AMERICAN STUDIES

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FACULTY ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROGRAM OF AMERICAN STUDIES

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Senior Lecturers James Berger (English), Ron Gregg (Film & Media Studies)

Lecturers Ryan Brasseaux, Irene Garza (Ethnicity, Race, and Migration), Christine Muller, Joseph Plaster, Karin Roffman (Humanities, English), Joel Silverman, Joseph Spooner, Quan Tran (Ethnicity, Race, and Migration)

The American Studies program encourages the interdisciplinary study of the cultures and politics of the United States, the changing representations of national identity, and the construction of borderland and diasporic cultures over time. Each student in the major combines courses in American Studies with courses from other relevant disciplines (literature, history, the arts, and the social sciences) to explore these broad topics from local, national, and global perspectives. Through the selection of an area of concentration, each student develops a focus for course work in the major. The program encourages scholarly work in nontraditional combinations of disciplines; at the same time, however, it assumes and requires a substantial foundation of knowledge in the history and culture of the United States. Students interested in the major are encouraged to consult with the director of undergraduate studies as early as possible.

Requirements of the major for the Class of 2018 and previous classes Students in the Class of 2018 and previous classes may fulfill the requirements of the American Studies major that were in place when they entered the major, as described in previous editions of this bulletin (http://www.yale.edu/printer/bulletin/archivepdffiles/VCPS). Alternatively, they may fulfill the requirements for the major as described below for the Class of 2019 and subsequent classes.

Requirements of the major for the Class of 2019 and subsequent classes All students majoring in American Studies must take fourteen term courses approved by the program’s faculty. Although a good deal of freedom in course selection is permitted, it is expected that all students will acquaint themselves with the materials, skills, and perspectives of cultural studies. Accordingly, the major requires completion—preferably by the end of the sophomore year, but no later than the end of the junior year—of at least four gateway courses (AMST 111–199), including two in cultural history/cultural studies, one broad survey course in American literature, and one course preparatory for work in the student’s area of concentration, to be selected in consultation with the director of undergraduate studies. One of these four courses must be one of the designated “Early Americas” courses as listed on the American Studies Web site (http://americanstudies.yale.edu/undergraduate-program/courses). An additional five concentration courses from diverse disciplines must be taken for a letter grade, one of which must incorporate a comparable topic from a non-U.S. perspective. Two electives chosen from the American Studies course offerings are also required.

Students must take two junior seminars (AMST 300–399) during their junior year. At least one of the seminars must fall within the student’s area of concentration, described below. In each of the seminars, students are expected to demonstrate proficiency in interdisciplinary research and analysis through the production of critical essays on primary source materials or a paper of fifteen to twenty pages. Sophomores contemplating a junior term abroad are urged to take one of the junior seminars in the spring term of their sophomore year.

Area of concentration Each American Studies major selects an area of concentration, normally in the fall of the junior year, from six possible choices: (1) national formations, (2) the international United States, (3) material cultures and built environments, (4) politics and American communities, (5) visual, audio, literary, and performance cultures, and (6) public humanities. The concentration in national formations explores historic migrations, settlements, and encounters among peoples who have formed the American nation, with an emphasis on Native American history and the construction of America’s frontiers and borderlands. The international United States
concentration focuses on historic and contemporary diasporas, the role of the United States outside its national borders, and the flows of American peoples, ideas, and goods throughout the globe. Students in the material cultures and built environments concentration examine the formation of the American landscape from the natural to the human-made, including the development of American architecture, and the visual and decorative arts. The concentration in politics and American communities investigates the emergence of social groups and their political struggles at the local and national levels, emphasizing the themes of power, inequality, and social justice. Majors with a concentration in visual, audio, literary, and performance cultures study American consumer culture, popular culture, representations, and media in relation to U.S. literatures. Students in the public humanities concentration explore various forms of public intellectual engagement, including museum studies, documentary work, public history, digital humanities, and archival based work in the visual or performing arts; senior projects in this area may consist of works or productions beyond the traditional scholarly essay. Students may also petition the director of undergraduate studies to develop an independent concentration.

Senior requirement During the senior year, each student in the major completes work in the area of concentration in one of three ways. First, the student may enroll in a senior seminar within the area of concentration (AMST 400–490). Students should apply interdisciplinary methods and undertake original research to produce a final paper of twenty to twenty-five pages. Students must complete all course requirements to fulfill the senior requirement. Students electing this option should submit the senior seminar registration form, signed by the seminar instructor, to the director of undergraduate studies.

