

FALL 2017

AMERICAN STUDIES COURSE OFFERINGS

AM 103W 001 The Wizard of Oz

Professor Gregory Pfitzer

MW/F 9:05-10:00 Credits: 4

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).

AM 103W 002 The City

Professor Amber Wiley

Tu Th, 9:40-11:00 Credits: 4

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.

Note(s): (Fulfills social science requirement.)

AM 261C 001 Holocaust and American Culture

Professor Daniel Nathan

WF, 8:40-10:00 Credits:3

This course has two emphases. The first third will focus on what Americans knew about the Nazis' genocidal policies in the 1930s and 1940s, how and when they knew it, and why the U.S. government and Jewish leaders were mostly ineffective in halting or mitigating the murder of some six million European Jews (among others). It will also consider the initial American reaction to learning about the Nazi death camps in 1945. The remaining two-thirds of the course will employ an interdisciplinary methodology to critique and put in context a variety of texts-films (documentary and feature), a TV series, graphic non-fiction, museums-created by and for Americans that have represented the Shoah ("the catastrophe"). The course will engage issues related to power and justice. It will probe the ways in which those in power in the United States did less than they could or might have done to save thousands of European Jews. It will also consider the power of popular culture to teach people lessons about the past and social justice. Ultimately, the class is about the power of remembering and representing the past, and the perils and possibilities that are part of those processes.

AM 264 001 African American Experience

Professor Amber Wiley

Tu Th 11:10-12:30

Credits: 3

An exploration of the development of the distinctive culture of the southern region of the United States. The course examines myths and legends of the Old South, including those surrounding the origins of the plantation system, southern womanhood, and the development of the slave and free communities of the region in the antebellum period. Topics include the myths and legends of the New South, the legacy of the Civil War and Reconstruction, the imposition of segregation, modernization of agriculture and industry, and the migration of African-Americans northward. The course culminates in a study of the civil rights movement, and recent demographic, economic, and political changes.

Note(s): (Fulfills social sciences requirement.)

AM 265 001 Pop History

Professor Gregory Pfitzer

M 11:15-12:00 and WF 10:10-11:30 Credits: 4

A topical examination of the creation, dissemination, and consumption of "pop"ular history in American culture. The course will examine the ways in which Americans absorb history through vernacular forms of communication, including radio dramatizations (*The Cavalcade of America*); cartoons and comic books (*Classics Illustrated*); television programs (*Time Tunnel* and *Drunk History*); movies (Disney's *Pocahontas*); living history demonstrations (Civil War re-enactments); and rap music (Flocabulary's *Hip-Hop History*). The interrelationships among popular, elite and folk history will be explored.

AM 351D 001 Historic Preservation Theory and Practice

Professor Amber Wiley

T/Th, 12:20-1:40 Credits: 3

Historic Preservation is a necessarily interdisciplinary field. Born of grassroots efforts to safeguard our country's early heritage and to create a sense of "national lineage," this field has expanded to include city planning, public history, archaeology, landscape studies, and economic development, to name only a few allied fields. As such, this **yearlong course** composed of one semester of *History and Theory of Preservation* (4 credits) and one semester of a *Preservation Practicum* (3 credits), with an option to attend the *National Park System Advisory Board Landmarks Committee Meeting* (1 credit) should appeal to upper-level students in the fields of American Studies, Art Administration, Art History, Business, Environmental Studies, History, and Political Science, etc.

The course will take advantage of the local resources in the Capital Region. Guest lectures from specialists from the Saratoga Battlefield National Historic Park, Saratoga Springs Preservation Foundation, Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor and the New York State Historic Preservation Office will be central to the class structure, in addition to site visits. Students will also have the chance to attend a National Park Service meeting in Washington, D.C. in the fall.

AM 356 001 Sports Cinema

Professor Jeffrey Segrave

MW 2:30-3:50, S 7:00-9:00 Credits: 3

This class puts in context and critiques feature films and documentaries about sports to understand and appreciate— aesthetically, historically, culturally—a wide variety of experiences and issues. The course is also intended to enhance visual literacy, and thus students will assess the films *as films*, which have their own codes and conventions. As one would expect, most of the films we will study were made and set in the United States. A notable exception is Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* (1938), which chronicles and celebrates the 1936 Berlin Olympic games. We will screen several "classic" sport films—among them, *Knute Rockne—All American* (1940), *Raging Bull* (1980), and *Hoop Dreams* (1994). After spring break, we will pair a Hollywood feature film with a related documentary: so, for example, Ken Carlson's *Go Tigers!* (2001), which is about high school football in Massillon, Ohio, will be paired with Peter Berg's *Friday Night*

Lights (2004). The point is *not* to suggest that documentaries provide a more accurate version of sporting reality; rather, it is to consider what different kinds of visual texts, grammars, and discourses do well (and poorly) and how they interact with and enhance one another. Students are required to attend a weekly evening film screening.

AM 374 001 Senior Seminar

Professor Gregory Pfitzer

MW, 4:00-5:50

Credits: 4

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.

Note(s): 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor.