

# AMERICAN STUDIES (AS)

## AS 0200 Roots of American Culture

3 Credits

**Prerequisite:** One American Studies Gateway course.

This course provides an introduction to the study of American culture. In familiarizing students with the variety of interdisciplinary ways to approach American Studies, students will examine the diverse experiences, intellectual traditions, and cultural touchstones that make American life a rich and fascinating object of study. Using a variety of sources, students will survey the following themes: race, ethnicity and immigration; expression and imagination; values and ethics; gender; institutional power and politics; and America as a global identity.

## AS 0201 The American Intellectual Tradition

3 Credits

A seminar on major ideas and themes that have helped shape American life, this course makes a conscious effort to demonstrate the interaction between intellectual, social, and cultural dynamics in the formation of America.

## AS 0350 Internship

1-3 Credits

The internship program allows students to gain on-site access experience in a wide variety of fields, including, but not limited to, law, marketing, magazine publishing. These positions are available upon recommendation of the program intern supervisor, under whose guidance the students assume the jobs, which require 10-15 hours a week. Students may take one internship for credit toward the American Studies major. Students may take a second internship for elective credit. Enrollment by permission of the program intern supervisor only.

## AS 0361 American Civil War: Myth and Reality

3 Credits

**Attributes:** ASHI American Studies: History

This course exposes students to an interdisciplinary method of learning. While using standard historical texts to establish the facts regarding the American Civil War, this course explores the sometimes confusing and contradictory versions of the Civil War as depicted in literature, photography, feature films, documentary films, music, painting, and other modes of expression.

## AS 0383 America in the 1930s: A Decade of Change

3 Credits

**Attributes:** ASHI American Studies: History

The Great Depression represents the catalytic agent in America's extraordinary transformation in the 1930s, a decade during which the changes in the economic and political sectors provided the matter for American cultural life. This course acquaints students with the complexities of this pivotal period in American life through feature films and documentaries, popular and serious fiction, the American theatre of the time, popular music, public and private art, and mass circulation and little magazines, while introducing them to an interdisciplinary methodology.

## AS 0389 Literature and Religion: The American Experience

3 Credits

This course surveys the relationship of literature to religion in the history of American letters. Beginning with the moral didacticism of early Puritan literature, American writers have manifested a persistent concern with religio-ethical matters as well as with the impact of religious institutions in shaping our social and cultural environment. Using literary texts by major American writers, the course evaluates the critical perspective and relevance of the imaginative writer's treatment of religious questions.

## AS 0399 Independent Research Project

3 Credits

During their senior year, each American studies major writes a research paper under the supervision of several participating faculty members. Students integrate different intellectual disciplines in the design and execution of their projects.

## AS 0400 Critical Issues in American Studies

3 Credits

This graduate seminar provides an introduction to the field of American Studies. Using key books and essays in American Studies, students will familiarize themselves with the diverse cultural and intellectual traditions that have created the American experience. Using interdisciplinary approaches, students will survey the following themes in American society and culture: race, ethnicity and immigration; expression and imagination; values and ethics; gender; institutional power and politics; and America and the world.

## AS 0404 American Studies Graduate Project

3 Credits

The culminating component of the MA program is the Graduate Project. With the guidance of a faculty mentor, the student undertakes a major research project focused on an approved American Studies topic. The faculty mentor and student will choose a second faculty reader from another discipline within the American Studies Program. At the outset, the student will register for AS 404 with the faculty mentor and will provide a proposal and preliminary bibliography. The project carries three credits and usually is completed over the course of one semester. Specific guidelines are distributed by the Graduate Program Director.

## AS 0410 Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

3 Credits

This course introduces students to the theories and concepts of the interrelated fields of Women's Studies and Gender Studies, Masculinity Studies, and Sexuality/Queer Studies. We will discuss the development of these fields, their application in various disciplines, and their importance in American Studies. The course uses theoretical readings, novels, and popular films to explore aspects of gender studies in everyday life.

