

American Studies

Contact Persons

Bridget Barrett, *senior administrative assistant*
Paul Staiti, *chair, spring semester*
Donald Weber, *chair, fall semester*

Requirements for the Major

The American studies major is only available to the class of 2010.

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

- 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).

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

102f Introduction to the Study of American Culture: Asian/Pacific/American History, 1850 to the Present

(Same as History 175f, Asian Studies 175f)
This course situates Asian/Pacific/American experiences within the context of American history, as well as that of their countries of origin. First we will look at the pre-World War II era, exploring relationships between the U.S. quest for empire in the Pacific, political-economic dislocations in Asian countries, and anti-Asian prejudice against migrants in the U.S. Next we will examine the

period after World War II, especially Japanese American internment; post-1965 immigration; war in Southeast Asia; the rise of post-colonial and new nations in Asia; and contemporary issues facing the A/P/A community in the U.S. Major themes include migration, racism, gender, and colonialism.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement

R. Chu

4 credits

***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

290fs Topics in American Studies

Fall 2009

290f(01) Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers

(Same as English 270(01)) In this cross-cultural examination of nineteenth-century American women writers, we will compare a number of works of fiction, prose, poetry, and autobiography. We will discuss how writers created sophisticated and insightful critiques of American culture and imagined or re-presented new American identities and histories. We will also consider tensions between "sentimental" idealism and political

pragmatism, restrictive domesticity and dangerous autonomy, and passionless femininity and expressed sexuality. Authors may include Alcott, Child, Far, Fuller, Harper, Hopkins, Ruiz de Burton Wilson, and Winnemucca.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-A requirement
L. Brown

Prereq. Prereq. soph, second-year fy with permission of the instructor; 4 credits; enrollment limited to 25; 2 meetings (75 minutes); meets English department 1700-1900 requirement; 4 credits

290f(02) American Drama, 1787 to 1994 (Same as Theatre Arts 234, English 234) Various topics in theatre studies including particular theatrical periods and genres. Topics may include melodrama, postcolonial theatre, early twentieth-century avant-garde movement, feminist theatre, etc. These courses include historical and theoretical approaches and could involve interdisciplinary collaboration.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-A requirement
E. Rundle

Prereq. See Theatre Arts 234f-01; 4 credits

290f(03) Winners and Losers: Taxation, Social Justice, and Economic Choices

(Speaking-intensive course; Same as Complex Organizations 220-01) The maze of laws that make up the U.S. tax system shape and define what our nation is and will be; they also create winners and losers. Who benefits from special relief provisions such as for housing, health care, education, retirement savings, charitable giving, and child care? What are the economic consequences? How are families taxed? Women? The poor? Capital gains? Should we have an estate tax, reform the income tax, or adopt a consumption tax? How can we save Social Security? All these issues and more are addressed, including a review of federal tax history from the Constitution to the present.

Meets Social Sciences III-A requirement
J. Fox

Prereq. History 171, Politics 104, Economics 103 or 104, or permission of instructor; 4 credits

290f(04) Reading and Writing in the World (Writing-intensive course; Same as English 267, Environmental Studies 267) An introduction to reading and writing about nature, this seminar will attempt an exchange across distinct approaches to observing and describing the world around us. Do lenses of culture, discipline, and gender determine how we see and experience nature, environment, and place? Course work will include reading such authors as N. Scott Momaday, Henry David Thoreau, bell hooks, Leslie Marmon Silko, Mary Oliver, and Annie Dillard; field trips; and writing assignments—weekly field notes and journals, analytical papers, and personal essays.

Meets Humanities I-A requirement

J. Lemly, L. Savoy

Prereq. permission of instructor; 4 credits

Spring 2010

290s(01) Immigration and Racialization

Meets multicultural requirement; meets

Humanities I-B requirement

S. Reddy

Meets twice a week; 4 credits

295fs Independent Study

Does not meet a distribution requirement

The department

1-4 credits

301fs Senior Seminar

Fall 2009

301f(01) Bootleggers, Glamour Girls, and Hobos: American Culture between the Wars

(Same as History 381) This seminar explores a number of themes between 1914 and 1945 that capture the tensions, contradictions, and transformation of U.S. culture between World War I and World War II. Weekly topics include manliness and race, revolution in morals and manners, Harlem in the 1920s, the culture of consumption, the barrios of Los Angeles, New Deal politics, Depression-era culture, the growth of sexual subcultures, health and athletics, and the politics of war. The seminar is designed to help students with the tasks of researching and writing a 20-page paper, including how to select a topic, strategies for research, and feedback on

drafts.

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

301f(02) Reading the New York Times:

Journalism, Power, History

(Same as History 301) This course will examine the political and cultural power of the *New York Times* in the American past and present. Students will analyze the *Times* today through careful, daily readings. They will also study its evolution as an institution, as well as its coverage of and involvement in several of the critical historical events of this century.

By focusing on the *Times* as the most influential “agenda setter” in American journalism, we will also address the larger issues of objectivity, bias, and influence in the mass media.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

D. Czitrom

Prereq. permission of instructor, 8 credits in history, written application prior to academic advising period

(http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/history/300-level_application.html) required; 4 credits

301f(03) Literature of the Jazz Age

(Same as English 368f) This course will examine how a number of American writers responded to the many cultural impulses associated with the term Jazz Age. We will discuss various forms of American modernism in fiction and poetry, and some of the critical responses to them. We will also discover the relationship of the writing to jazz music and to the literature of the “lost generation.” Authors may include William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Edmund Wilson, Anita Loos, Claude McKay and John Dos Passos.

