

# 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

SP

Hours 1-3

*No description available*

Special Topics Course

### AMS506 Directed Study

SP

Hours 1-3

*No description available*

Special Topics Course

### 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.

### AMS512 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 mainstays 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

This course examines a crucial period in the modern American experience beginning with the end of one world war and ending with the beginning of another. Adjusting to modernity required Americans to square old values with new departures, something that makes this period more than merely two decades linked by the calendar and the Stock Market Crash. Top to bottom, between 1919 and 1941, Americans redefined themselves and their society, embraced (some of them) and debated (nearly all of them), often hotly, old beliefs, new conceptions, and the implications of a modern, machine-driven, consumer society. What they argued over then, is what is still argued over, issues and assertions students should find very familiar. Students will look closely at this debate from its origins in post-war prosperity and its evolution through Great Depression scarcity, paying particular attention to such crucial issues as Modernism, consumerism, the growth of American national culture, and the influence of commercialized forms of popular expression on everyday lives and values.

### AMS530 Special Topics

SP

Hours 3

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

Special Topics Course

**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.

**AMS532 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.

**AMS536 Studies Social Experience**

Hours 3

Research and discussion of selected topics in the American social experience.

**AMS539 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 scholars in 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.

**AMS545 The "Good War"**

Hours 3

In popular memory, then and since, it is, say many, the defining moment of the twentieth century, perhaps all the American experience. Between 1941 and 1945, the American people waged global war, an undertaking of unprecedented scale and urgency. After Pearl Harbor, the national will stiffened and at least for the duration, the story goes, Americans forgot their differences, rallied to the cause, and through their collective suffering and sacrifice saved the world. This was not just a necessary war; it was a good war fought against a palpable evil in a world reduced to rival spheres of right and wrong whose only acceptable end, "victory," justified any means however extreme. Virtue abroad, cohesion at home, and prosperity in the marketplace, the war united all three in a way previous Americans had only dreamed about and never achieved before or since. Small wonder, then, that over the years since 1945, in a world less simple and a society more divided, the memory of World War II has hardened into myth, the golden, "feel good" moment of rectitude, shared sacrifice, and uncomplicated moral triumph. This course is very much about that moment and the myth it established. Please note, it is not a military history of the Second World War, replete with situation maps, production figures, and casualty reports. It is instead a topical examination of the American experience at home and abroad, 1941-45. It focuses critically on five related subjects, each providing ample opportunity to examine the myth and memory of "Good War America," this pivotal moment in national and global history.

**AMS565 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.

**AMS585 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.

**AMS589 Approaches Teaching Ams**

Hours 3

This course offers supervision and mentorship to second-year masters students when they teach an introductory level on topics of their choosing. Whether or not students plan to continue teaching (in whatever forms it takes) in their careers, learning how to teach applies to lots of fields: practicing how to gather and synthesize information, how to help unfamiliar audiences understand the key points, how to lead discussions, how to improve at public speaking, how to get more comfortable with various technical processes, and other issues.

**AMS592 American Topic Seminar**

SP

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.

Special Topics Course

**AMS595 Ams Colloquium: Res & Methods**

Hours 3

Discussion of methodological and theoretical issues in American Studies.

**AMS596 Ams Colloquium: Scholarly Writ**

Hours 3

Presentation of research and methods.