

# American Culture Studies

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## Courses

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### AMCS 1101 Ampersand: American Stories: Place, Power, and Imagination

If an American landscape could tell a story, what would it say? American Stories is an interdisciplinary approach to reading landscapes from the nineteenth century to today, uncovering untold stories of American places and the people, politics, and power that shaped them. The first semester of this Ampersand program introduces ways of seeing and interpreting American histories and cultures, as revealed in the built environment and stories of our cities. We will travel through time and place, touching down in Boston, Charleston, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and more. The course encourages students to read landscapes as multilayered records of past and present social relations, and to speculate for themselves about cultural meanings. It also introduces students to the social, economic, and political forces that have profoundly shaped the American urban landscape. This class is for first-year non-transfer students only.

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

Typical periods offered: Fall

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### AMCS 1102 Ampersand: American Stories: St. Louis, Power, and the Making of an American City

A scholar of St. Louis history once claimed, "St. Louis will seem to have been located in entirely different parts of the country throughout its history." In many ways, it's a city that defies easy characterization. It's been a place of great possibility and promise, and of hopelessness and betrayal--and very often all of these things at once. This course will explore the history of St. Louis as a place of many places, reading the city's neighborhoods from the nineteenth century to today. Tracing a legacy of neighborhood fragmentation, students will investigate St. Louis as a city of strong, tight knit communities and grassroots organizations with a rich sense of place, but also as a city of fragmentation and barriers. Discovering what makes St. Louis a uniquely American city, the course will take interdisciplinary approaches to reading compelling primary source documents and will forge connections between St. Louis and other American cities of the past and St. Louis in the present. Students will also take several off-campus trips and engage with local guest speakers from artists to public historians to archivists.

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

Typical periods offered: Spring

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### AMCS 2003 Doctors and Terrorists: The Fictions of South Asian America

South Asians have always played an integral role in the culture, history and politics of the United States. However, for complex reasons, their presence has either been concealed, or dismissed through dangerous stereotypes, or just as inaccurately, excessively celebrated for proving the generosity of American liberalism and multiculturalism. Racially misrecognized, this large and heterogeneous group has nonetheless

shaped American categories of race, sexuality, and citizenship in intriguing and powerful ways. South Asian Americans have reached to fiction, music and popular culture to craft deeply intimate and original assessments of mainstream desires. In doing so they have sought to resist the dictates of whiteness, to question US imperialism, to garner acceptance and mobility, to build solidarity with other US minorities. In this course we learn about the complex history and cultural productions of South Asians in America. How did South Asia become a category of identification, and who benefitted from that designation? What role have South Asians played in the economic, cultural and global ascendancy of the United States? How do South Asians connect with, and control, their countries of origin? Why do discourses of sex and intimacy rise to the surface in this history, and what is the significance of story-telling in building the archive and questioning the fiction of South Asian America? Course enrollment is limited to first-year and sophomore students.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, SC Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, ETH, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall

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### AMCS 2062 Visualizing the American City

Mound City. Gateway to the West. A city of neighborhoods. One of the most segregated places in America. A sports town with the best fans in the world. The heart of the Silicon Prairie. Flyover country. St. Louis has been called all of these things and many more over the past 200 years. Like all cities, its evolving identity has been shaped by stories, ideas, place memories, and local branding efforts that are deeply rooted in the visual imagination -- those pictures of the mind that define a distinct sense of place. Such pictures are at once personal and shared. And some -- like aerial photos of the Arch -- become definitive elements of the visual imaginary and are reproduced endlessly, from art galleries to tourist maps to baseball caps. This introductory course explores the visual culture of the American city, seeking to understand its powerful political and social significance at key moments in urban history. We will engage the rich archives of urban life, culture, and economic development associated with Chicago, New York, St. Louis, Detroit, and other cities, working with maps, engravings, photographs, travel guides, souvenirs, billboards, posters, and many other visual technologies, including digital representations and experimental formats. In so doing, we will attend to various historical phenomena, from world's fairs and urban renewal projects to catastrophic violence and slum clearance to gentrification and social reform -- and their visual representations -- that have shaped these cities' public lives and identities and contributed to broader urban imaginaries that are still powerfully present today. Students will develop their analysis and writing skills through short artifact readings.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM, VC BU: BA, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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### AMCS 2071 Reading Culture

See Section Description. Topic changes semester to semester.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: CPSC, HUM, VC BU: HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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### AMCS 2200 Topics in AMCS

This course introduces students to the different approaches and methodologies within the American Culture Studies field, including those represented by literature, history, sociology, and political science; at the same time, will learn key concepts within the field that will inform their future work. These are presented in a semester-specific topic of focus; please see Course Listings for a description of the current offering. The course is ideal for AMCS majors and minors, but others are welcome. This course fulfills the Introductory Course requirement for AMCS majors and minors.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM EN: H  
Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 2252 Topics in AMCS**

The topic of this course varies from semester to semester. Please see the Course Listings for a description of the current offering.  
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, HUM EN: H  
Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 2270 Topics in Native American Culture**

The topic of this course varies from semester to semester. Please see Course Listings for a description of the current offering.  
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD, SSC Art: SSC BU: BA, ETH  
Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 2290 Introduction to AMCS: #americanculturestudies: Exploring the Field!**