Meets Humanities I-A requirement

G. Pemberton

Prereq. jr, sr, or permission of instructor; 4 credits

301f(04) Race, Gender, and Empire: Cultural Histories of the United States and the World

(Same as History 301(04); Gender Studies 333) Recent cultural histories of imperial-

ism—European as well as U.S.—have illuminated the workings of race and gender at the heart of imperial encounters. This course will examine the United States' relationship to imperialism through the lens of such cultural histories. How did encounters between Native Americans and European colonizers, as lived and as remembered, call into play racial and gender identities? How have the legacies of slavery been entwined with U.S. imperial ambitions? How did racialized constructions of gender and sexuality shape the "American Century?" And what can we learn from transnational approaches to "the intimacies of empire?"

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

M. Renda

Prereq. 8 credits in history or gender studies; online application required; see <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/womst/application.html>; 4 credits

*301f(08) *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 constructions 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 *Kin-dred*.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets

Humanities I-A requirement

I. Day

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

Spring 2010

301s(01) *Slavery and the Literary Imagination* (Same as English 350-01) In this course we will study American works that focus on enslavement in America and the ways in which

historical fact and literary conventions inform representations of enslaved and self-emancipated people, as well as enslavers, abolitionists, and free people of color. In what ways do race, class, region, and history influence portrayals of slavery? How do conventions of the slave narrative and sentimental novel affect the representation of slavery and freedom? Authors may include Octavia Butler, Charles Chesnut, Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, Lawrence Hill, and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-A requirement

L. Brown

Prereq. Jr, sr, 8 credits in department beyond 101, including at least one of the following: English 240, 241, 250, or permission of instructor; 1 meeting (3 hours); 4 credits

301s(02) *Queer Kinship in Asian North American Literature, Film, and Video*

(Same as English 334, Film Studies 370, Gender Studies 333) This course examines alternative kinship formations in Asian North American cultural production. It will focus on the gender and sexual management of racial bodies since the nineteenth century—from the U.S. Page Law of 1875 that restricted Chinese women on the basis of their presumed sexual immorality to various forms of "racial castration" that mediate Asian masculinities. We will consider how alternative kinship arrangements and queer cultural projects expose and/or upset the narrative assumptions embedded in heteronormative scripts of nationalism.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-A requirement

I. Day

Prereq. jr, sr, 8 credits in department beyond English 101, or permission of instructor; meets English department seminar requirement; 4 credits

301s(03) *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright*

(Same as Art History 350s-01) This seminar will explore Frank Lloyd Wright's 60-year career in architecture. We will pay particular attention to ways in which he handled form, space, and structure to frame human activity

and to create a modern American style. We will also explore the social implications of Wright's approach to domestic design and community planning.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement
M. Davis

Prereq. jr, sr; 8 credits in art history, architectural studies, or American studies, or permission of instructor; 4 credits

301s(04) Studies in American Literature: Cather, Fitzgerald, Faulkner

(Same as English 345s-02) This seminar will focus on works of fiction by three major twentieth-century American writers, with special attention to novels published between the world wars. The course will examine ongoing critical debates regarding each writer, including such concerns as the status of the American South and West, conflicts across racial, ethnic, and gender lines, and American responses to the rise of modernist practices in literature and the visual arts.

Meets Humanities I-A requirement
C. Benfey

Prereq. jr, sr, 8 credits in department including English 200 or permission of instructor; meets American Studies seminar requirement; 4 credits

301s(05) Segregation: Origins and Legacies

(Same as History 301s-03) This colloquium will explore the historical debates about the causes and timing of racial segregation, its effects on African Americans and social inequality, and its most resistant legacy in the twentieth century, residential segregation. Violence against blacks, the use of gender to bolster segregation, biracial alliances and the onset of disfranchisement, the nationalist character of segregation, and black resistance to segregation will be prominent themes. Weekly readings will include primary and secondary works, documentary films, and historical fiction.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement
L. Morgan

Prereq. permission of instructor; 8 credits in history; written application prior to academic advising period
(http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/history/300-level_application.html) is required; 4 credits

301s(06) Gender and War

(Same as Gender Studies 333, English 372f-01) This seminar will focus on depictions of war in the context of gender. When asked how we might prevent war, Virginia Woolf suggested that we must invent new language and methods rather than follow the path of the traditional "procession of educated men." What language emerges in works about the effects of war? Texts will include essays and films as well as selected works by writers such as Alcott, Whitman, Crane, Twain, Hemingway, Woolf, Silko, Morrison, and O'Brien.

Meets Humanities I-A requirement
L. Glasser

Prereq. jr or sr; 8 credits beyond the 100 level in English or Gender Studies or permission of instructor; meets English department seminar requirement; 4 credits

301s(08) Landscape and Narrative

(Speaking- and writing-intensive course; Same as Environmental Studies 333-01) Different stories or narratives—whether myth, literature, maps, or scientific theory—have been created about every region or environment on Earth as human attempts to describe and understand our connections with that place. How do braided strands of human history and natural history contribute to stories we tell of the land, and to stories we tell of ourselves in the land and of relational identity? In this reading and writing seminar we will reflect on how lifeways, homeplace, and identity of an individual or a community are linked with environment or the land. We will also create written and visual narratives of our own and explore creative environmental writing in reflection and action.

Meets Humanities I-A requirement
L. Savoy

Prereq. jr., sr., permission of instructor; 4 credits

301s(09) 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

ing 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

The department

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

***301s(10) American Women's History**

(Same as History 38, 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

1-8 credits