## AS 0415 Civil Liberties I

3 Credits

This course examines the freedoms afforded by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights and the role of the federal courts, especially the Supreme Court, in protecting individual rights. It focuses on such areas of law as freedom of speech and press, freedom of religion, and the right to privacy. Particular attention is paid to the equal protection and due process clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment and the relationship to such issues as school desegregation, voting rights, affirmative action, and criminal procedure.

## AS 0416 Civil Liberties II: Criminal Justice

3 Credits

This course examines the investigatory and adjudicatory processes of the American criminal justice system. The course begins with a brief introduction to criminal law, its sources, and development. It then moves to an analysis of the evolutionary development of due process focusing on the right to counsel, search, and seizure, the role of the police in interrogations, confessions, and investigations. The focus then shifts to an examination of the criminal trial and the respective roles of prosecutor, defense attorney, judge, and jury. Attention is also given to the issues of bail and "plea-bargaining." The course concludes with an analysis of the goals of punishment, the Eighth Amendment, and the function of the correctional system.

## AS 0450 Supreme Court in the 1960s

3 Credits

This course analyzes the dynamics of the Earl Warren Supreme Court and its impact on American society through decisions on such issues as reapportionment, right to privacy, school prayer, libel, and civil rights. The course examines major criminal rights decisions of the Court such as search and seizure, self-incrimination, and the right to counsel, and considers the impact of these decisions on subsequent cases and current issues related to the cases.

**AS 0453 American Popular Entertainments and Social History 3 Credits**

Popular entertainments have great power. "They tell us what is on the minds of ordinary people at any given moment - their concerns, biases and anxieties - and in turn refine them and restate them in a palatable, easily understood way," wrote Professor Emeritus Brooks McNamara of New York University of this new field of scholarly inquiry that plumbs America's popular entertainments as a means of understanding its social history. This course will examine critical live entertainment forms that flourished in the years between the conclusion of the Civil War and the end of the 1920s largely due to increased leisure time, improved transportation, and rapidly developing cities. Popular entertainment – amusements aimed at a broad, relatively unsophisticated audience – were frequently American reinventions of European imports, such as the circus, while others, like the Minstrel Show, were uniquely American creations. We will begin the course with an intensive look at the Minstrel Show as a key to the solidification and perpetuation of American racist stereotypes and then consider Circus, the Wild West Show, Vaudeville, Burlesque, Medicine Show, Chautauqua, and popular dramas such as Toby, Tab, and Tom shows, as manifestations of American society of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

**AS 0461 The American Civil War 3 Credits**

This course employs the interdisciplinary method of learning in examining the American Civil War. While using standard historical texts to establish the facts regarding the War, the course focuses on the sometimes confusing and contradictory versions of the War depicted in literature, photography, feature films, documentary films, and other modes of expression.

**AS 0471 Introduction to Native American Studies 3 Credits**

This course explores a range of genres, for example autobiography, novels, short stories, film, and poems, by American Indian writers and filmmakers from the 18th through 21st centuries. We will rigorously examine how Native peoples have shaped and continue to shape their identities in and against U.S. colonialism. Writers and filmmakers may include, but are not limited to, Apress, Eastman, Za, Silko, Momaday, Welch, Eyre, Redroad. Formerly ASEN 0486.

**AS 0479 Islam in America 3 Credits**

The course treats the history of Muslims in America from the early 19th century to the present. Topics include: the basic tenets of Islam; changing and diverse religious traditions and ideas; Islam among African-Americans; the role of women; concerns about prejudice and unfair treatment; and political views and practice before and after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

**AS 0483 America in the 1930s: A Decade of Change 3 Credits**

The Great Depression represents the catalytic agent in America's extraordinary transformation in the 1930s, a decade during which the changes in the economic and political sectors provided the matter for American cultural life. This course acquaints students with the complexities of this pivotal period in American life through feature films and documentaries, popular and serious fiction, the American theatre of the time, popular music, public and private art, and mass circulation and little magazines, while introducing them to an interdisciplinary methodology.

