

American Culture Studies

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Courses

AMCS 5000 Independent Study

BY PERMISSION OF INSTRUCTOR

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

AMCS 5002 Directed Research Project for Research for AMCS MA

This course is the Direct Research Project for AMCS master's students.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring, Summer

AMCS 5150 Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History: Women in American Religion

What role has gender played in U.S. religion? How have scholars wrestled with and written about these concepts and questions? We will examine these questions while paying particular attention to how scholars have written about women and religion over time. We will study the religious experience in various historical periods, contexts, and traditions, highlighting women who have played major roles in religious traditions and experiences. The goal is for students to learn how to participate in academic conversations about religion and gender through primary and secondary sources, and contribute to the academic conversations through their own writing and research.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Summer

AMCS 5190 Engaging the City: The Material World of Modern Segregation

Credit 1 unit.

AMCS 5371 Music and Performance: Pleasure and Politics in Popular Music

Christopher Small has asserted that music is not a thing but an activity--something that people DO. Starting from this premise, this course explores popular music in performance and introduces students to the flourishing scholarship at the intersection of performance studies, sound studies, and popular music studies. We will attend to sound, music, listening, and voice and we will consider these elements of performance in combination with costume, choreography, stage design, and audience participation and interaction. Exploring the choices of performers and the expectations of audience members in settings from gospel churches to Radio City Music Hall, this course moves through a wide variety of musical genres, including cabaret, blues, opera, musical theater, and rock. We will consider the pleasure and politics embraced by everyday people and activists who have used music in protest movements from the labor movement to Black Lives Matter. We also attend performances around St. Louis, guided by

the interests of the class. Upper-level undergraduates and graduate students (enrolled under a 500-number) with an interest in music, theater, dance, cultural history, American studies, and African American studies are especially welcome.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

AMCS 5790 On Location: Exploring America

Every summer, AMCS travels to a new location to explore fundamental questions of national identity and meaning through the study of the interdependent relationship between culture and place. By visiting landmarks, historic sites, museums, memorials etc.-- sites best understood through direct engagement with consideration of their rich material, historical, political, and social meanings--students become in-the-field observers and learn from local experts and faculty. Past On Location destinations have included: California, Hawaii, New York City, Washington D.C., the Industrial Southwest, and American Indian landmarks. For more information and description of past travel sites, please visit http://amcs.wustl.edu/courses/on_location.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Summer

AMCS 5890 Studies in American Photography

What can American photographs reveal about our past and present, and how we see ourselves and others? This course explores how photographs--culled from archives, media, family albums, blogs, social media, and more--shape and reflect individual and collective identities and memory. From the daguerreotype to digital media, students will engage with critical methods in studying American photography. We will delve into foundational texts and recent American Studies approaches to visual culture, examining how photographs are influenced by and shape ideas about gender, race, class, and sexuality. Students will learn American photographic history, major theoretical trends in image-based studies, and the skills to incorporate photographic images into their research and writing.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Fall

AMCS 5901 Outlaws, Villains, and Fiends: Criminals in the American Novel

In this course we will trace how representations of criminality change--and remain the same--over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries, investigating American culture's fascination with outlaws, villains, and fiends from the legacy of the Wild West to the boardrooms of Wall Street. Central to our inquiries will be the ways that these narratives depict justice and the law, as well as our readerly experiences of antipathy and/or compassion toward the criminals these fictions depict and those who seek to foil them. Through class discussions, close readings, and attention to the century's shifting aesthetic sensibilities, this course provides students with an opportunity to understand the American novel's development in response to evolving interpretations of crime and those who commit it. Course assignments will include a presentation and a seminar paper. For DLA, MLA, and AMCS MA students only.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Fall

AMCS 5902 World Cinema in the Age of Streaming

This class studies major trends in world cinema outside of the United States, and the impact that streaming platforms have in their distribution and in their aesthetics. Through films available in platforms dedicated to global cinema--Criterion Channel and MUBI more prominently, as well as Netflix, AMC+ and others--the class will discuss the following: how are diverse cinema traditions from around the world flattened under concepts of art cinema through the platforms? What

kinds of films do platform favor and how that favoring affects the styles of cinema worldwide? How have platforms contributed to increase the diversity in the number of countries able to distribute their cinema at a global scale? Each class will discuss this question with sample readings. Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Spring

AMCS 5903 James Baldwin: Life, Letters, & Legacy

In his 1972 essay, *No Name in the Street*, James Baldwin recounts that he could never in good conscience just write because he had never been just a writer. Indeed, Baldwin saw himself as a public witness to the situation of black people, compelled to speak truth to power in whatever form he deemed necessary. Baldwin, as a black, gay, man, American, author, activist, and so much more, has served as an essential figure in theorizing the intersection of these presumably rigidity concepts. In this respect, this course will center on Baldwin, the thinker, as much as Baldwin, the author. We will examine his classic novels and essays and his work across many less-examined domains - theatre, sermon, dialogue, film, and short story. Moreover, while committing ourselves to close reading methods, we will situate Baldwin's works within a socio-historical context and consider how he shaped and was shaped by events beginning with the Civil Rights Era through our precarious contemporary moment in which he remains, often tragically, a timely voice. This course is only open to MLA, DLA, and AMCS MA students.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Spring

AMCS 5904 Mormon Women: Navigating Sexuality, Politics, and Gender

This interdisciplinary course explores the intricate intersections of sexuality, politics, and gender within the context of Mormon (LDS) women's experiences and histories. Through a combination of discussions, readings, and multimedia resources, including popular media representations, students will examine how cultural, religious, and social constructions of gender identity and sexuality have evolved in the Mormon tradition and how these factors influence contemporary issues faced by women in the Church and in broader society. The goal is for students to learn how to participate in academic conversations about religion and gender through primary and secondary sources, and contribute to the academic conversations through their own writing and research.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Summer

AMCS 6000 Introduction to American Culture Studies

An introduction to interdisciplinary approaches to the study of American culture. The class will examine the relationship between cultural criticism and scholarship on American culture, the history of the American Studies and cultural studies movements, the simultaneous turn to historicist approaches in literary studies and to textualist approaches to historical studies, the moral and interpretive implications of the shift from a modernist to a postmodernist stance in cultural inquiry, and the challenges that multiculturalist and transnational perspectives pose to the study of a national American culture. Many of the readings will emphasize trends in cultural history, but will also include works in anthropology, art and architectural history, literary history, media studies, political and social theory, and religious studies.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Spring