Second, the student may complete a one-term senior project or essay (AMST 491). The product should be a thirty-page essay or its equivalent in another medium. To apply for admission to AMST 491, a student should submit a prospectus, signed by the faculty adviser, to the director of undergraduate studies.

Third, the student may enroll in the intensive major (AMST 493 and 494) and work independently for two terms. The intensive major offers an opportunity for significant original research leading to a substantial senior project. AMST 493, 494 carries two terms of credit; its final product should be a sixty-page essay or its equivalent in another medium. All students in the intensive major participate in a yearlong proseminar on theory and method. One term of the two-term project may count as a course in the area of concentration. To apply for admission to AMST 493 and 494, a student should submit a prospectus, signed by the faculty adviser, to the director of undergraduate studies.

As a multidisciplinary program, American Studies draws on the resources of other departments and programs in the University. The following list of courses is meant to be suggestive only: apart from those courses required for the major, it is neither restrictive nor exhaustive. Students are encouraged to examine the offerings of other departments in both the humanities and the social sciences, as well as residential college seminars, for additional relevant courses. The stated area of concentration of each student determines the relevance and acceptability of other courses.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Prerequisites None

Number of courses 14 term courses (incl senior req)

Distribution of courses 4 gateway courses, as specified; 2 junior sems, 1 in area of concentration; 5 courses in area of concentration for letter grades, 1 on a related non-U.S. topic, (1 may be one term of two-term senior project); 2 electives

Substitution permitted 1 freshman sem for 1 gateway course; others with DUS permission

Senior requirement Senior sem (AMST 400–490) or one-term senior project (AMST 491) related to area of concentration

Intensive major Same, except a two-term senior project (AMST 493 and 494) replaces AMST 491

Freshman Seminars

* AMST 010a / ER&M 010a, Islam in the United States Zareena Grewal
Introduction to ethnic studies and ethnographic film and writing through the study of Islam in the United States. The wide variety of Muslim ethnic and racial and immigrant groups in the United States and the new forms of religious life that develop from their interaction. Global and universal elements of Islam; elements that are specific to place and community, including what is American about Islam in America. Enrollment limited to freshmen. Preregistration required; see under Freshman Seminar Program. WR, HU

* AMST 017b / ER&M 017b / WGSS 017b, Travel Literature of the Americas Dixa Ramirez
Evolving visions of the so-called New World from 1492 to the present. Readings from fictional and nonfictional accounts of travel to or throughout the Americas. Visual examples of travel narratives, including tourism ads; some attention to scholarly criticism. Enrollment limited to freshmen. Preregistration required; see under Freshman Seminar Program. WR, HU

* AMST 020a, The Humanities from Plato to the Corporate University James Berger
Inquiry into the relevancy of the humanities. Consideration of Plato’s dismissal of any study that could not clearly demonstrate its own truth and moral validity, as well as recent focus on the alleged technological obtuseness of the humanities. Debate as to whether academic studies and artistic pursuits, criticized as both anti-modern and postmodern, economically worthless, and politically harmful, can defend themselves. Examination of these debates, from Plato’s Academy to today’s corporate university. Enrollment limited to freshmen. Preregistration required; see under Freshman Seminar Program. WR, HU
* AMST 025a / WGSS 025a, The American Essay Tradition  Greta LaFleur
Exploration of the American essay tradition, from some of its earliest moments to more recent iterations. Consideration of the essay as a rhetorical form, a political tool, and a literary tradition. Authors include Thomas Paine, Claudia Rankine, Benjamin Franklin, Virginia Woolf, James Baldwin, Cherrie Moraga, Sherman Alexie, and Hilton Als. Students will write political essays, as well as develop competencies in literary analysis. Enrollment limited to freshmen. Preregistration required; see under Freshman Seminar Program.  HU

* AMST 060b / AFAM 060b / HIST 016b, Significance of American Slavery  Edward Rugeemer
The history of American slavery, its destruction during the nineteenth century, and its significance today. Topics include the origins of slavery, the development of racism, the transatlantic slave trade, the experience of enslavement, resistance to slavery, the abolitionist movement, the process of emancipation, and the perpetuation of slavery and other forms of unfree labor in the twenty-first century. Enrollment limited to freshmen. Preregistration required; see under Freshman Seminar Program.  WR, HU

