

FALL 2020

AMERICAN STUDIES COURSE OFFERINGS

AM 101W 001 Introduction to American Studies: Growing up in America

MW, 5:10-7:00, Tammy Owens, 4 credits online

What does it mean to be an American *child* in 2020? How have definitions of childhood changed over time? How does race, class, gender, sexuality, or ability influence perceptions of American children or childhood? How does geography shape ideas about American childhood? In this course, students will engage in an interdisciplinary study of the history of American childhood to answer these questions. By studying the history of American childhood, students will learn how major social, cultural, political, and economic changes in the U.S. have defined the nation's culture. Students will gain a better understanding of how our ideas and beliefs about what it means to be an American have influenced our ideas about who is or who is not a child, where childhood can or cannot exist, and the role of children and young adults in shaping our world. Students will examine a diverse mix of sources including literature, archival documents, films, music, social media, and critical social theory.

AM 101W 002 Introduction to American Studies: Basketball

WF, 8:40-10:00 and R 7:00-8:00, Daniel Nathan, 4 credits
hybrid: mix of in-person/online

This course introduces students to different forms of cultural criticism and examines some recurrent American cultural values and themes, such as the tension between community and individualism, and the 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, sociology, journalism, autobiography, fiction, poetry, art, film (feature and documentary), and other forms of knowledge and expression.

AM 261D 002 Peace Studies: Performing Communications of Peace in Precarious Times

WF, 12:20-2:10, Visiting Assistant Professor Jacque Micieli-Voutsinas,
4 credits hybrid: mix of in-person/online

The 21st century has seen the proliferation of terrorism, asymmetrical war, communal violence, and increasing economic and ecological precarity throughout much of the world. In these uncertain times, human and non-human exposure to vulnerability and violence has intensified. In a moment where coalescing fundamentalisms and right-wing populisms expand globally, what

does it mean to be a ‘chisel of peace’? What does it mean, in other words, to resist mechanisms of violence without reproducing their terms, at home or abroad? What are the institutions, ethical codes, and moral principals of non-violent resistance? And when is violence justified?

Offering a survey of the relatively young, interdisciplinary field of Peace Studies, this course answers these and other important questions for our times. Throughout this course, emphasis is placed on critical reading and careful analysis of the ideological representations and material manifestations of peace, justice, reconciliation, and sustainability as relevant modes of contemporary, non-violent political resistance. As global citizens exposed to and implicated in the suffering of others, it is imperative that we ground our theoretical explorations in peace and non-violence within intersectional analyses of identity, power, and oppression. Such intersectional perspectives highlight the importance of geography, positionality, and privilege as mechanisms of control and domination, at multiple scales. To this end, issues of militarism, racial, gender, and sexual violence, ecological degradation, terrorism, neoliberalism, and neocolonialism will be discussed, alongside modes of resistance: conscientious objection; boycott, divestments, and sanctions; civil disobedience; reconciliation, amongst others. Contemporary examples of non-violent social activism will also be included to illustrate theoretical and applied concepts from course texts and lectures; possible case studies include, but are not exclusive to: the Black Civil Rights Movement; Ploughshares/Catholic Worker Movement; Vietnam; Occupy Wall Street; Boycott Divestment and Sanctions; Black Lives Matter; NoDAPL; the Women’s March; Sanctuary Cities; and the role of non-violent resistance under occupation. Please note that we will be discussing potentially triggering topics in this class; therefore, please take your time to read through the syllabus and determine if you are comfortable discussing these matters.

Note(s): May be repeated for credit with focus on a different theme.

AM 264 001 Themes in American Culture: African American Experience

TR, 2:50-4:10, Tammy Owens, 3 credits online

An investigation of the role African Americans have played in the history of the nation, including African-American contributions to, and exclusions from, various aspects of a “democratic” American society. Students will examine the critical issues and periods 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. Primary and secondary sources include narratives, documents, photographs, and films.

Note(s): (Designated a Cultural Diversity course; fulfills social sciences requirement.)

AM 265 001 Post-Apocalyptic Film and Literature

WF, 10:30-12:20, Beck Krefting, 4 credits in-person

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 the Mayan calendar predicted 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* to novels like *Parable of the Sower* and *I am Legend* to films and television series like *The Walking Dead* and *Snowpiercer*, this course will investigate print and visual popular culture that imagines life in a post-apocalyptic world. Over the semester, we will learn methods for analyzing popular culture, 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.

AM 351C 001 American Horror Fiction

W, 6:10-8:55, Aaron Pedinotti, 3 credits on-line

This course explores the subgenres and modalities of American horror fiction in multiple media, including print, film, television, videogames, graphic novels and virtual reality. Its goals are four in number: 1) to introduce students to the formal characteristics of various horror subgenres, including American Gothic, ghost stories, pulp horror, weird fiction, sci-fi horror, body horror, post-apocalyptic horror, slasher films, splatterpunk, and the horror of the anthropocene; 2) to investigate the ways in which the texts of horror are refracted and inflected by the specific mediums in which they are presented; 3) to explore theoretical takes on how the classic aesthetic motifs of horror fiction—including the terror/ horror schism, Gothic sublimity, and cosmic pessimism—are refracted through specifically American texts and contexts; and 4) to relate the genres and texts that are studied in the course to major issues in American history and society, including racial and gendered oppression, economic exploitation, settler colonialism, genocide, imperialism, militarism and other forms of social violence. Specific authors studied in the course will include Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allen Poe, H.P. Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, Shirley Jackson, Richard Matheson, Stephen King, Kathe Koje, Octavia Butler, Scott Snyder and Jeff VanderMeer. (Some of the works by latter authors will be full novels, but several will be short

stories.) Films and television screenings will include Rod Sterling's *The Twilight Zone*, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*, David Cronenberg's *Rabid*, Matt Reeves' *Let Me In*, David Mitchell's *It Follows*, Jordan Peele's *Get Out*, Alex Garland's *Annihilation*, Season 2 of SYFY's *Channel Zero*, and Jen and Sylvia Soska's remake of David Cronenberg's *Rabid*. Some experiential engagement with horror-themed videogames and VR experiences will also be a part of the curriculum. Some accommodations will be made for anxiety responses, but students are advised that this course is not for the squeamish or faint of heart...

AM 351C 002 Post-9/11 America

T, 6:10-8:55, Jacque Micieli-Voutsinas, 3 credits

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 stand as the defining moment for United States foreign policy and, more generally, U.S. culture in the 21st Century. We will examine the cultural impact 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 American public 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, documentary 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 historical 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, religion, and patriotism in the contemporary United States as well as questions about the United States' role in global affairs.

AM 374 00 Senior Seminar

TR, 9:50-11:10, Daniel Nathan, 4 Credits

Hybrid: Mix of in-person/online

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.