What does it mean to do American culture studies? This course teaches students how to critically analyze U.S. culture and society and introduces them to the history, methodologies, frameworks, and key questions that have shaped and continue to inform this interdisciplinary field. American culture studies is a broad and vast discipline that defies simple summary; it asks probing questions to uplift marginalized voices and experiences as part of an expansive definition of American identity. This course exposes students to practices that constitute American culture studies rather than demarcate a terrain for what it is: historically crossing disciplinary boundaries (arts, humanities, social sciences) and engaging diverse texts (film, literature, historical documents, popular culture, performance, material culture, etc.) American culture studies resists strict definition! In this course students study how knowledge and understandings about society and culture are produced and learn approaches to analyzing, curating and interpreting cultural objects and theorizing cultural phenomena. We examine the concept and idea of America in local, regional, national, and international contexts and continuums; we explore the lived experiences of diverse American communities within and across cultural and literal borders. Through a case study approach, the course engages questions related to the construction of ethnic and racial identities in the U.S.; visual, material, and digital cultures; social thought and social issues; mass media and popular culture; gender and sexuality; citizenship and nationhood; art, literature, and performance; and American imperialism.  
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, HUM EN: H  
Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 2585 Sports & Society**

Commercialized spectator sports are a hugely influential part of American culture, politics, and economics. However, the story of how they got that way is too often assumed to be straightforward and self-evident. In this course, we will complicate such assumptions by examining the complex cultural web of American sports history and exploring the people, power structures, and social contexts in which our athletic games have developed, from the Civil War to the present. We will pay particular attention to matters of gender and race in traversing these histories, and students will be asked to consider the ramifications of sociocultural development in sports for American culture at large (and vice versa). Among the topics in sport that we will consider in detail are amateurism, commercialization, masculinity, mass mediation, and violence. We will analyze particular athletes of significance from the last 150 years, including Jack Johnson, Althea Gibson, Muhammad Ali, Serena Williams, Michael Jordan, and others. At the same time, we will examine the forms of media that shape our narratives and understandings of the competitions we consume. In addition, we will consider transnational competitions like the Olympics, which bring American conflicts over race and gender into a global

context. No prior sports knowledge is necessary to enroll in the class. Students put themselves on the waitlist and will be enrolled manually by the registrar. Five seats are reserved for each class year for a total of 20 students. This course is affiliated with Sports & Society: Culture, Power, and Identity, an American Culture Studies program initiative focused on the intersections of athletics, identity, and social power.  
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, HUM EN: H  
Typical periods offered: Spring

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**AMCS 2655 The Cultural Lives of Things: An Introduction to American Material Culture**

American culture is so often defined by its obsessive attachment to material things - the iPhones, coffee cups, favorite t-shirts and Harley-Davidson motorcycles that fill our everyday lives. This course will explore our contradictory relationship to such objects - the possessions that serve practical functions and give us a sense of identity, meaning and power, but just as often come to possess or control us. How do things take hold of us? What gives them potency, value, and cultural significance? What psychological, social, economic and political purposes do they serve? Do Americans have a distinct relationship (or a dysfunctional attachment) to their possessions? In answering such questions, we will consider objects of all kinds, from the mundane and utilitarian to the strange, rare and often-fetishized. We will explore their histories, their participation in regimes of commodification and power, their everyday and symbolic functions - in short, the twists and turns of their rich cultural lives. The course will introduce different strategies for interpreting objects as cultural evidence, drawing upon work in anthropology, art history, sociology, literature and museum studies, as well as theorists (Marx, Freud, Baudrillard, and others) who have influenced modern conceptions of material life. Students should also look forward to some in-the-field analysis of different historic, museum, and personal objects around St. Louis (field trips!).  
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM EN: H  
Typical periods offered: Spring

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**AMCS 2660 Topics in Sequential Art: Understanding Comics: Introduction to Sequential Artistry**

Comics are a medium of their own-words and pictures, but more than that. Comics rely on the reader decoding and connecting a multilayered series of relationships. But even more than that, comics are a visual language. As Neil Cohn says, Just as words in sequence are used in spoken language, sequences of images can create a visual language. In this course, you will learn to read that language, and to see how it operates and can be used across visual media and visual culture as a medium of visual communication, particularly our multimodal digital culture. Understanding comics can work as a base for interrogating how other forms of visual culture use sequence to create meaning, including through visual rhetoric. This course covers how to read comics, how sequential artistry creates meaning in comics, and how comics are constructed via a range of artistic, commercial, industrial, and cultural conversations between creators, producers, and audiences. The course offers (but does not require) opportunities to create expository sequential artistry-to write paper in comics form. Texts include works like Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, *Watchmen*, *Asterios Polyp*, *When I Am King*, and visual journalism such as *Welcome to the New World*.  
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Art: VC BU: HUM EN: H  
Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 2700 Topics in Asian American Studies**

An introductory survey covering United States immigrant populations from throughout Eastern and Southern Asia.  
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC, SC Art: SSC BU: BA  
Typical periods offered: Fall

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#### **AMCS 2701 Topics in AMCS: A Year in Review**