Gateway Courses

AMST 125b / AFAM 125b / HIST 135b, The Long Civil Rights Movement  Crystal Feinster
Political, social, and artistic aspects of the U.S. civil rights movement from the 1920s through the 1980s explored in the context of other organized efforts for social change. Focus on relations between the African American freedom movement and debates about gender, labor, sexuality, and foreign policy. Changing representations of social movements in twentieth-century American culture; the politics of historical analysis.  HU

AMST 133a / ER&M 187a / HIST 107a, Introduction to American Indian History  Ned Blackhawk
Survey of American Indian history, beginning with creation traditions and migration theories and continuing to the present day. Focus on American Indian nations whose homelands are located within the contemporary United States. Complexity and change within American Indian societies, with emphasis on creative adaptations to changing historical circumstances.  HU

AMST 135a / HIST 127a / WGSS 200a, U.S. Lesbian and Gay History  George Chauncey
Introduction to the social, cultural, and political history of lesbians, gay men, and other socially constituted sexual minorities. Focus on understanding categories of sexuality in relation to shifting normative regimes, primarily in the twentieth century. The emergence of homosexuality and heterosexuality as categories of experience and identity; the changing relationship between homosexuality and transgenderism; the development of diverse lesbian and gay subcultures and their representation in popular culture; religion and sexual science; generational change and everyday life; AIDS; and gay, antigay, feminist, and queer movements.  HU

AMST 160a / AFAM 160a / AFST 184a / HIST 184a, The Rise and Fall of Atlantic Slavery  Edward Rugeemer
The history of peoples of African descent throughout the Americas, from the first African American societies of the sixteenth century through the century-long process of emancipation.  HU

AMST 163a / EVST 120a / HIST 120a / HSHM 204a, American Environmental History  Paul Sabin
Ways in which people have shaped and been shaped by the changing environments of North America from precolonial times to the present. Migration of species and trade in commodities; the impact of technology, agriculture, and industry; the development of resources in the American West and overseas; the rise of modern conservation and environmental movements; the role of planning and impact of public policies.  WR, HU

AMST 196a / AFAM 196a / ER&M 226a / EVST 196a / SOCY 190a, Race, Class, and Gender in American Cities  Laura Barraclough
Examination of how racial, gender, and class inequalities have been built, sustained, and challenged in American cities. Focus on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Topics include industrialization and deindustrialization, segregation, gendered public/private split, gentrification, transit equity, environmental justice, food access, and the relationships between public space, democracy, and community wellbeing. Includes field projects in New Haven.  SO

AMST 197a / ARCH 280a / HSAR 210a, American Architecture and Urbanism  Elihu Rubin
Introduction to the study of buildings, architects, architectural styles, and urban landscapes, viewed in their economic, political, social, and cultural contexts, from precolonial times to the present. Topics include: public and private investment in the built environment; the history of housing in America; the organization of architectural practice; race, gender, ethnicity and the right to the city; the social and political nature of city building; and the transnational nature of American architecture.  HU

AMST 217b / HSAR 216b, American Decorative Arts and Design in the Long Twentieth Century  Edward Cooke
A survey of American architecture and decorative arts in the twentieth century. Examination of architecture, furniture, metals, ceramics, and glass. Topics include responses to the reforms of the Arts and Crafts movement, the introduction of modernism, the survival and revival of traditional and vernacular expressions, the rise of industrial designers, the development of studio crafts, and the varieties of postmodern expression.  HU

* AMST 231b / WGSS 231b, Introduction to Digital Humanities  Laura Wexler
The application of computational methods such as text analysis, mapping, and network analysis to traditional and new forms of inquiry in the humanities. What methods are best for which forms of inquiry, how to apply those methods, and how new questions arise in the process. The limitations and challenges as well as the promises of digital humanities.  HU

* AMST 232a, Fact in Fiction  Michael Roemer
Examination of the relationship between film and reality, not only in documentaries, where it is generally acknowledged, but in those fiction films that don’t shape facts to meet the wishes of the audience. Why a film, scene, or moment seems persuasive and relevant
decades after it was shot, while manipulations emerge glaringly for what they are. Why the work of Chaplin and Keaton, while deeply rooted in fact, can make what happens on the screen seem unreal.

