

SPRING 2024

Course Descriptions

AMERICAN STUDIES

AMST 6401 - Literature and Culture of the Americas **Instructor: Dr. Miriam Brown Spiers**

This class will explore the ways that the American national identity has been created, maintained, and transformed by the development of a distinctly American literary tradition. At the heart of our inquiry will be the paradoxical nature of American identity: although the U.S. often imagines itself as a nation of immigrants, it continues to wrestle with the legacies of colonialism and slavery that undergird its founding. These opposing histories have once again risen to the surface in our current national discourse as we find ourselves engaged in heated debates about what kind of place America has been in the past and what kind of country we hope to become in the future. Through the lens of American literature, we will trace the development of these conflicting narratives from the truly diverse and transnational colonial period, to the more rigidly defined character of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, through the multicultural and postmodern literary traditions of the past sixty years. Possible authors may include Mary Rowlandson, Olaudah Equiano, William Wells Brown, Zitkala-Sa, William Faulkner, Leslie Marmon Silko, Gloria Anzaldúa, Maxine Hong Kingston, Mona Susan Power, Toni Morrison, and Junot Diaz.

AMST 7000 - American Studies Scholarship **Instructor: Dr. Kate Schaab**

AMST 7000 introduces major concepts, theories, debates, and thinkers that shape(d) American Studies scholarship. Through this course, we will investigate six major points of interest within American Studies scholarship (ranging from “Violent Projects” to “Centrality of Difference” and “Cultural Production & Consumption”) which will help guide our understanding of the field’s history and evolution. AMST 7000 is designed to help you consider how your scholarly interests fit into American Studies as you develop your ability to formulate questions, analyze arguments, make connections, and produce and share knowledge.

AMST 7240 - Enterprise and Labor in American Culture **Instructor: Dr. Randy Patton**

This course will emphasize themes in US labor and business history and the impact of work and enterprise on US culture. Themes will include the origins and development of the US labor movement, from the Wobblies and the IWW through the CIO and the Fordist accord of the post-WWII era, up to the recent resurgence of union organizing; the development of working-class culture and its representation in US films (including Norma Rae, Salt of the Earth) and other mass media; the formation, maturing, and decline of the Fordist/mass production model and the social/political struggles it engendered; and the rise of the neoliberal model in the 1970s and its seeming triumph; and an attempt to define the post financial crisis era after 2008.

AMST 7300 - American Cities, Suburbs, and Countryside **Instructor: Dr. Rebecca Hill**

This course takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of mass incarceration and discourses of criminality as they affect how Americans understand the spaces where they live. We will explore a variety of scholarship on the carceral state that advocates both abolition and reform as solutions to problems within US prisons and policing. This scholarship concerns economic relationships among cities, suburbs, and countryside as they manifest in prison construction, policing strategy, and uses of labor surplus. Students will also engage in critical analysis of popular representations of crime and punishment in cities, suburbs and countryside and learn about national and transnational policy responses, such as counterinsurgency, wars on drugs and sex trafficking as they connect national and local politics to patterns of exchange in the global economy.

AMST 7700 - Practicum (Internship or Applied Research Project)**Instructor: Dr. Miriam Brown Spiers**

This course requires students to apply American Studies knowledge, concepts, and theory to practical issues, non-academic environments, or to new research questions. The practicum may be offered as an internship; applied research project; teaching practicum; or other applied experience as approved by the program director. This course may be repeated.

AMST 7901 - Capstone Literature Review and Proposal**Instructor: Dr. Miriam Brown Spiers**

In the first part of the American Studies capstone experience, students work with faculty advisors to review scholarly literature and write a research or project proposal. The research reviewed will consist of interdisciplinary scholarship from American Studies and related fields that investigates questions consistent with the program's mission and the student's professional goals. Students work with faculty advisors to review literature and develop a proposal related to their topic or project aims.

AMST 7902 - Capstone Experience**Instructor: Dr. Miriam Brown Spiers**

A major research project or a project using interdisciplinary methods from American Studies to investigate questions consistent with the program's mission and the student's professional goals. Students work with faculty advisors to carry out research related to their topic or project aims, and complete a product drawing on the content of program courses and integrating it with new, individualized study.