What was 2020? This course examines a year that will be remembered alongside 2001, 1968, 1945, 1929, 1865, 1800, and 1776 as one of the most consequential in American history and culture. We will consider how the COVID-19 global pandemic, the bitterly contested 2020 Presidential election, and a summer of renewed protest for social justice reverberated through spheres of American arts, culture, education, energy, health care, labor, religion, sports, the university, technology and more. A series of guest experts from Washington University and around the country will provide instruction via lecture once per week, with students sharing their own experiences and analysis in discussion sections during the other weekly course meeting. The course is open to all, but it is geared toward first-year students and sophomores. It fulfills the Intro course requirement in the AMCS major. This is a variable topics course for courses best suited to the reviewing of a significant year in American Culture Studies. Topics vary by semester, so please see the current course listing.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall

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#### **AMCS 2802 Imagining the World to Come: Internet Cultures, Politics, & Cat Videos**

The American internet we experience today emerges from a long history of technological innovation that reaches back to the post-Civil War era, featuring the dramas and crises of world wars, secret communications, spy agencies, cold war anxieties, counter cultural forces, and lots of copper cable. While this history is important for situating the internet within the politics of the 20th century, it tells only part of the story. For the rest, we must interrogate the cultures of the internet, from the utopian evangelists who claimed cyberspace as the principal refuge of individual liberty, to social media, to hackers, to ransomware, to mis- and dis-information networks. As both 'place' and communication service, our internet has proven to be overwhelmingly full with content, surprisingly fragile \*and\* robust, and the cause of civilizational decline. As we explore signature moments of the internet's development, we'll carefully study the phenomenon as a cultural site of politics, economics, fun, identity, and security (or lack thereof). To do so, we'll use a few disciplinary practices, including cultural studies, tech studies, media studies, and communication studies. Within this multidisciplinary frame, we'll investigate how people imagine and understand what the internet was and is and map how politics and capitalism shape a thing without boundaries or borders.

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

Typical periods offered: Summer

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#### **AMCS 2803 The American City**

The American city has multiple forms: as a place to live and work, as a measure of economic vitality, as an architectural creation, as a political setting for both the promise and peril of democracy, and as a mythic backdrop for fictive struggles of identity formation and personal liberation. This course will begin a student's exploration of American culture and politics, with St. Louis serving as field laboratory for investigations that will also present the lives of New York, Chicago, New Orleans, Philadelphia and other cities. American cities carry material evidence of the economic and political reasons that they exist, the transportation networks that shape them, the street plans that give them form, the governments that provide the public good, the people who call them home, the role of public transportation systems, the geography of racial segregation, and the histories of immigrant communities. At the same time, the role of the American city has changed significantly in the 21st century when most Americans now live in suburbs surrounding older cities. Throughout the semester, this course will analyze the material and social culture of American cities through a series of lectures, films and field trips.

Credit 3 units. BU: BA EN: H

Typical periods offered: Summer

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#### **AMCS 2804 American Cultures: Investigating America**

How does one study American culture? This course teaches students how to critically analyze U.S. culture and society and introduces them to the history, methodologies, frameworks, and key questions that have shaped and continue to inform this interdisciplinary field. In this course, we ask probing questions to uplift marginalized voices and experiences as part of an expansive definition of American identity. In this course students study how knowledge and understandings about society and culture are produced and learn approaches to analyzing, curating and interpreting cultural objects and theorizing cultural phenomena. We examine the concept and idea of America in local, regional, national, and international contexts and continuums; we explore the lived experiences of diverse American communities within and across cultural and literal borders. This course is offered in tandem with L98 238S American Cultures: Investigating St. Louis by offering both a national and a local lens with which to view American culture, and students are strongly encouraged to enroll in both courses. Through a case study approach, the course engages questions related to the construction of ethnic and racial identities in the U.S.; race and class; social thought and social issues; mass media and popular culture; landscape, borders, and belonging; citizenship and nationhood; language as culture; and American exceptionalism.

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

Typical periods offered: Summer

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#### **AMCS 2900 Directed Research in AMCS**

Introduces first-years and sophomores to research by engaging them in ongoing faculty research projects within the department. Under the direction of a faculty mentor, students take part in tasks that contribute to the mentor's research. Through this hands-on experience, students learn about the research process and build foundational research skills that can benefit their future academic experience and development. Faculty mentors provide regular guidance, training, and feedback to support students' understanding and growth. Students are registered by the department after approval from the faculty member leading the research project. The course may be taken for 1-3 credit hours based on the weekly hours required. Credit/No Credit only

Credit 3 units.

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#### **AMCS 2996 Elective: 200-Level**

Course is used for transcribing AMCS 2000 level electives

Credit 3 units. EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring, Summer

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#### **AMCS 3026 Home, Bittersweet Home: Histories of Housing and Homeownership in America Since 1850**

The idea of owning one's own home has been central to realizations of the American dream or the good life. By 1931, Herbert Hoover called the idea a sentiment deep in the heart of our race and of American life. While the dream continues, the reality of homeownership has been elusive or fraught with struggle and sacrifice for many Americans. If home ownership is such a central part of American identity, why have so many generations of Americans struggled to achieve it? In this course, students explore the histories of different versions of home and homeownership by touching down in different locations at pivotal moments in order to investigate the varied meanings of housing and homeownership in the context of a particular place and time in American history. Using a case-study approach, the course travels across time and space to explore diverse forms of housing, including the big house and slave house in the south under slavery, the immigrant tenement in New York City, the company town in south Chicago, the Midwest homestead, the planned postwar suburban neighborhood, high rise public housing and gated communities. This format exposes students to the important role of federal and local policies as well as themes of housing including homes as private

and domestic realms; housing as a commodity and the largest form of American debt; housing as an icon and encoder of social status; housing as exclusionary and inclusionary; housing as racial or socio-economic discrimination; the suburbs and their discontents; and the recent housing crisis.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, HUM EN: H  
Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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#### **AMCS 3039 Research in American Culture Studies**