**AMST 234b / ER&M 243b / HIST 188b / RLIST 342b, Spiritual But Not Religious** Zareena Grewal
Study of the historical and contemporary “unchurching” trends in American religious life in a comparative perspective and across different scales of analysis in order to think about the relationship between spirituality, formal religion, secular psychology and the self-help industry. HU, SO

* AMST 235b / ENGL 354b, Language, Disability, Fiction James Berger
Portrayals of cognitive and linguistic impairment in modern fiction. Characters with limited capacities for language as figures of "otherness." Contemporaneous discourses of science, sociology, ethics, politics, and aesthetics. The ethics of speaking about or for subjects at the margins of discourse. HU

**AMST 238a / AFST 238a / ER&M 238a, Introduction to Third World Studies** Gary Okihiro
Introduction to the historical and contemporary theories and articulations of Third World studies (comparative ethnic studies) as an academic field and practice. Consideration of subject matters; methodologies and theories; literatures; and practitioners and institutional arrangements. SO

**AMST 247a / FILM 244a / HIST 147a / HLTH 170a / HSHM 202a, Media and Medicine in Modern America** John Warner
Relationships between medicine, health, and the media in the United States from 1870 to the present. The changing role of the media in shaping conceptions of the body, creating new diseases, influencing health and health policy, crafting the image of the medical profession, informing expectations of medicine and constructions of citizenship, and the medicalization of American life. HU, SO

* AMST 257b / ENGL 325b, Modern Apocalyptic Narratives James Berger
The persistent impulse in Western culture to imagine the end of the world and what might follow. Social and psychological factors that motivate apocalyptic representations. Differences and constant features in apocalyptic representations from the Hebrew Bible to contemporary science fiction. Attitudes toward history, politics, sexuality, social class, and the process of representation in apocalyptic texts. HU

* AMST 258b / EVST 258b, Wilderness in the North American Imagination Eric Rutkow
The idea of wilderness in American history, art, literature, and public policy. Authors include Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, John McPhee, and Ramachandra Guha. A class dinner and field trip are held during the term. HU

* AMST 267a, Interdisciplinary Approaches to Oral History Narrative Joseph Plaster
Introduction to the theory and practice of oral history and the foundational skills of project design, audio recording, and interviewing styles. Students learn and practice the skills required to conceptualize, conduct, and analyze oral history narratives. Draws on scholarship in performance studies, ethnography, and affect studies to consider the unique forms of evidence produced through the oral history encounter. HU

**AMST 271b / HIST 171b / WGSS 201b, Women in Modern America** Joanne Meyerowitz
U.S. women's history and the history of gender from 1900 to the present. Changing meanings of femininity, masculinity, sex, gender, and sexuality; intersections of class, race, ethnicity, and gender; women's labor in industrial and postindustrial economies; women's participation in politics and social movements; trends in sexual expression, gender presentation, reproduction, child rearing, and marriage; and feminist and other gender-equity movements. HU

**AMST 272b / ER&M 282b / HIST 183b / WGSS 272b, Asian American History, 1800 to the Present** Mary Lui
An introduction to the history of East, South, and Southeast Asian migrations and settlement to the United States from the late eighteenth century to the present. Major themes include labor migration, community formation, U.S. imperialism, legal exclusion, racial segregation, gender and sexuality, cultural representations, and political resistance. HU

* AMST 274b / ER&M 274b, Antebellum American Literature Michael Warner
Introduction to writing from the period leading up to and through the Civil War. The growth of African American writing in an antislavery context; the national book market and its association with national culture; emergence of a language of environment; romantic ecology and American pastoral; the "ecological Indian"; evangelicalism and the secular; sentimentalism and gender; the emergence of sexuality; poetics. WR, HU

**AMST 274b / ER&M 217b, Introduction to Latino/a Studies** Albert Laguna
Themes and issues that have shaped the experiences of Latino/a populations in the United States explored within an interdisciplinary and hemispheric framework. Relations between the United States and Latin America; the history of ethnic labels; the formation of transnational communities and identities; the politics of language and bilingualism; race, class, and ethnicity; and gender and sexuality. HU

* AMST 291a / HUMS 163a, The House and the Writer's Life Staff
The study of seven American writers' houses from the mid-nineteenth century to today. Authors include Stowe, Twain, James, Wharton, Stein, Merrill, and Ashbery. Focus is on the creation of the house, including issues of location, architecture, and design and on the literary works that emerged during each writer's process of setting up the house. Trips to local houses and museums.
Conventional literary texts such as novels and poetry, as well as political documents, orally transmitted texts, and imagery. 

texts that explore relations between the two nations, with some attention to each country's individual literary and cultural traditions.