**AS 0484 Battle Over Family Values in American Politics 3 Credits**

The course examines family as an evolving American political and cultural ideal and investigates changes and continuities in American family politics through the twentieth century. It explores the causes, implications, and contexts for the rise of numerous political debates that have centered on the American family such as welfare and anti-poverty policies, LGBT rights, contraception and abortion, and immigration. It also familiarizes students with multiple forms of social scientific writing, methods of research design and original data gathering.

**AS 0486 Health and Healing in America, 1650 to 2000 3 Credits**

This seminar explores the idea of America through the lens of major themes in the history of health and medicine from the colonial era to contemporary America. Students will consider the changing American identity from the colonial era to the present as they engage with cultural artifacts evocative of a population grappling with the health and diseases in a land new to Europeans, medicine and health in the age of science and industrialization, and medicine and health in an age of technology.

**AS 0488 Frontier in American Culture 3 Credits**

The frontier – traditionally understood as the place where "humanity" comes into contact with its apparent absence in the shape of alien beings and landscapes – has been the subject of some of the most lasting powerful stories in the formation of U.S. national identity. The purpose of this course is to investigate the ideological underpinnings of this myth and its consequences, as well as to explore alternative conceptualizations of the frontier, particularly as a "rhizomatic" space where cultures meet and grapple with one another. Materials for the course are drawn from literature, film, painting, photography, and popular culture.

**AS 0499 Independent Study 3 Credits**

Students arrange for independent study with a professor willing to serve as a tutor and under whose direction they will write a research paper of approximately fifty pages. This project should be completed in one semester. All independent study must have the approval of the program director. Students may take only one independent study toward the MA degree.

**ASAH 0441 Fine Art vs. Anti-Art: 1917 to 1967 3 Credits**

Dr. Wayne Craven writes in *American Art: History and Culture*, "As the new century opened America was a nation in transition, and ripe for many kinds of revolutions - in politics, social systems, and certainly in literature and painting. [These] social shifting values and forces were occurring within American society at large." Focusing on the 50 years from WWI to Vietnam, this class examines the artistic debates and ideological struggles manifested by American art. During this time, there is a shifting barometric needle of stylistic expression. On one side, we see an entrenched, traditionalist school that retains the noble beaux arts criteria for realism and classical content. Artists to be studied in this school are: Henri, Sloan, Hopper, Marsh, Cadmus, Benton, Curry, Wood, Sheeler, Demuth and Wyeth. On the other side of the aesthetic spectrum, we encounter rebels leading the avant-garde. Sparked by the new "isms" of European modernism, artists to be discussed include: Duchamp, Stella, Dove, O'Keeffe, Gorky, Pollock, Rothko, Frankenthaler, De Kooning, Motherwell. The culmination and convergence of these parallel tracks arrive with the neo-realist but equally avant-gardist Pop art movement of the 1960s. Warhol, Rosenquist, Johns, and Wessleman use hard-edge realism to convey anti-establishment parodies and camp spin-offs of high culture. The period between 1917-1967 becomes, then, the pivotal shift when traditionalism is converted into a new cultural paradigm ending modernism as a distinct period.

**ASAH 0444 American Visual Art History****3 Credits**

This class focuses on a selection of American Masters who came to define the American experience as visual innovators reflecting and transforming their times. Among the artists explored are: Thomas Cole, Winslow Homer, John Sloan, Frank Lloyd Wright, Georgia O'Keefe, Edward Hopper, Jacob Lawrence, Lee Krasner, Jackson Pollock, Andy Warhol, and Judy Chicago. Each artistic biography is presented as a filtered lens through which America's social, political, literary and economic themes are manifested in painterly expressions. Within this cultural framework, we examine the creative spirit of each age in the American experience. The course combines classroom illustrated slide lectures, discussions, and field trips to study on-site major collections of American art at museums including: The Yale University Art Gallery, Wadsworth Atheneum, New Britain Museum of American Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Whitney Museum of American Art.