This course is an introduction to research for second-year students. Students work under the supervision of a sponsor.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Fall

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#### **AMCS 3046 Sports & Society: Contemporary Issues in American Sports**

Athletes like Colin Kaepernick, Ally Raisman, LeBron James, and Megan Rapinoe leave no doubt: sporting spaces are powerful platforms for political and social activism. In this era of division and social unrest, sports cannot be stuck to. But what to make of the various messages these athletes espouse, and how can we understand the intersectional influence of sporting cultures on American politics, economics, and culture? In this class students will examine major contemporary issues in American sports by examining scholarship, fan behavior, and narratives provided by athletes themselves. Among the topics students will consider are: racism and sexism in coaching, LGBTQ and Trans athlete identity, amateurism and athletic labor, mascots, traumatic brain injuries, and social media.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, HUM EN: H  
Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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#### **AMCS 3053 HOT Takes: Cultural Criticism in the Digital Age**

The twenty-first century has seen a new and exciting wave of cultural criticism, and along with it a new wave of public intellectuals. Ta-Nehisi Coates, Roxane Gay, Jia Tolentino, Anne Helen Petersen, Jo Livingstone, Hanif Abdurraqib—at their best, writers like these aspire to the sort of indispensability on political, social, and artistic matters that their forebears like Susan Sontag, Norman Mailer, and James Baldwin had at midcentury. But these voices are unique because they emerged through and alongside a specifically online critical sphere, a space betwixt and between the comments section and the little magazine. This is the space of viral tweets and threads, hot takes and think-pieces. It's a space of potentially greater democratization and diversity even as it is an opportunity for bigots and trolls. These writers are beholden to their networks, but those networks are far wider, more idiosyncratic and inclusive and incendiary—more unstable than anything buttressing the vaunted public intellectuals of the past. This course examines the cultural critics of the contemporary moment in context of the critical space they opened and now occupy. We'll begin with a quick history of the public intellectual from the eighteenth century to the present before we log on. The rise and fall of Gawker, Grantland, and The Awl; The New Republic's controversial digital pivot; the feminist communities of The Hairpin and The Toast; the conservative intellectual dark web; the message boards of the early 2000s; the emergence of semi-academic sites like the Los Angeles Review of Books; the blogs and tumblrs and livejournals that nurtured the talents and provocateurs that we now find indispensable or unavoidable. We will dissect their style, understand their theory and practice, engage with their subjects, and investigate the way their writing has intersected with and propelled social media movements like Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, and #OscarsSoWhite. And we will consider the way these critics have influenced the way scholars and students approach the texts and topics we always have.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM EN: H  
Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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#### **AMCS 3060 Current Affairs and Critical Issues in American Culture**

What's in your newsfeed? Media outlets drive critical conversations and public discourse, and in this course students have the chance to keep up and weigh in. Students read the news and examine current affairs as they unfold week by week, critically analyzing and exploring modes of understanding, historicizing, and contextualizing contemporary issues in American society. The course introduces students to theoretical and conceptual frameworks for this engagement and asks questions such as the following: How are these issues related to the past?

How have Americans experienced this issue before, and how is the contemporary context different? We will follow trends in pop culture, technology, politics, and society. Students learn to layer current issues with historical documents, the commentary of public intellectuals and cultural critics, and political, economic, and social policies. The course stresses research analysis, group process, critical thinking, multidisciplinary inquiry, and professional writing and speaking skills.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, ETH, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall

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#### **AMCS 3086 Living in a Material World**

In the months after 9/11, President Bush urged Americans to buy cars and take vacations to show their patriotism and unity and also to send a message to terrorists that our way of life could not be stolen. Such calls to consume have often been made in times of crisis, and consumption has long been something of a national pastime (some would say a national pathology!). But frugality, simple living, and ethical consumerism have also at times been declared American values, and they are now just as likely to be advanced by celebrities, entrepreneurs, or corporations as by political activists. This multidisciplinary course explores our complex and evolving relationship to materialism and materiality, focusing on moments in U.S. history when consumption has been especially consoling or haunting or when it has been aligned with ideas of the public good or social and political change. Along the way, we will study material goods that have been declared symbols of American values (e.g., soap, Tupperware, Harley-Davidson motorcycles, #MAGA hats); influential advertising campaigns and models of good and bad consumer behavior (e.g., shoplifting, hoarding, good housekeeping, thrifting); and anti-materialist positions, from Thoreau's Walden to the Occupy Movement to today's off-the-grid cooperative-living communities. Students will write short analytical response papers, conduct a study of their own consumer practices, and do a final project on a recent ethical consumption campaign in historical perspective. This course counts as Multidisciplinary for AMCS students and as Visual Culture for Sam Fox students.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM, VC BU: BA, HUM EN: H  
Typical periods offered: Fall

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#### **AMCS 3189 Engaging the City: The Material World of Modern Segregation**

See course listings for current offering.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC, SC Art: CPSC EN: S

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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#### **AMCS 3192 Surveillance & the City**

