COURSES FOR DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN STUDIES

American Studies Courses

AMS500 Internship
Hours 1-3
An internship opportunity that combines independent study and practical field work focusing on a particular problem or topic related to American culture and experience. Recent examples include internships in museum management, historic preservation, archaeological research, television production, category fiction, promotion of academic programs, documentary television, academic public relations, with Alabama Heritage and Louisville magazines, and with the Paul Bryant Museum.

AMS505 Directed Study
Hours 1-3
No description available

AMS506 Directed Study
Hours 1-3
No description available

AMS507 Landscapes of the South
Hours 3
This seminar explores the cultural, social, and natural ecology of the Mississippi watershed from St. Louis to the Gulf Coast. This interdisciplinary American Studies course examines the river dubbed “the Body of the Nation,” its history, cultural geography, and geophysical ecology. Through readings in history, literary accounts, and artistic expressions, we explore effects of human interventions in nature and nature’s impact on the course of human events.

AMS509 Memory, Identity and Politics: Gender, Race, and Class
Hours 3
This interdisciplinary graduate seminar explores the ways in which memory and the past construct political identities and the interplay of race, class, gender, and ethnicity in its social construction through readings, discussion, and student research. Reading selections include core theoretical texts on memory studies and specific case studies on topics, including not but exclusive to the American Civil War memory, U.S. South, slavery, and Reconstruction. Issues and questions are: how memories are constructed, translated into identities and political action; bases of shared memories and contested memories; political memorialization and the effects of collective amnesia; and how “communities of memory” are developed, sustained, and dissolved.

AMS510 On The Road
Hours 3
This course seeks to introduce the breadth and power of the travel culture that defines "America" and examines enduring features when writers take to the open road in America.

AMS516 American Environmental Thought
Hours 3
Popular conceptions of nature hold extraordinary power in shaping our responses and policies toward both the geophysical world and built environments. This interdisciplinary course examines key concepts and controversies in American thought about nature since before colonization. Using accounts from various regions, the course explores evolving conceptions of nature and justice, competing claims about race and class, and changing institutional responses and remedies to environmental degradation in the context of global change.

AMS521 Writer & Artist in America
Hours 3
This course offers a comparative examination of responses by 20th century literary and visual artists to perceived social crises and challenges to American cultural values, such as sex in the early 20th century American city, working class struggles during the Great Depression, issues of atomic anxiety during the early years of the Cold War, the ethical dilemmas of the Vietnam War, the perils of the AIDS/HIV crisis, and the flourishing of contemporary consumer culture. The course also introduces several important movements in twentieth century American arts and letters, including Naturalism, Modernism, Social Realism, the Beat movement, Social Surrealism, and Postmodernism.

AMS522 Popular Culture in America
Hours 3
Survey and analysis of 20th century US popular culture including social context and how it has reflected and shaped American society, including gender, race, class and region.

AMS523 The Roots of American Music
Hours 3
This class surveys American music from ragtime, blues, and hillbilly to Broadway, Hollywood musicals, and swing jazz. Our focus will be on commercial mainstreams and democratic audiences – how selling sound led to different identities being expressed through taste and style. Race, gender, class, sexuality, age, technology, and the music business will all factor as we move from blackface minstrelsy in the 1800s to World War II. We will listen closely to several songs each week, connecting music to larger themes through primary and secondary sources, regular writing, and in-class discussion.

AMS529 American between the Wars
Hours 3
Explores first two decades of America’s "Modern Times" (1919-1941) when Americans redefined themselves and their society.

AMS530 Special Topics
Hours 3
Selected American topics in American Studies offered by AMS faculty members or Americanists from related departments. Recent example: Women in America.

AMS531 Studies In Pop Culture
Hours 3
Research and discussion of selected topics in American popular culture: literature, music, network broadcasting, advertising, film, and drama.
AMSS32 Studies In The Arts
Hours 3
Research and discussion of selected topics in literature, film, painting, photography, and architecture, and the role of the artist in 19th- and 20th-century America.

AMSS36 Studies Social Experience
Hours 3
Research and discussion of selected topics in the American social experience.

AMSS39 Urban Spaces
Hours 3
This interdisciplinary social science course provides an introduction to the cultural and physical ecology of cities, focusing primarily on urbanization in the United States from the late 19th century to the present. Course readings include classical urbanism and urban design. Contemporary urban environmental histories explore population shifts and land use along the urban gradient from the suburbs to urban centers, with attention to water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure, pollution, and urban sprawl.

AMSS45 The "Good War"
Hours 3
A topical examination of the American Experience at home and abroad, 1941-1945.

AMSS565 Fictions of American Identity
Hours 3
This course explores nineteenth- and twentieth-century American literature and culture. Novels and short stories by Zora Neale Hurston, Henry James, Gish Jen, James Weldon Johnson, Toni Morrison, Vladimir Nabokov, and other writers are studied in the context of debates over slavery, national identity, women's roles, immigration and assimilation, social mobility, sexual mores, consumer culture, and race relations. Paper assignments emphasize close reading techniques and process-oriented writing. Assigned literary critical readings include papers written by students in this class and subsequently published in The Explicator, a journal of text-based critical essays. Writing proficiency within this discipline is required for a passing grade in this course.

AMSS70 Natives and Newcomers: Cross-Cultural Encounters in Early America
Hours 3
The colonization efforts of European empires in the early modern period led to cross-cultural encounters between societies previously unfamiliar with one another, introducing each of them to unfamiliar ideas, cultures, political systems, and landscapes and changing their lives in profound ways. This course explores the complex interactions between Native American, European, and African peoples in North America, with a particular focus on the region that is currently the Southeastern United States. Such cross-cultural contact could result in valuable collaborations, deep misunderstandings, violence, or contests for power. How were interactions with unfamiliar peoples described and understood by Native Americans, Europeans, and African peoples in North America? How did the circulation of peoples and cultures shape ideas about 'America' and 'Americaness'? Is 'encounter' a single event, or a long process? This course meets a college core writing requirement; a demonstration of writing proficiency is required for a passing grade in this course.

AMSS585 American Experience to 1865
Hours 3
An exploration of the formative years of the American cultural experience, from early European encounters with the New World to the attainment of continental nationhood. The course will draw upon insights from many disciplines and will include several kinds of cultural evidence (for example: literature, art, and photography; religious, political, and social thought and behavior; and economic, technological, and geographical development) as well as consideration of recent major synthetic works of cultural scholarship. Topics covered include the growth of colonial societies; the Revolutionary movement and the political foundations of the American Republic; the Market Revolution and the rise of middle-class culture; the antebellum South and the emerging West; and the origins and evolution of American cultural diversity. Offered fall semester.

AMSS589 Approaches Teaching Ams
Hours 3
A study of basic approaches to interdisciplinary teaching in American culture at the college level, along with supervised teaching experience.

AMSS592 American Topic Seminar
Hours 3
Study of special topics within the American cultural experience. Recent examples include American literary realism, women in America, the Civil Rights movement, the picture press, music and ethnicity, the politics of culture, regionalism in American culture, the changing American family, homelessness in America, American autobiography, American monuments, contemporary American folklore, Southern popular culture, Southern iconoclasts, politics and culture, historical memory, America by design, the other in America, women in America, race in America, 19th-century popular culture, and slavery and the Civil War in historic memory.

AMSS595 Ams Colloquium: Res & Methods
Hours 3
Discussion of methodological and theoretical issues in American Studies.

AMSS596 Ams Colloquium: Scholarly Writ
Hours 3
Presentation of research and methods.