**ASEN 0447 Poetry in America****3 Credits**

A survey of major developments in American poetry from the mid-19th century to the late years of the 20th century, this course emphasizes the poems of Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, and Langston Hughes. The course also offers an introduction to the works of Ezra Pound, E. E. Cummings, Amy Lowell, Marianne Moore, and William Carlos Williams, as well as to Beat poetry (Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti), and to the confessional movement that dominated the second half of the 20th century (Robert Lowell, Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath). The focus is on the shifting patterns of poetic style and on the evolution of American sensibility and experience as expressed in the poems under discussion.

**ASEN 0488 Award-Winning American Novels****3 Credits**

In this course students will read a variety of award-winning contemporary American novels. The novels will be selected from among the most prestigious prizes given in American letters each year, including The National Book Award, National Book Critics Circle Award, The Pulitzer Prize, and the Pen/Faulkner Award. These awards are given annually to the best novels published each year. The course will investigate what makes each novel "American" thematically, culturally, and stylistically. Among the ten novels to be studied will be *The Known World*, *Martin Dressler*, *Motherless Brooklyn*, *The Great Fire*, and *Confessions of Nat Turner*.

**ASEN 0490 The Contemporary American Memoir****3 Credits**

This course is a study of some of the most important contemporary memoirs written by Americans in the last 30 years. With the readings, students will analyze what makes a memoir a memoir and in particular, what is quintessentially American about each one.

**ASHI 0415 Inventing Themselves: African-American Women in U.S.****History****3 Credits**

At the intersection of race, gender, and class, African-American women often challenged the codification of blackness and femaleness as well as a limited conception of class consciousness. From the diaspora to the present, they created forms of resistance, devised survival strategies, and transmitted cultural knowledge while defying racial/gender stereotypes. The multiple roles assumed by African-American women during their struggle from slaves to citizens in the United States represent a complex study of the relational nature of difference and identity. This course focuses on African-American women as subjects and agents of pivotal importance within the family, community, and labor force.

**ASHI 0437 American Prophetic Tradition****3 Credits**

This intensive reading and writing seminar examines in some depth individuals and social movements in U.S. history that acted out of religious and philosophical traditions. Topics covered include biographies, auto-biographies, writings, and diaries of such figures as Mary Dyer, Roger Williams, John Dickinson, John Ross, Emma Willard, Lydia Marie Child, W.E.B. Dubois, Randolph Bourne, Walter Rauschenbusch, Dorothy Day, Abraham Heschel, and Robert Coles. The course looks at the prophetic roots of religious liberty, women's suffrage, abolitionism, the labor movement, populism, Civil Rights, and the '60s. Five three-page critical book reviews and one longer project are required.

**ASHI 0439 The Tumultuous 20th Century: Key Issues in United States Political and Social History****3 Credits**

The United States in the 20th Century has seen massive strikes, social upheaval, political challenge, and unparalleled prosperity and growth. This intensive reading, writing, and discussion seminar examines key issues and figures in the political and social changes of the 20th century - from Progressivism to Bill Clinton, from the first Red Scare and the rise of the American Civil Liberties Union to current struggles over political and civil rights in the context of the War on Terror.

**ASHI 0442 Immigration, Ethnicity, and Race in United States History****3 Credits**

This intensive reading, writing, and discussion seminar examines the history of U.S. immigration in the 19th and 20th centuries. Arranged thematically within a chronological framework, the seminar situates the United States within the context of global migration patterns and economic development. The first part of the course investigates patterns of migration and community settlement, family strategies of survival and adaptation, and immigrant cultures. The second part analyzes the reception of successive immigrant groups. Most importantly, the course explores how race, ethnicity, assimilation, acculturation, and Americanization were defined by American government and society. Throughout, the course conducts a critical evaluation of how historians and other scholars have studied immigration and immigrant communities and examines today's perceptions of the American immigrant experience. Varied readings include monographs, oral histories, reform investigations, and a novel.

**ASHI 0449 Historical Cultural Geography****3 Credits**

This seminar will teach students various aspects of researching and constructing a historical geographical study, using one community's land records, tax records, genealogical records, and maritime records. The course will include lab work, training in computer techniques, including geographic information science (GIS) technology, which will provide students with a usable skill that is applicable to many professional careers. The case study will change each time the course is offered. Most recently, it was "Little Liberia," an early Free Black community in the South End of Bridgeport in the 1820s and 1830s and the site of the Freeman Houses, built in 1848 and listed in the National Historic Register.