In 2014, the urban street artist Banksy painted a mural of three government agents flanking a public telephone booth, each using spy gadgets to listen, record, and transmit a copy of the conversation had within. His work reflects the emergent concerns of citizen surveillance in Western democracies and the techno-logics of 21st-century political reality, where persistent monitoring, invisible identification, and data collection are features of both government control and data-driven capitalism. The rise in technological sophistication in both



the capture and assessment of data makes adoption at scale by city governments affordable and relatively noncontroversial. But as the surveillance of bodies, habits, associations, and identities becomes more naturalized in the governing and policing institutions of urban areas, legal safeguards lag behind, concepts like privacy and security become fuzzier, and existing inequalities of race and class become hardcoded in the techno-systems supposedly designed as neutral tools. This fieldwork class will explore St. Louis as a landscape of the always observed, from community-level realities to online experiences. Readings and class discussions will be complemented by field trips to sites in the St. Louis region to interrogate the practice of observation in situ among different zip codes and communities where the blanketing presence of surveillance practices and surveillance technology warps a relationship to place; amplifies racial, cultural, and class inequalities and disenfranchisements; consolidates social and political control; and replaces human accountability with the veneer of the objective and rational machine.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, HUM EN: H  
Typical periods offered: Fall

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### **AMCS 3202 Civic Scholars Program Semester One: Self Awareness, Civic Life, and Citizenship**

This is the first semester, foundation course for students in the Civic Scholars Program of the Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement. This course provides students with a context for examining civic engagement and developing civic leadership skills. Through lectures, guest speakers, readings, excursions, and class discussion, students 1) explore the history and current status of civic engagement; and 2) prepare for the implementation of a civic project the summer between their junior and senior years. Students meet in a structured class to discuss concepts, engage in critical reflection, and develop leadership skills. In addition, students will critically reflect on course content to enrich their learning. This is a two-credit course. Prerequisite: Acceptance into the Civic Scholars Program. Civic Scholars courses do not count towards the AMCS Major and Minor.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC Art: SSC EN: S  
Typical periods offered: Fall

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### **AMCS 3203 Civic Scholars Program Semester Two: Civic Engagement in Action**

This is the second-semester foundation course for students in the Civic Scholars Program of the Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement. This course provides students with a context for developing their civic projects. Students engage in a semester-long research and project planning process tied to their civic projects. Through research, lectures, workshops, and presentations, students develop a project proposal for their civic projects. Students will meet in class to discuss concepts, engage in critical reflection, and develop skills.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC Art: SSC EN: S  
Typical periods offered: Spring

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### **AMCS 3227 Civic Action Lab: Strategies for Engagement in U.S. Elections**

The November 2024 General Election is critical to the future of democracy in the United States. Democratic institutions are under threat, dis- and misinformation are widespread, and disillusionment with government - particularly among young people - is strong. This course will blend history, theory, and practice and will provide students with the knowledge, skills, and tools to engage in democratic processes and encourage their peers to do the same, whether or not they are eligible to vote in the U.S. elections.

Credit 1.5 units.  
Typical periods offered: Fall

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### **AMCS 3270 Comics, Graphic Novels, and Sequential Art**

This course traces the evolution of comics in the America from the comic cuts of the newspapers, through the development of the daily and Sunday strips, into the comic book format, and the emergence of literary graphic novels. While not a uniquely American medium, comics have a specifically American context that intersects with issues of race, class, gender, nationalism, popular culture, consumerism, and American identity. Comics have repeatedly been a site of struggle in American culture; examining these struggles illuminates the way Americans have constructed and expressed their view of themselves. The way comics have developed as a medium and art form in this country has specific characteristics that can be studied profitably through the lens of American Culture Studies.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM EN: H  
Typical periods offered: Spring

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### **AMCS 3272 The Superhero in American Culture**

The superhero is an American cultural figure that enjoys great metaphoric resonance in contemporary America and about contemporary America, much as the Western did during the Cold War. But this metaphoric resonance has existed since the genre came into being with Superman in 1938 as part of the nation's response to modernity, and predates the creation of the genre through the hero figures that contributed tropes to the superhero genre. Through a cultural historical and transmedia approach, this course examines the superhero and the superhero genre as a myth medium and contested site for portraying and shaping ideas about American identity, masculinity, modernism, race, class, gender, and humanity. The prehistory of the superhero is examined in 19th and early 20th century frontier stories, science fiction, and pulp fiction. The definition of the superhero and the genre's evolution in comics, film, television, and fan-produced works are examined, with a focus on how the genre has served and mediated the conflicting needs of creators and audiences.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM EN: H  
Typical periods offered: Spring

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### **AMCS 3304 The Politics of Black Criminality and Popular Protest**

This course will explore the meanings and perceptions of Black criminality in modern American culture. It will consider issues of rioting and racial violence; movements ranging from hip-hop to Black power; the crucial matter of police brutality; and cultural associations between criminality and Black masculinity. Our work will be informed by an awareness of the historical interactions between African Americans and legal and other systems of authority: in particular, the ambiguous boundaries of legality under slavery, post-emancipation convict leasing, Jim Crow laws, Black gangs, and the functions of illegal acts in the lives of Black citizens. The course will give special attention to the ways that popular thought, imagination, and culture -- and particularly Black thought and culture -- have addressed crime. How does criminality connect to popular forms of protest, resistance, and discussions about inequality and identity?

