

# SPRING 2012

## AMERICAN STUDIES COURSE OFFERINGS

### **AM 103W 001 Intro: Basketball**

This course introduces students to different forms of cultural criticism and examines some recurrent American cultural values and themes, such as the tension between community and individualism, and the disparity between American ideals and social realities. It also emphasizes reading critically, thinking historically, practicing interdisciplinarity, acknowledging diversity, and making connections. Students will analyze and synthesize many kinds of texts in order to better appreciate the complexity of American life and culture. The course employs an interdisciplinary approach that melds history, sociology, journalism, autobiography, fiction, poetry, art, film (feature and documentary), and other forms of knowledge and expression.

**Daniel A. Nathan, 4 credits**

### **AM 103W 002 A Humorous (Dis)Course**

In this course we will use stand-up comedy to think critically about American culture and to explore key moments and transitions in American history. As burgeoning Americanists, we will examine the history of stand-up comedy as the history of the United States—that comedy reflects the institutions and ideologies shaping cultural production; the same institutions and ideologies that prompt us to warfare, that determine who has rights and who does not and that influence our consumptive practices. This course will examine the history of cultural production in America, specifically through the cultural form of stand-up comedy/comic performance and how it has been influenced and shaped by shifts in social consciousness, changing economy, industrial and technological innovations, political events, public/popular discourses and global conflict and relations **Beck Krefting, 4 credits**

### **AM 202 001 American Identities: Post-1870s**

Taken in conjunction with AM202, the workshop complements AM202 class sessions. Classic texts and documents in American culture from 1877 to the present are examined in depth. The workshop includes additional reading, journal writing, oral presentations, a field trip, and assignments in the American Studies-History Lab. (Fulfills social sciences requirement; designated as a Cultural Diversity course.)

**Mary C. Lynn, 3 credits**

### **AM 202L 001 American Identities: with workshop**

**Mary C. Lynn, 4 credits**

### **AM 221 Methods and Approaches**

An introduction to American studies scholarship, methodologies, and approaches to the study of society and culture in the United States. Course materials include “classics” in American studies as well as the most recent scholarship: the “myth and symbol” school, the culture concept, psychoanalytic methodologies, new literary and feminist critiques, material culture and oral history resources, mass and popular culture analyses, with attention to issues of race, gender, class, and ethnicity throughout. The intent of the course is to offer students a variety of opportunities to sharpen their analytical, research, and writing skills

from interdisciplinary and historiographic perspectives. Required of majors and minors in their sophomore or junior years. **Daniel A. Nathan, 4 credits**

## **AM 230 001 Born in America**

An exploration of the changing ways in which American women have experienced contraception, abortion, pregnancy, and childbirth from 1587 to the present. We will examine developments in technology, law, medicine, the economy, and the role and position of women and the family in society as they have influenced the reproductive lives of American women, using sources from the history of medicine, social history, literature, legal and constitutional studies, government and sociology. Issues we will consider include social childbirth and the role of the midwife in the colonial period, the masculinization of obstetrics, introduction of anesthesia, and criminalization of abortion in the nineteenth century, the struggle for reproductive freedom and the introduction of hospital birth, as well as the legalization of abortion and introduction of alternative birthing patterns in the twentieth century. By analyzing these topics, reading about them, writing about them, and thinking about and discussing various aspects of each, we will work to gain a greater understanding of how social change occurs, and what studying reproduction can tell us about the evolution of American society. **Mary C. Lynn, 4 credits**

## **AM 241 001 Mark Twains America**

A study of American culture from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century through the life and works of Mark Twain. Using Twain's essays, letters, short stories, and novels as points of reference for discussions of major themes for the period of Twain's life (1834-1910), the course focuses on issues of regionalism, class, race relations, technology, humor, and imperialism. **Gregory M. Pfitzer, 4 credits**

## **AM 260 001 Law and American Society**

This seminar examines the law and the legal system from the outside looking in: investigating the societal forces that shape and influence the law, determining how it is applied. It also studies the law from the inside out: examining how and to what extent the legal system influences modern society and societal norms, probing the interrelationship between the law and modern culture. The law and the legal system will be studied from multiple viewpoints, and with the perspective of citizens living in American legal culture: how has the law influenced and shaped modern American culture, and in what ways does modern American culture influence the development of the law? What is the role of modern society in the legal system and vice-versa? In this seminar, we will draw on a variety of sources including film and television, courtcases/opinions, newspaper & current media, and social science materials. In particular, we will more closely examine depictions of the law and the legal system in several popular films, considering and analyzing each film to further our inquiry and understanding of the cultural perspectives in relation to an associated seminar topic. In this discussion-based seminar, students will develop advocacy skills in classroom discussions, while individual projects will allow students to explore particular topics in greater depth. Films will be shown on alternate Monday evenings. **Scott Mulligan, 3 credits**

## **AM 260J 001 Diversity in the United States**

An examination of the ways in which people in the United States try to reconcile the realities of cultural difference with preconceived notions of a unified America and American identity. Students will learn about the United States as a complex, heterogeneous society that has been profoundly shaped by both the connections and conflict implicit in its multicultural heritage. Students will also address interrelationships and tensions that characterize a culturally diverse democracy by examining how accepted cultural traditions intersect with contested themes such as race, the family, adoption, gender, sexuality, and education. (Fulfills social sciences requirement; designated as a Cultural Diversity course.)

**Beck Krefting, 3 credits**

## **AM 360C 001 The 1960s**

An interdisciplinary analysis of the decade of the 1950s in America. Using a wide variety of primary and secondary sources, including fiction, film, music, biography, autobiography, poetry, sociology, drama, and social criticism, the course explores the distinctive culture of this decade. It focuses on the ways different groups of Americans experienced the period, studying conformity and consumerism, the beatniks, rock and roll, and the silent generation, as well as the roots of the protest movements and the counterculture of the 1960s.

**Gregory M. Pfitzer, 4 credits**

## **AM 376 001 Historical Imaginings**

Interdisciplinary seminars exploring a substantial aspect of the development of American culture. These courses involve in-depth analysis using the resources and techniques of several different disciplines and require a major research paper. 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor. May be repeated for credit with a different topic.

**Daniel A. Nathan, 3 credits**