**ASHI 0451 Crises and Turning Points in United States Foreign Relations, 1776 to 2009****3 Credits**

This seminar explores crises and turning points in U.S. Foreign Relations from the American Revolution to 9/11, the Iraq War, Afghanistan and up to the present, including the Alliance with France, the War of 1812, Manifest Destiny, the Mexican War, Indian Removal, the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War, World War I, Pearl Harbor, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and the resurgence of China and Russia.

**ASIT 0481 Visions of Italy and America in Film****3 Credits**

Adaptations and critiques of genres and themes indicate cinematic health. Italian cinema, which has given rise to movements such as neorealism, *commedia all'italiana*, and the spaghetti western, has provided the original material for adaptations by directors from other countries, notably the United States. The prevalence of American adaptations is a measure of the artistic contribution of the Italian national cinema. In this course we examine the phenomenon of adaptation and interpretation of Italian films from the postwar period until today. After a condensed review of more than 60 years of Italian cinematic history, we examine several American interpretations of Italian film classics. Garnett's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946), based upon James Cain's novel, revisits Visconti's *Ossessione* (1943). Neil Simon's *Sweet Charity* (1966) and later Woody Allen's *Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985) re-tell Fellini's tragic tale of *Le notti di Cabiria* (1957). More subtle parallels are found in Neil LaBute's *Nurse Betty* (2000) and Fellini's *Lo sciocco bianco* (1956). Brian DePalma's *Blow Out* (1981), starring John Travolta, maintains the premise of Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1966). Madonna and Guy Ritchie's 2002 remake of *Swept Away* (1974), as well as Garry Marshall's adaptation *Overboard* (1987), reveal the impact of Wertmuller's original. These American reflections on Italian films, themselves dark mirrors reflecting on the themes and assumptions of American film hegemony, offer another means to appreciate the powerful insights of self-reflection in the Italian postwar period.

**ASIT 0493 Italian-American Experience****3 Credits**

Students analyze the concept of nationality and national identity in literature, film, and critical essays by and about Italian-Americans and discuss the concept of race and racial origins together with the phenomenon of emigration. The course addresses role and representation differences for men and women in this subgroup of American society, with particular consideration given to the ethnic roots of these differences. It also examines the ways in which poetry, prose, and film reveal Italian ethnicity in 19th- and 20th-century America, with special emphasis on the sense of otherness that this immigrant group experienced.

**ASMU 0401 History of Jazz****3 Credits**

This course traces the development of American jazz from its origins in black musical traditions. Topics include the roots of jazz in ragtime, blues, work songs, and march music. Also addresses the development of different jazz styles, such as Dixieland in the '20s, swing in the '30s, bop in the '40s, and present-day evolutions. The course emphasizes connecting the historical period with the music of jazz - America's original art music.

**ASMU 0402 History of Rock****3 Credits**

This course surveys the musical and social trends that resulted in the emergence of rock and roll as an important musical and cultural force in America. The course traces the roots of rock, blues, and country styles and, showing how they merged with popular music, studies periods from the 1950s to the present, along with Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, Little Richard, the Beatles, the British invasion, folk music, Bob Dylan, jazz and art rock, Jimi Hendrix, the west coast movement, and the music industry. The social, political, and cultural aspects of rock as they have affected American life provide an American studies emphasis.

**ASMU 0403 Critical Issues in American Popular Music****3 Credits**

This course provides an in-depth look at the important musical, social, and racial issues in American popular music spanning from the media exploitation of the blues in the 1920's through current issues in hip hop. Subject areas will include blues and its origins, jazz and modernism, the obstacles of race in music, the death of rhythm and blues, rock's evolution in the 50's, rap and hip hop culture, and issues in both postmodernism and perverse modernism as seen by many music and art critics.