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, HUM  
Typical periods offered: Spring

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### **AMCS 3507 Legal Conflict in Modern American Society**

Thousands of lawsuits are filed daily in the state and federal courts of the United States. The disputes underlying those lawsuits are as messy and complex as the human, commercial, cultural and political dynamics that trigger them, and the legal processes for resolving those disputes are expensive, time-consuming and, for most citizens, seemingly impenetrable. At the same time law and legal conflict permeate public discourse in the United States to a degree that is unique in the world, even among the community of long-established democracies. The overarching objective of the course is to prepare our undergraduate students to participate constructively in that discourse

by providing them with a conceptual framework for understanding both the conduct and resolution of legal conflict by American legal institutions, and the evolution of -- and values underlying -- the substantive law American courts apply to those conflicts. This is, at core, a course in the kind of legal or litigation literacy that should be expected of the graduates of first-tier American universities. Some of the legal controversies that will be used to help develop that literacy include those surrounding the permissible use of lethal force in self-defense, the constitutionality of affirmative action in university admissions, contracts that are unconscionably one-sided, sexual harassment in the workplace, the duty of landlords to prevent criminal assaults on their tenants, groundwater pollution alleged to cause pediatric cancers, and warrantless searches of cellphone locator data by police.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 3528 The Black Athlete in American Literature: Frederick Douglass to LeBron James**

The black athlete is a central figure in American entertainment, and has been since Frederick Douglass decried Christmastime slave games in his Narrative. This course will examine literary depictions of black athletes-in novels, memoirs, essays, and poems-in order to better understand the cultural significance of sportsmen and women in the African American struggle for equality, from abolitionism to the Black Lives Matter movement. Students will read works by Douglass, Ralph Ellison, Maya Angelou, and John Edgar Wideman, among others, and examine the lives and athletic pursuits of prominent athletes such as Jackie Robinson, Muhammad Ali, Wilma Rudolph, Michael Jordan, and LeBron James. Popular perceptions of gender and sexuality, in addition to race and racism, will factor into readings, especially as students incorporate secondary sources into their own research.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 3595 American Culture: Methods & Visions**

Required course for AMCS Majors. See semester listing for current topics. As a Writing Intensive course, 375A serves as an occasion for AMCS students to think about matters of argument and presentation, and to develop ideas and models for future research. This course is intended for students at the Junior Level or Higher; it fulfills the multidisciplinary (MD) requirement for AMCS Minors and the Methods Seminar requirements for AMCS Majors.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, WI Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 3596 From Vision to Praxis: The Capstone Project Incubator**

This course is intended for AMCS juniors following the completion of L98 375A Methods & Visions. After sustained attention on methodological practices in 375A, students will shift focus in 375B toward the fundamentals of developing a senior-year project. Emphasis will be on process and skill enhancement, with areas of concentration including drafting project ideas; identifying animating research questions; enhancing scope and focus; exploring mediums of expression; creating a developmental bibliography; and planning for summer research. Learning modes will include lecture, reading and discussion, and peer workgroups. Assignments will develop formal and informal writing, drafting and rewriting, and scholarly reading. The final product will be two-fold: (1) a polished prospectus outlining project focus, research area, initial scholarship summary, and rationale for medium; and (2) a summer planning document outlining reading and writing goals in preparation for the capstone workshop senior year.

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

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 3704 Topics in AMCS**

Topics course focusing on instances of identity and culture within the American scope. Varies by semester. See Course Listings for description of current semester's offering.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Spring

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**AMCS 3705 Topics in Gender and American Culture**

This topics course introduces students to gender as a category of analysis. Students investigate why and how gender becomes infused with cultural meanings. Through various methodological approaches, they explore how these socially constructed meanings shape Americans' everyday lives and societal dynamics more broadly. The topic varies by semester; common focal points include the intersection of gender with race and ethnicity, social class, health care, education, and politics. This course fulfills the Social Differential requirement. Please see the course listings for a description of the current offering.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Spring

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**AMCS 3706 Topics in VMD**

Topics vary by semester; see semester listing for course description.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: CPSC, HUM, VC BU: HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall

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**AMCS 3707 Topics in AMCS**

This topic varies by semester. See course listings for current offering.

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

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 3708 Topics in American Culture Studies**

This course allows students to learn about topics in American Culture Studies.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 3709 Topics in American Culture Studies: Protest and Power in Modern America**

The topic of this course varies from semester to semester. Please see Course Listings for a description of the current offering.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 3715 Topics in St. Louis**

Topics vary by semester; see semester listing for course description.

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

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 3716 Topics in AMCS**

Course varies by semester, see semester listing for description,

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 3717 Topics in AMCS**

This course topic changes; see semester listing for current course offering.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: CPSC, HUM BU: BA, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 3718 Culture and Identity**

Topics vary by semester; see semester listing for course description.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: CPSC, HUM BU: BA, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 3719 Topics in AMCS:**

The topic of this course varies from semester to semester. Please refer to the Course Listings for a description of the current offering.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC Art: SSC BU: BA, IS EN: S

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 3720 Topics in American Culture Studies**

Topics vary by semester; see semester listing for course description.

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

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 3722 Topics in American Culture Studies**

Topics vary by semester; see semester listing for course description.