The literature and culture of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and their diasporas in the United States and Canada since 1804. Focus on * AMST 336a / AFAM 336a / ER&M 315a / LAST 336, Haitian and Dominican Literature and Culture 

resistance.

The merging of political critique with desire and anxiety; the nature and effects of social power; forms of authority, submission, and technologies of security; and contemporary securitizations in the U.S. and elsewhere.

historical development and impact of technologies of militarization on gender; the transnational scope of militarized coordination today.

Exploration of how militarization impacts and changes race, gender, and sexuality, with focus on the United States. Topics include the role of art in the struggle for environmental justice.

In mitigating unequal representation; which groups bear disproportionate shares of negative environmental consequences globally; and inequality. Topics include why and how minority communities face higher levels of environmental risk; the role grassroots activism plays.

Examination of the intersection of environmental issues and various systems of social injustice, especially racism, sexism, and economic inequality. Topics include why and how minority communities face higher levels of environmental risk; the role grassroots activism plays in mitigating unequal representation; which groups bear disproportionate shares of negative environmental consequences globally; and the role of art in the struggle for environmental justice.

From TV programming like Homeland to video games including Modern Warfare and the graphic surge by comics like Marvel, this seminar explores popular cultural representations and contemporary histories of the War on Terror. Engagement of media across television, film, art, literature, and music in conversation with select theoretical and historical pieces. Consideration of the variety of cultures and themes that have come to represent, shape, and contest the domestic and transnational project known as the War on Terror.

The role of gender, sexuality, and intimacy in shaping American economic life, past and present. Topics include domestic labor and care work, adoption, egg and sperm donation, emotional labor, the service economy, commercial sex, dating, and globalization. Through readings in sociology, history, literature, and film, students analyze economic activities that seem to cross the boundaries between public and private, market and non-market, calculating and emotional.

An interdisciplinary, thematic approach to the study of race, nation, and ethnicity in the African diaspora. Topics include class, gender, color, and sexuality; the dynamics of reform, Pan-Africanism, neocolonialism, and contemporary black nationalism. Use of a broad range of methodologies.

An interdisciplinary field that draws on gender studies, queer theory, sociology, feminist science studies, literary studies, and history. Representations of gender nonconformity in a cultural context dominated by a two-sex model of human gender differentiation. Sources include novels, autobiographies, films, and philosophy and criticism.

Examination of the intersection of environmental issues and various systems of social injustice, especially racism, sexism, and economic inequality. Topics include why and how minority communities face higher levels of environmental risk; the role grassroots activism plays in mitigating unequal representation; which groups bear disproportionate shares of negative environmental consequences globally; and the role of art in the struggle for environmental justice.

In-depth examination of James Baldwin’s canon, tracking his work as an American artist, citizen, and witness to United States society, politics, and culture during the Civil Rights and Black Arts Movements. Prerequisite: Background or course work in twentieth century African American history, African American literature, and/or American literature helpful but not required.

Exploration of how militarization impacts and changes race, gender, and sexuality, with focus on the United States. Topics include the historical development and impact of technologies of militarization on gender; the transnational scope of militarized coordination today and historically; the separation between domestic and foreign policing; the relation between gender and militarism; the histories of technologies of security; and contemporary securitizations in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Attempts since the late nineteenth century to imagine, in literature, cinema, and social theory, a world different from the existing world. The merging of political critique with desire and anxiety; the nature and effects of social power; forms of authority, submission, and resistance.

The literature and culture of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and their diasporas in the United States and Canada since 1804. Focus on texts that explore relations between the two nations, with some attention to each country’s individual literary and cultural traditions. Conventional literary texts such as novels and poetry, as well as political documents, orally transmitted texts, and imagery.
* AMST 338a / AFAM 225a / THST 304a, Blackface Minstrelsy and the Politics of Power  
Daphne Brooks
Study of racial performances from Stowe, Twain, Winehouse, and others to explore the history and aesthetics of racial masquerade and cultural appropriation, from the origins of blackface minstrelsy through the present day. Examination of the roots and modern legacies of a form that was once the most popular entertainment attraction in American culture and of the relationship between performance politics and forms of social domination and cultural subversion. The impact of modernity and material histories (slavery and captivity, immigration, labor, development of the culture industry) on blackface minstrelsy’s evolution.  HU RP