**ASPO 0461 The American Presidency****3 Credits**

This course examines the role of the President in the political system and considers the origins, qualifications, and limitations of the office from which the President functions as chief executive, legislative leader, and link with the courts. The course evaluates presidential achievement of domestic and foreign policy goals by examining presidential powers and the President's roles as party leader and politician. It also reviews questions of reform.

**ASRS 0442 Jews and Judaism in America****3 Credits**

What has it meant in the past and what does it mean today to be a Jew in America? Viewing Judaism and Jewishness as inseparable from one another, Jews remain a distinct, though by no means homogeneous, religious and ethnic group in American society. This course explores the religious, cultural, social, economic, and political diversity that exists among American Jews, as well as distinctive beliefs, concerns, and experiences that continue to unite them. The course pays special attention to issues related to immigration, acculturation, gender, and African-American/Jewish relations.

**ASSO 0412 Contemporary American Society****3 Credits**

This course analyzes the dominant ideology and values that have shaped American culture - namely, the Protestant ethic - and how and why these values are changing. The course also analyzes major institutional trends that have transformed and continue to transform America and the modern world - bureaucratization, industrialization, urbanization, the rise of the business corporation, science, and technology - and the effects of these institutions in producing new personality types, mass society, and rapid social change. The course provides a macro-sociological framework.

**ASSO 0465 Urban Sociology: New York****3 Credits**

This course examines the evolution of the city in the American experience by focusing on New York City. Both New York's unique history and contemporary social structure are examined. Readings and classroom discussion are combined with three field trips to New York on three successive Saturdays. Each field trip explores an area of New York.



**ASSO 0469 Women: Work and Sport****3 Credits**

Gender stratification exists in most areas of everyday life throughout American society. This course concentrates on the varying experiences (based on class, race, and ethnic differences) of women in the workplace and on the playing field. Sex segregation and sex integration as complex historical and contemporary processes constitute the main focus of the first part of the course. Within this context, economic and social changes will be viewed as historically having an enormous impact on the roles of women in the work force and how they have managed these roles. In turn, their experiences will be analyzed as catalysts of societal change. The last part of the course focuses on women as athletes. Their varied experiences in this world parallel to a large extent their experiences within the workplace. The underlying theme is that the sports arena mirrors the larger society particularly in terms of gender roles. What is seen as "acceptable and non-acceptable" behavior for women in the everyday world is reflected in their roles as athletes. The impact of gender on socializing children into sport and sport itself as a socializing agency is the foundation for critically assessing the outcomes of Title IX and the existence of homophobia in sport.

**ASTA 0420 American Drama and Society****3 Credits**

This course explores the social, political, and economic forces that have shaped the United States via the themes and perspectives expressed in its drama. The course covers the late 18th century through the present, paying particular attention to dramas and more populist forms of entertainment that specifically address the notion and development of a distinctly American voice and ideology. Students begin with Royall Tyler's 1787 comedy, *The Contrast*, which offers the first wholly American character - Jonathan the "true-blue" Yankee - and end with Tony Kushner's monumental two-part drama, *Angels in America* (1991), which juxtaposes American Judaism and Mormonism within the context of politics, homo- and heterosexual relationships, and the AIDS epidemic. In between, students consider the work of seminal American dramatists (O'Neill, Miller, Williams, and others) as well as trends in popular theatre forms (minstrelsy, wild west shows, vaudeville, burlesque, musical comedy) in creating the totality of the American cultural experience.

**ASTA 0421 Ethnic American Performance and Society****3 Credits**

The course will explore the social, political, economic, and cultural forces that have shaped the United States via the themes, perspectives, and production choices expressed in its ethnic drama and performance. We will consider plays and performance pieces (such as pow-wows, Chinese New Year celebrations, and the like) created by African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Latino/a Americans, and Native Americans, all of whom have been marginalized voices existing outside of mainstream theatre, an arena historically dominated by white males. We shall pay particular attention to issues of race, gender, and class apparent in both the play texts as well as in the ideological perspectives of the playwrights. We also will note the choice of subjects, themes, and environments and consider how these are placed within the larger context of American culture and society.