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

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 3841 1984: One Weird Year**

This course examines one year as a way to make sense of recent American culture. Looking at points around the country but always returning to the experience of WashU in 1984, this course experiences the past as Americans did, through the simultaneous overlap of daily life and politics, movies and music, the books they were assigned in school and the very different books they chose to read. In addition to tackling the challenge of understanding one year, students will develop a variety of the collaborative and communication skills that are so important both in college and beyond.

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

Typical periods offered: Fall

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**AMCS 3980 Directed Fieldwork in American Culture Studies**

This course allows students to experience directed fieldwork in American Culture Studies.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 3990 Undergraduate Teaching Assistant**

Open to advanced undergraduates only. Usual duties of teaching assistant in classroom instruction. Prerequisite: Permission of instructor.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 3993 Undergraduate Internship in American Culture Studies**

Students receive credit for a faculty-directed and approved internship. Registration requires completion of the AMCS Learning Agreement which must be filled out and signed by the AMCS-affiliated faculty sponsor prior to beginning internship work. Credit should correspond to actual time spent in work activities, e.g., 8-10 hours a week for thirteen or fourteen weeks to receive 3 units of credit; 1 or 2 credits for fewer hours. Students may not receive credit for work done for pay but are encouraged to obtain written evaluations about such work for the student's academic advisor and career placement file. Department preapproval required. AMCS Majors and minors only.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Fall

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**AMCS 3995 Elective: 300-Level**

Course is used for transcribing 3000 level AMCS electives

Credit 3 units. EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring, Summer

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**AMCS 3996 Local Archives: Directed Study in St. Louis**

Directed study with an AMCS-affiliated faculty. All proposals for study must be submitted for review and approved by the AMCS advisor. See the AMCS Academic Coordinator for more information. By permission of instructor.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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**AMCS 4016 Advanced Research in American Culture Studies**

Directed study with an AMCS-affiliated faculty. All proposals for study must be submitted for review and approved by the AMCS advisor. See the AMCS website for the appropriate form. By permission of instructor.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Fall

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**AMCS 4150 Senior Seminar On the Presidency: The Trump Administration**

This course uses the run-up to the presidential election as a point of departure for considering the current presidency. This is a research seminar that will begin with a series of common readings, after which students will constitute themselves into research teams that will explore the current state of the presidency in broad cultural perspective. 2020 Iteration: In Spring 2020, the course will focus on the election and presidency of Donald Trump as experienced by Washington University in particular and St. Louis in general.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, WI Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Spring

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**AMCS 4200 AMCS Capstone Workshop I**

This workshop is required for AMCS majors completing an independent capstone project, whether by means of a 3-credit capstone project, a Latin Honors (6-credit) thesis, or a two-semester (6-credit) non-honors project. In all three cases, the capstone project is intended to serve as the culmination of the major—an opportunity to build on previous work and to engage with the broader field of American Culture Studies while developing a multidisciplinary framework suited to the goals of the project. The workshop is intended to foster intellectual community and provide support during the research and writing process. Students share aspects of their work in large- and small-group settings; discuss methods, models, and challenges of cultural studies; participate in several peer-review workshops; and develop insights and skills directly relevant to their capstone work. Barring circumstances which prevent it, the 3-credit capstone should be completed by the end of the fall semester. Students pursuing a 6-credit project (either a Latin Honors thesis or non-honors project) will continue their work into the following semester by enrolling in L98 4XX. Enrollment by permission of Program pending approval of project proposal, which will be submitted in the Spring of Junior Year. Students seeking to earn Latin Honors in AMCS must meet the University cumulative GPA minimum (3.65) and have permission of their thesis advisor.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Fall

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**AMCS 4203 Civic Scholars Program Semester Four: Civic Engagement Across the Lifespan**

This is the fourth semester course for students in the Civic Scholars Program of the Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement. This culminating course provides students with the opportunity to integrate the Civic Scholars experience, explore civic engagement opportunities post-college, and discuss ethics and civic engagement. Through group discussions, readings, lectures, and guest speakers, students 1) understand civic engagement over the life course; 2) discuss ethics and civic engagement; and 3) develop a one-, five-, ten-, and twenty-year civic vision. This one-credit course meets weekly for one hour during the spring semester. Students are expected to take an active role in their learning through sharing their experiences, engaging with reading material, and participating in reflection exercises. Prerequisite: L98 3202, L98 3203 and L98 4202  
Credit 1 unit. A&S IQ: SSC Art: SSC EN: S

Typical periods offered: Spring

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**AMCS 4204 AMCS Portfolio Workshop: Academic Citizenship**

How can students develop a stronger sense of academic identity and purpose? How can research translate into opportunities beyond the classroom, from service to politics? In this workshop AMCS Majors explore these questions while receiving support at a crucial milestone, the Senior Capstone. Through reflection and writing students develop a stronger intellectual identity, and consider how their research prepares them to participate in conversations and activities that transcend scholarship. This participation is a kind of academic citizenship with students leveraging their learning to engage intellectual, social, and political life in and beyond campus. Students do this primarily through consideration of their capstone research, happening concurrently in the AMCS Capstone Workshop or in an approved seminar. While encouraging Majors to consider the intersection of their academic and personal goals, the workshop supports research (e.g., guest faculty discuss methodology), gives structure to activities already required for the Major (e.g., the capstone abstract), and builds community (e.g., peer-led discussions). The workshop also provides time and space for students to curate their AMCS portfolio. The Fall Workshop is part of a workshop series designed to help AMCS Majors develop their portfolio and provide additional training and support at particular milestones in the major. The portfolio and accompanying workshops is a response to students' feedback. Graduating seniors said they would have liked more structured time to reflect on their work in the major; they would have liked to document their progress in the program more fully; and they wanted more opportunities to strengthen their class cohort. The Fall Workshop will provide all of those things, while centering students' attention on their growth as scholars and engaged citizens.  
Credit 1 unit.