* AMST 341a / AFAM 399a / ER&M 407a, Race and Capitalism  
Aaron Carico
This interdisciplinary seminar explores, both theoretically and historically, how racial formations are bound to the formations of capitalism. Focus on the American scene, with sustained inquiry on slavery, its commodity logics, and their residues. Consideration of the effects of immigration and globalization.  SO

* AMST 348b / EVST 304b, Space, Place, and Landscape  
Laura Barraclough
Survey of core concepts in cultural geography and spatial theory. Ways in which the organization, use, and representation of physical spaces produce power dynamics related to colonialism, race, gender, class, and migrant status. Multiple meanings of home; the politics of place names; effects of tourism; the aesthetics and politics of map making; spatial strategies of conquest. Includes field projects in New Haven.  SO

* AMST 349b / THST 233 / THST 427b, Technologies of Movement Research  
Emily Coates
Marshaling both artistic and academic methods, and with dance as the focal point, this course examines technologies that traverse disciplinary boundaries. Topics include: somatic practices that emphasize internal sense perception; choreographic notation; dance dramaturgy; digital motion capture; the intersection of cognitive science and dance; and ethnographies that draw strategies from the arts to probe social problems. Open to all students.

* AMST 353a / HIST 160Ja / WGSS 348a, Selected Topics in Lesbian and Gay History  
George Chauncey
Readings and discussions focus on recent studies of twentieth-century queer family life, religion, migration, race, urban politics, state regulation, and sexual culture in the United States, and help frame research questions for students to pursue in Yale’s archival collections. Attention to methodology and the craft of historical writing.  WR, HU

* AMST 356b, Storytelling, Social Justice, and Public Humanities  
Joseph Plaster
Introduction to the use of storytelling and public humanities as catalysts for social change. Training in interdisciplinary methods of research, including oral history and performance ethnography; discussion of collaborative humanities projects through which marginalized communities become partners in research and not simply objects of study.  HU

AMST 364b / EVST 366b / FILM 432b, Documentary and the Environment  
Charles Musser
Survey of documentaries about environmental issues, with a focus on Darwin’s Nightmare (2004), An Inconvenient Truth (2006), Food, Inc. (2009), GasLand (2010), and related films. Brief historical overview, from early films such as The River (1937) to the proliferation of environmental film festivals.  HU RP

* AMST 370a / THST 380a, The History of Dance  
Jessica Berson
An examination of major movements in the history of concert and social dance from the late nineteenth century to the present, including ballet, tap, jazz, modern, musical theater, and different cultural forms. Topics include tradition versus innovation, the influence of the African diaspora, and interculturalism. Exercises used to illuminate analysis of the body in motion.  WR, HU

* AMST 371b / ER&M 297b, Food, Race, and Migration in United States Society  
Quan Tran
Exploration of the relationship between food, race, and migration in historical and contemporary United States contexts. Organized thematically and anchored in selected case studies, this course is comparative in scope and draws from contemporary work in the fields of food studies, ethnic studies, migration studies, American studies, anthropology, and history.  SO

* AMST 381b, Queer and Trans Performativity  
Joseph Plaster
Introduction to the intersections of queer theory and performance studies through examination of key texts that have shaped conversations between these fields, followed by focus on the themes currently under debate such as queer temporalities and history; the anti-social thesis; and the turn to affect. Attention to aesthetics and the performing arts.

* AMST 385b, Trauma in American Film and Television  
Christine Muller
Origins, multiple meanings, and influence of the notion of trauma in contemporary American culture. Relations between theories of popular culture and of trauma, particularly in discussions of war, social upheaval, and September 11, 2001. The conditions and implications of engaging trauma through everyday entertainment such as film and television; the ethics of representation.  HU

AMST 386b / AFAM 403b / THST 431b, Black Women and Popular-Music Culture  
Daphne Brooks
Forms of musical artistry innovated by black women artists as sites of social, political, and cultural rupture, revision, and resistance. The intersecting politics of race, gender, class, and sexuality in popular-music culture considered through black women’s sonic performances. Examination of voice, lyricism, embodied performance, and spectacle. Artists range from Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Lena Horne, and Eartha Kitt to Nina Simone, Grace Jones, Lauryn Hill, Nicki Minaj, and Janelle Monae.  HU

