

FALL 2013

AMERICAN STUDIES COURSE OFFERINGS

AM 103 001 Intro. to American Studies

Introduction to the interdisciplinary study of American culture, past and present. Emphasizes reading critically, thinking historically, practicing interdisciplinarity, and acknowledging diversity. Students will analyze and synthesize multiple kinds of primary sources (such as fiction, film, music, art) and disciplinary perspectives (sociology, economics, media criticism) to appreciate better the complexity of American life and culture. (Fulfills social science requirement.)

Daniel Nathan, 4 credits

AM 103W 001 Intro: Wizard of Oz

An interdisciplinary analysis of *The Wizard of Oz*, this course will examine the numerous adaptations of L. Frank Baum's classic tale to introduce students to the study of American culture, past and present. Students will read critically, think historically, practice interdisciplinarity, and acknowledge the intersections of race, class, and gender in order to analyze the ways that *The Wizard of Oz*, in its many versions, has reflected and shaped American culture. Students will consider primary and secondary sources that explore Oz through a range of media (fiction, film, theater, television, and music) and from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. In addition to reading Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), students will consider MGM's *The Wizard of Oz* (1939); the "super soul" Broadway musical, *The Wiz* (1975), and its 1978 film adaptation; Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon* (1973); Gregory Maguire's *Wicked* (1996); Stephen Schwartz's 2003 Broadway musical version of the Maguire novel; ABC television's *The Muppets' Wizard of Oz* (2005); and the television mini-series *Tin Man* (2007). **Megan Williams, 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 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. (Fulfills expository writing requirement.) **Mary C. Lynn, 4 credits**

AM 236 001 Jazz Multicultural Expression

This course is neither a "traditional" historical survey of jazz styles and musicians, nor a close reading of the structures of the music itself. Rather, "Jazz, Race, and Gender" is an interdisciplinary introduction to theories of

race and gender – as they intersect with other social categories such as class, sexuality, and nation – as lenses for studying jazz and its impact on U.S. culture. Focusing mainly on U.S. expression from the 1920s to 1960s, we will consider the ways that racial and gender dynamics have shaped the history and criticism of American jazz culture. Through reading, listening, viewing, discussing, and writing, students will learn skills for analyzing the meanings of gender and race within jazz contexts. **Megan Williams, 4 credits**

AM 260C 001 African American Experience

A study of the African-American experience, 1860s-1980s. Using both primary and secondary source material, the course examines the critical issues and period relevant to the African-American struggle toward freedom and equality. Topics include slavery, emancipation, and Reconstruction; the woman's era; the age of Jim Crow and the new Negro; the civil rights movement; and the post-reform period. Sources include narratives, documents, photographs, and films. **Leonard Slade, 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 331 001 Critical Whiteness in the United States

An interdisciplinary examination of whiteness in U.S. culture and history. Explores the racial construction of whiteness, focusing on its changing legal, political, aesthetic, and cultural definitions over four centuries of American experience, with special emphasis on the concept of whiteness in contemporary ethnographic studies, memoirs, and essays. Students will examine the relationship between whiteness and other components of identity. The nature of white privilege and the conditions of access to whiteness will be investigated. 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor. (Designated a Cultural Diversity course.) **Beck Krefting, 4 credits**

AM 374 001 Senior Seminar

Exploration of primary and secondary sources in the interdisciplinary examination of a particular topic in American culture. Students will pursue a major research project or prepare an honors thesis proposal. Required of all senior majors. Open to majors only; normally taken in fall semester of senior year.

Daniel Nathan, 4 credits

AM 376X 001 Blacks and Jews

During the late 1960s, Jewish and Black public intellectuals and scholars outlined competing narratives of “Black-Jewish Relations.” One asserted that African Americans and American Jews share similar histories of persecution in the United States as well as common beliefs in social justice and liberalism; it argued that these experiences and beliefs culminated in the civil rights movement – a “golden age” of Black-Jewish alliance. This account posited that militant Black Nationalists, with their anti-white and anti-Semitic rhetoric, destroyed this fruitful relationship, causing the “collapse” of Black-Jewish coalition. Its competing narrative questioned the

validity of a “natural alliance” and argued that Jews participated with African Americans in the struggle for civil rights in order to advance Jewish American status in the United States, rather than to promote universal racial equality.

Today, many continue to characterize American Blacks and Jews as marginalized groups sharing a “special relationship” marked by “alliances and arguments.” In this interdisciplinary seminar, we will critique these dominant political narratives of “Black-Jewish Relations” by exploring complex interactions – real and imagined – between African Americans and American Jews in a variety of arenas (including but not limited to popular culture, education, the arts, religion, the family, and politics) over the course of the twentieth century. Throughout, we will pay special attention to the ways that constructions of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, class, and region intersect with those of Jewishness and Blackness during different historical moments. **Megan Williams, 4 credits**