Typical periods offered: Fall

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**AMCS 4205 AMCS Portfolio Workshop: Connections and Explorations**

Where have your studies in American Culture taken you? In this one-credit workshop AMCS Majors work with mentors and peers to reflect on their journey through the major, prepare for the public presentation of their capstone research in early April, and prepare for life after college. The course gives AMCS Majors space and time to think more deeply about what they have achieved academically and where their intellectual and personal priorities intersect. We hope it helps AMCS students to discover connections among what they have done and learned in the program and clarifies post-college goals and pursuits. Some of the workshop activities are required for the major (e.g., the capstone presentation). The course provides structure, support, and academic credit for doing them. The workshop is a response to students' feedback: Graduating seniors tell us they would have liked more structured time to reflect on their work in the major; they would have liked to document their progress and growth in the program

more fully; and they wanted more opportunities to strengthen their class cohort. The Senior Workshop will foster all of these things, while centering students' attention on the connections among their academic, personal, and career interests.

Credit 1 unit.

Typical periods offered: Spring

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**AMCS 4206 AMCS Capstone Workshop II**

This course is required for students planning to complete the Latin Honors thesis or a 6-credit non-honors project through American Culture Studies. It builds on work done in L98 400A: AMCS Capstone Workshop I, and involves periodic workshops and conferences with the instructor and project advisor(s) during the final stages of thesis preparation. Prerequisite: Satisfactory standing as a candidate for a two-semester capstone, including successful completion of L98 400A Capstone Workshop I and permission of project advisor. Latin Honors eligible students must meet the University GPA minimum. Course will meet every other week, time/date to be determined based on participants' schedules.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Spring

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**AMCS 4208 Civic Scholars Program Semester Three: Application and Integration of Civic Projects and Values**

This is the third semester course for students in the Civic Scholars Program of the Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement. This one-credit seminar style course provides students with the opportunity to evaluate their civic projects and explore implications of their work. Through group discussions, readings, lectures, and guest speakers, students 1) connect their civic engagement project to local, national, and international contexts; 2) understand interdependence of social issues, public policy, and culture; and 3) explore sustainability and social change. The class meets weekly for one hour during the fall semester. Students are expected to take an active role in their learning through sharing their experiences, engaging with reading material, and participating in reflection exercises. Students are required to continue their coursework through the spring of their senior year, in the Civic Scholars Program, Semester Four: Civic Engagement across a Lifespan. Prerequisite: L98 3202 and L98 3203  
Credit 1 unit. A&S IQ: SSC Art: SSC EN: S

Typical periods offered: Fall

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**AMCS 4371 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

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring



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**AMCS 4505 AMCS Harvey Scholar Seminar**

In this course, AMCS Harvey Scholars examine critical issues in American studies while receiving support and structure for their Harvey projects. Students discuss seminal texts and explore creative, literary and artistic productions and representations of American diversities and social contrasts. Class activities integrate academic journals, media, visual artifacts, and other texts that support students' specific projects while deepening their competencies in the field of American cultural studies. Participation includes attending the monthly AMCS Americanist Forum, which brings together faculty, postdoctoral fellows, graduate students and undergraduates. This course is part of the AMCS Harvey Scholar Fall-Spring seminar sequence, which is designed to support the intellectual and community life of AMCS undergraduates. Permission of the program is required for participation. Students place themselves on the waitlist and will be manually enrolled.

Credit 2 units. A&S IQ: SSC EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall

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**AMCS 4506 AMCS Harvey Scholar Seminar**

In this course AMCS Undergraduate Harvey Scholars examine critical issues in American Studies while receiving support and structure for their Harvey projects. Students discuss seminal texts and explore creative, literary and artistic productions and representations of American diversities and social contrasts. Class activities integrate academic journals, media, visual artifacts, and other texts that support students' specific projects while deepening their competencies in the field of American cultural studies. Participation includes attending the monthly AMCS Americanist Forum, which brings together faculty, postdoctoral fellows, graduate students and undergraduates. The AMCS program director leads the seminar with support and involvement from faculty and staff. This course is part of the AMCS Harvey Scholar Fall-Spring seminar sequence designed to support the intellectual and community life of AMCS undergraduates. Prerequisite: Permission of program. Students place themselves on the course waitlist and then will be manually enrolled.

Credit 2 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Spring

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**AMCS 4800 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](http://amcs.wustl.edu/courses/on_location).

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

Typical periods offered: Summer

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**AMCS 4996 Elective: 4000-Level**

Course is used for transcribing AMCS 4000- level electives

Credit 3 units. EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring, Summer

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**AMCS 4998 Directed Study in American Culture Studies**

Students in this course perform directed study with AMCS-affiliated faculty. All proposals for study must be submitted for review and approved by the AMCS adviser. See the AMCS website for the appropriate form. Prerequisite: Permission of instructor.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring, Summer

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