

SPRING 2013

AMERICAN STUDIES COURSE OFFERINGS

AM 103 001 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 103W 001 Intro: 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 Krefling, 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. **Greg Pfitzer, 4 credits**

AM 233 001 American Past in Film

This course is an interdisciplinary introduction to the history and structure of classical Hollywood film and the cultural factors that shaped past cinematic depictions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. Students will consider the significance of American cinema between the mid-1910s and early 1960s as a cultural institution that has shaped and reflected racism, class inequality, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism in the United States. Students will also analyze film as a site of contemporary struggle by exploring the ways that marginalized Americans have used the genre to resist systems of privilege and inequality. **Megan Williams, 4 credits**

AM 260 001 Childhood in America

An interdisciplinary exploration of American culture from 1620-2010, focusing on the experiences and roles of American children. Beginning with Native American patterns, the class will explore Puritan notions of childish original sin, the increasing independence of young Americans at the time of the Revolution, the early Victorian ideas of children's innocence, class and childhood in the nineteenth century, and children's lives during and after plantation slavery. In the twentieth century we will consider the work of psychologists and education reformers such as John Dewey, John B. Watson, Sigmund Freud, Anna Freud, and Benjamin Spock, as well as emphasizing the importance of considering race, gender, class, and ethnicity in analyzing childhood. Our overall strategy will be to study American culture historically, and through fiction, film, and art by analyzing the lives of children, their experiences, and the changing ideas and policies which have defined American childhood. (Fulfills social sciences requirement.) **Mary C. Lynn, 3 credits**

AM 260I 001 Popular Culture: Post Apocalyptic Film & Literature

Fear of nuclear warfare in the mid-twentieth century led to a surge in family home bomb shelters and elaborate underground fortresses intended for high-profile public officials and authorities. A computer glitch that threatened to bring an end to the electronic age, spurred the Y2K problem, prompting people to hoard water and provisions on the millennium's cusp. Religious groups continue to forecast an apocalypse and currently, the Mayan calendar predicts December 21, 2012 as that "end date." The DIY and self-subsistence movements reflect a desire to broaden our skill sets as much as they reflect a desire for readiness in the face of imminent disaster. Threats of an apocalypse shape human behavior, practices and identity. How these are imagined and what happens in the aftermath can tell us about who we are, how we will behave in crisis, what we are afraid of and who matters. How do dystopic stories differ from post-apocalyptic tales; what are distinguishing characteristics of the latter genre? What happens to the treatment of minorities—racial, sexual, differently abled and gender—in a post-apocalyptic era as imagined by authors and filmmakers? More importantly, what does this say about our current attitudes toward minorities? How do stories of the apocalypse and the aftermath reflect the fears and concerns of the American public in a particular moment in time? What happens to American identity in a post-apocalyptic world? In this class we will explore these questions and many more by examining a cross-section of post-apocalyptic film and literature produced throughout the past century. From graphic novels like *'Y' the Last Man on Earth* to novels like *A World Made by Hand* and *Blindness* to films and television series like *The Walking Dead* and *The Road*, this course will investigate print and visual popular culture that imagines life in a post-apocalyptic world. Over the semester, we will explore approaches to and ongoing debates in popular culture studies and become conversant with literary and film theories, applying them to print and visual post-apocalyptic texts. (Fulfills social sciences requirement.) **Beck Krefting, 4 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 360D: AMERICAN CULTURAL PERIODS: WORLD WAR II THE AMERICAN HOME FRONT AND BEYOND, 1941-1945

The Second World War is often remembered by Americans with nostalgia as “The Good War,” a moral war, with a clear enemy – the Axis powers – and a clear cause – the victory of democracy over fascism. During this period, the United States government sought to rally public support behind the war effort by representing the country as the leader of “the free world.” Through tightly monitored and heavily censored popular culture, the wartime government constructed an image of the United States as the champion of equality. Despite this representation of the country as the defender of freedom, many American men and women experienced institutionalized inequality – based on race, gender, class, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, and ability – on both the home and battle fronts during World War II. In the face of these ideological contradictions, many entered the military and the wartime workforce eager to prove their patriotism and their right to the privileges the United States ostensibly guaranteed all of its citizens. They fought for a “Double Victory” – victory over fascism abroad and victory over inequality at home.

This course is an intensive exploration of American home-front culture – and beyond – during World War II. Through an examination of wartime mass culture (including Hollywood cinema, recruitment films and posters, magazines and advertising, songs and radio, popular literature and comic books), we will deconstruct the dominant narratives of the era. At the same time, we will question how these pop-cultural portrayals of “America” and “Americans” at war compare with the experiences of the everyday men and women who fought for equality at home and abroad. *Megan Williams, 4 credits*

AM 363 001 Women in American Culture

An examination of the changing position of women in American culture and society from the seventeenth century to the present. Topics will include the developing familial, economic, sexual, educational, and political roles of women, as well as consideration of the suffragist and feminist movements. Issues of race, class, ethnicity will be included, and resources from a variety of disciplines will be used, including material culture, history, literature, politics, sociology, and economics. May be repeated for credit with a different topic. (Counts towards Women’s Studies credit) **Mary C. Lynn, 4 credits**

AM 376G 001 Magazines and Modernity

The number and variety of American magazines exploded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, leading historians to call this era the “golden age” of periodical development. This course will introduce you to this wealth of primary material and to the theoretical concerns of scholars who study the roles of magazines in reflecting and creating modern culture. We will read magazines as cultural documents in order to explore the rise of modern advertising; the shaping of gendered, classed, and racialized readerships; and the popular advancement, and occasional subversion, of dominant ideological perspectives (of nation, of domesticity, of labor, of consumption). We will also consider the enormous influence of certain turn-of-the-century editors and their business policies; including the sophisticated relations they created among internal magazine elements so as to streamline their cultural messages. In addition to substantial theoretical and historical reading and regular short research and writing assignments, each student will be responsible for a major semester-long project that will involve intensive study of a period magazine in the Scribner collection. **Janet Casey, 4 credits**