

SPRING 2015

AMERICAN STUDIES COURSE OFFERINGS

AM 103 001 Intro: Civil War in American Memory

This course considers how Americans have remembered and commemorated the Civil War from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Drawing on depictions of the war in fiction, film, popular history, television, music, and re-enactors' conventions among other cultural sources, it focuses on how memory and history interact in the popular imagination to shape the cultural legacy of the conflict.

MWF 10:10-11:05 Gregory Pfitzer, 4 credits

AM 103W 001 Intro The 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)

Tu Th 11:10-12:30 Megan Williams, 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.

Tu Th 9:10-11:00 Gregory Pfitzer, 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.

Tu Th 3:40-5:00 Megan Williams, 4 credits

AM 236 002 Jazz, Multicultural Expression

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M W 2:30-3:50 Megan Williams, 4 credits

AM 260 001 Museums in American Culture

Course description: What do material objects and cultural relics tell us about individual and collective experiences, past and present? How do people and cultures assemble, preserve, and display objects of cultural significance to form narratives of cultural history, and who or what determines what is “culturally significant”? To answer these and other questions, this course will provide students with an understanding of the material and discursive practices of museums, memorials, and archives in constructing narratives of cultural identity. Focusing on the curatorial processes of material objects and the discourses they shape, produce, and manage about American identity, history, and culture, this course blends hands-on and theoretical approaches and provides students with knowledge of Museum Studies in 20th and 21st century America. **Tu Th 12:40-2:00 Jacque Micieli-Voutsinas, 3 credits**

AM 260X 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? **Tu Th 2:10-3:30 Scott Mulligan, 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. **M W 4:00-5:50 Gregory Pfitzer, 4 credits**

AM 376 002 AMERICA-POST-SEPTEMBER 11

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 stand as the defining moment for United States foreign policy and, perhaps more generally, United States culture in the past decade. This course will examine the history of the post-September 11th period, asking both what the domestic and foreign policy responses to the attacks have been, how Americans engaged with those events and policies, and how they have been represented in popular culture. As we do so, we will read primary documents from the period, the best recent scholarship, and a range of popular texts that includes graphic novels, long-form journalism, film, and memorials. Our discussions will take seriously the premise that cultural texts do not simply reflect already-extant cultural ideas but rather play a critical role in the production of competing ideas about events, their cultural significance, and their political import. Our goal will be to analyze not only the events of September 11 and the United States' political, military, and cultural response to them but also how those events and responses are significant within larger debates about race, gender, citizenship, and patriotism in the contemporary United States as well as questions about the United States' role in global affairs. Each week, our focus will be on thoroughly examining key thematic topics central to post-9/11 culture. Among the topic we will discuss are: security and civil liberties, torture and detention, racial profiling, veterans' experiences, imperialism, memory and trauma, foreign policy and military strategy, drones, gender and sexuality.

Tu Th 6:30-7:50 Jacque Micieli-Voutsinas, 3 credits

AM 376 003 AMERICA-POST-SEPTEMBER 11

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W 6:30-9:30 Jacque Micieli-Voutsinas and David Kieran, 3 credits

AM 376X Reel Sports

This class critiques and puts in context Hollywood feature films and documentaries to better understand— aesthetically, historically, culturally—a wide variety of sporting experiences, issues, and ideas. 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—such as *Knute Rockne—All American* (1940), *The Pride of the Yankees* (1942), *Rocky* (1976), and *Raging Bull* (1980). During the second half of the semester, 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, might be paired with Peter Berg's *Friday Night Lights* (2004). The point is *not* to suggest that docs 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. **Daniel Nathan, 4 credit**