

FALL 2016

AMERICAN STUDIES COURSE OFFERINGS

AM 103 001 1968

Professor Daniel Nathan

Tu Th, 12:40-2:00 Credits: 4

This course introduces students to different forms of history and cultural criticism and examines some recurrent American cultural values and themes, such as the tension and 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, journalism, autobiography, material culture, music, literature, art, film (feature and documentary), and other forms of knowledge and expression—and uses 1968 as its focal point.

Why 1968? There are several reasons. For many people, especially those who experienced it firsthand, 1968 seemed like a historical and cultural pivot or a line of demarcation between the past and the present, a moment when the United States and much of the world changed irrevocably. Some have characterized it as “The Year That Shaped a Generation,” “The Year Everything Went Wrong,” and “The Year the Dream Died.” For our purposes, 1968 is a kind of laboratory that enables us to think critically about American culture in a complex, interdisciplinary manner.

AM 103W 001 A Humorous (Dis)Course

Professor Beck Krefting

W/F 10:10-12:00 Credits: 4

In this course we will use comedic cultural forms 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 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 forms of minstrelsy, vaudeville, improv, and stand-up comedy 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.

AM 103W 002 The American 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 250A 001 Reg Culture: Hudson River

Professor Gregory Pfitzer

MWF, 9:05-10:00

Credits:4

An introduction to the history, literature, and art of the Hudson River Valley. The Hudson River is considered as an environmental entity, an economic and political concern, and especially as a cultural symbol. The course considers four centuries of American experience on the Hudson, but focuses on the nineteenth century, when the Hudson had its greatest influence on regional and national culture. **Note(s):** (Fulfills social sciences requirement.)

AM 260C 001 African American Experience

Professor Amber Wiley

M/W 2:30-3:50

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 362 001 American Autobiography

Professor Daniel Nathan

WF, 12:20-1:40 Credits: 3

An examination of American culture through the lives of specific people as recorded in their autobiographies. The course explores autobiography both as an act of self-creation and as a reflection of culture. Various autobiographies are examined for their revelations about choices, crises, values, and experiences of representative people in particular periods of the American past. **Note(s):** 300-level courses in American Studies are not ordinarily open to first-year students except by permission of the instructor.

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.

AM 376B 001 City in American Culture

Professor Amber Wiley
T/Th, 2:10-3:30 Credits: 3

This course is an examination of the growth and impact of urban life on American culture. The course examines the relationship between the perceptions of urban life and the actualities of that experience. By focusing on how varying reactions to the urban experience result from economic, ethnic, or gender differences, the course explores such topics as: the effect of industrialization, the waves of rural migration and overseas immigration, the concentrations of wealth and poverty, the impact of architecture, and the parks and planning movements. *The nation's capital, Washington, D.C., will be the lens through which we investigate these issues.*