

**SPRING 2017**

## **AMERICAN STUDIES COURSE OFFERINGS**

### **AM 103W 001 American Cultural Geographies**

**WF 8:40-10:00 Amber Wiley, 4 credits**

What is American culture? Why is it such an important concept to how we perceive and live in relation to the world around us? Is American culture connected to certain places or people, or is it mobile? How does it impact the ways people perceive themselves in relation to others? What about all of these questions is geographic, and does thinking about American culture geographically give us a different understanding of the term? AM 103W is designed to address these and other questions about something called American culture. The course introduces students to the interdisciplinary study of American culture and the ways that a geographic approach helps us make sense of American cultural practices and how it shapes the world around us. Students will examine how questions of American culture are also questions of landscape, identity, politics, economics, history, and place, and how a geographic approach to such questions helps us understand the world in more critical ways. This course is not meant to be a comprehensive history of the United States; instead, it provides snapshots of the nation's history through an investigation of cultural landscapes.

### **AM 221 001 Methods and Approaches**

**T R 12:40-2:00 Daniel Nathan, 4 credits**

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.

**Note(s):** Required of majors and minors in their sophomore or junior years.

### **AM 241 001 Mark Twain's America**

**WF 10:10-11:30 Gregory Pfitzer, 4 credits**

**M 11:15-12:10**

A study of American culture from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century through the life and works of Mark Twain. Using Twain's essays, letters, short stories, and novels as points of reference for discussions of major themes for the period of Twain's life (1834–1910), the

course focuses on issues of regionalism, class, race relations, technology, humor, and imperialism.

## **AM 264 001 African-American Experience**

**T R 11:10-12:30 Amber Wiley, 3 credits**

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 Literature and Film**

**T R 2:10-3:30 Beck Krefting, 4 credits**

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.

## **AM 342 001 Black Feminist Thoughts**

**T R 9:40-11:00 Beck Krefting, 3 credits**

This multidisciplinary seminar will chart and examine the development and expression of Black feminist thoughts, particularly in the United States. The course will focus on the intraracial significance of gender, sexuality, race, ability, and class, as well as the complex interplay among these variables. Emphasis will also be placed on illuminating Black feminist resistance and activism in several distinct, yet overlapping, contexts, including under conditions of servitude, the Black club women’s movement and the reemergence of Black feminisms and womanism from the late 1960s onward. In this class you will be introduced to the roots of modern Black feminist thought vis-à-vis Anna Julia Cooper and the prescient writings of Lorraine Hansbury. Later, the focus will be on Black feminist theorizing particularly the intellectual development of radical Black feminist thought and lesbian separatism during the 1960s and 1970s and late 20<sup>th</sup> century transnational feminisms.

## **AM 351D 001 Sports Cinema**

**MW 2:30-3:50 Daniel Nathan, 4 credits**

**Sunday 7:00-9:30**

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 352 001 City in American Culture**

**WF 12:20-1:40 Amber Wiley, 3 credits**

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.* The central theme to this urban investigation is Washington: Symbol and City.

## **AM 368 001 The 1960s**

**MW 4:00-5:50 Gregory Pfitzer, 4 credits**

A consideration of the major events of the 1960s, including the New Frontier, the Cuban missile crisis, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the war in Vietnam, the civil rights movement, the sexual and gender revolutions, the rise of rock and roll, the counterculture, the moon landing and other landmarks of the decade. The course considers not only what happened during those climactic years, but why such events were so important to American development, and how perceptions about the 1960s have changed over time.