African American, Asian American, and Chicana/o short stories, novels, and film. Works will include *Southland*, *Tropic of Orange*, *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992*, *Their Dogs Came with Them*, *Devil in a Blue Dress*, *We Should Never Meet*, and *Kindred*.

Meets Humanities I-A requirement

I. Day

Prereq. jr, sr, or permission of instructor; meets English department seminar requirement; 4 credits

301f(02) The Shakers

(Same as Religion 332) This course will examine the historical and cultural creation of the Shaker society. The religious vision of an alternative society whose birth and development paralleled that of the new American nation; by contrast and by imitation, the separate Shaker route thus offers an intriguing critique of American society and its values, and an unusual laboratory for examining a religious community based on a dual god-head.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

J. Crosthwaite

Prereq. jr, sr, 8 credits in department, Religion 221 or permission of instructor; 4 credits

Spring 2009

301s(01) Prison Writing

(Writing-intensive course; Same as English 348 and Gender Studies 333) In this course we will look at media and legal representations of prisoners and especially at the writing of prisoners themselves. Authors include Barbara Harlow, Jennifer Gonnerman, Mumia Abu-Jamal, George Jackson, and Salwa Bakr. Movies may include *Dead Man Walking* and *Aileen Wuornos: The Selling of a Serial Killer*. Some are castigated as rule breakers; structures are built for them, and in these realms men and women are cordoned off, envisioned and held separately in their transgressions—what stories emerge from the prisoners' mouths? Do those stories challenge the deep architecture of the prisons themselves?

Meets Humanities I-A requirement

S. Davis

Prereq. jr, sr, 8 credits in department; 4 credits

301s(02) American Women's History

(Same as History 381 and Gender Studies 333) In this research seminar we will be looking at American women's history through a range of women's writings, including memoirs, letters, and diaries as well as oral histories, first person accounts, and literature from the 1890s to the present. Attention will be paid to the role of personal narrative in the writing of history and the place of history in personal writing. Students will do an oral history of a friend or family member, write a biographical essay on a woman in the past, and produce a 25-page research paper on a topic of their choice. Trips to local archives will help students who are unfamiliar with historical research gain confidence.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

J. Gerhard

Prereq. permission of instructor, written application prior to academic advising period (<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/hist/application.shtml>) is required; 4 credits

395fs Independent Study

Does not meet a distribution requirement

The department, 1 to 8 credits

Suggested Courses for Majors

See department listings for complete descriptions. Other courses may apply as well with permission of chair.

	<i>African American and African Studies</i>
320f	Gender, Terror, and Trauma in African American Culture
340s	Sex, Love, and Gender in Contemporary African American Film
	<i>Art History</i>
242f	History of Photography
255s	American Art and Architecture 1620-1880
342s	Seminar in Twentieth-Century Art: 1930s American Photography
350f	Seminar in American Art: The Gilded Age

	<i>Critical Social Thought</i>	180f	Introduction to Latin American Cultures
253s	Critical Race Theory		
	<i>English</i>	260s	Afro-Latin America: From Slavery to Invisibility
240f	American Literature I	274s	Puerto Rican Literature and Society: Borinquen to El Barrio
243f	American Gothic		
250f	African American Literature	373s	Studies in Comparative Caribbean Culture: Contemporary Caribbean Writers
252s	Harlem Renaissance		
341s	American Literature III		
345f	The Career and Legacy of Richard Wright	386f	Central America: Reform, Reaction, Revolution
375s	Black Texts, Black Experiments: A Seminar in Contemporary African American Poetics	389s	Agrarian America: Sugar, Cotton, Coffee, Wheat
385s	Feminist Theory and Film		<i>Politics</i>
388f	The City in American Fiction	225f	Winners and Losers: Taxation, Social Justice, and Economic Choices
389s	American Memoir	235f	Constitutional Law: The Federal System
	<i>Gender Studies</i>		
117f	Gender and Power in the History of Mount Holyoke College	236s	Civil Liberties
	<i>History</i>	243f	Latin American Politics
170f	American History, Precolonial through the Civil War	246s	American Political Thought
275f	Women and Gender in History: American Women's History from Settlement to the Civil War	250f	Black Urban Reform
281f	African American History to 1865	347f	Race and Urban Political Economy
282s	African American History, 1865 to the present		<i>Religion</i>
283f	U.S. Since 1945: We Didn't Start The Fire	218f	Women in American Religious History
293s	Reel America: History and Film	230s	Spirituals and the Blues
301f	Reading the <i>New York Times</i>		<i>Spanish</i>
301f	Bodily Desires: Reading in the History of Sexuality in the U.S.	219f	U.S. Latino/a Literature
301s	Race, Gender, and Empire: Cultural Histories of the United States and the World	235f	Introduction to Latin American Literature I
301s	Segregation: Origins and Legacies	237s	Introduction to Latin American Literature II
381s	U.S. Since the Great Depression		
	<i>Latin American Studies</i>		
175s	Historical Emergence of the Caribbean		