* AMST 391b, The Vietnam War in American Culture  
Jeanne Follansbee
Examination of texts by and about soldiers and veterans, policy makers and protesters, reporters and refugees, covering key events in the Vietnam War. Discussion of materials produced during the war along with those produced after the war to better explore Americans’
contested and changing understandings. Texts include popular films, documentaries, journalism, fiction, letters, diaries, and government documents. SO

* AMST 392b / RLST 311b, Religion and Popular Culture  Kathryn Lofton
Study of the religious dimensions of popular culture. Religious institutions' engagement in economic markets; the deployment of religious imagery in the cultural marketplace; consumer culture as a religious space. HU

* AMST 397b / AFAM 251b, Critical Race Theory  Crystal Feimster
Introduction to critical race theory, a radical critique of relations among race, law, and power in U.S. politics and society. Intellectual foundations of the field, with emphasis on African American perspectives; key juridical acts. The centrality of U.S. law in producing social hierarchies of race and racial difference, gender, sexuality, and class. The extension of critical race theory to global analysis of race, immigration, and cultural difference. HU

* AMST 399a / ER&M 359a, Race and Material Culture  Michelle Morgan
Examination of how certain materials and material objects bear on racial formations and how those formations have changed over time; use of material culture in the construction of the racialized human. Themes include people and things, objects and the performance of race, materiality, posthumanism, media and immateriality, and more. HU

Senior Seminars

* AMST 402a / ANTH 302a / FILM 324a / WGSS 380a, Gender and Sexuality in Media and Popular Culture  Laura Waxler and T.L. Cowan
Investigation of visual media and popular culture in the United States and transnationally. Gender, race, class, and sexuality in relation to the production, circulation, consumption, and reception of media culture. Focus on theories of media and the visual. Significant lab component in which students use media technologies to make and illustrate theoretical arguments. HU

* AMST 403a, Introduction to Public Humanities  Ryan Brassieux
Introduction to the various media, topics, debates, and issues framing public humanities. The relationship between knowledge produced in the university and the circulation of ideas among a broader public, including modes of inquiry, interpretation, and presentation. Public history, museum studies, oral and community history, public art, documentary film and photography, public writing and educational outreach, and the socially conscious performing arts. HU

* AMST 405b / AFAM 406b / ENGL 405b, Autobiography in America  Robert Stepto
A study of autobiographical writings from Mary Rowlandson's Indian captivity narrative (1682) to the present. Classic forms such as immigrant, education, and cause narratives; prevailing autobiographical strategies involving place, work, and photographs. Authors include Franklin, Douglass, Jacobs, Antin, Kingston, Uchida, Balakian, Rodriguez, and Bechdel. WR, HU

* AMST 407b / AFAM 380b / HIST 111b, Antebellum America  Edward Rugemer
History of the United States from the Jackson administration through the Civil War. Emphasis on race, slavery, and the coming of the war, with some attention to western expansion. WR, HU

* AMST 409a / FILM 453a, Introduction to Documentary Studies  Zareena Grewal
An introduction to documentary film, photography, and radio for students interested in doing documentary work, as well as for those who simply wish to study the history of the documentary as a cultural form. HU RP

* AMST 411a / FILM 452a, The History of Race in the Early Americas  Greta LaFleur
A broad survey of the history of racial thinking in the Atlantic world from the early modern period through the late nineteenth century. Students will denaturalize the idea that race is synonymous with skin color by turning to the long history of racism and racial thinking in the Atlantic world to illustrate the way that current ideas about what race “is” or means is a profoundly twentieth-century idea. HU

* AMST 422b / ER&M 435b / HIST 151b, Writing Tribal Histories  Kathryn Dudley
An introduction to documentary film, photography, and radio for students interested in doing documentary work, as well as for those who simply wish to study the history of the documentary as a cultural form. HU RP

* AMST 424a / ANTH 426a, Ethnographic Encounters  Kathryn Dudley
Tracking the production of various forms of knowledge in social encounters structured by cultural and ontological differences. Advanced conversation and theoretical reflection on critical questions about the experiential basis for ethnographic analysis, writing, and representation. Exploration of key approaches to intersubjective experience, including phenomenological anthropology, relational psychoanalysis, affect studies, and the new materialisms. Instructor's permission. SO

* AMST 431b / THST 445b, Art and Agitprop since the 1960s  Tavia Nyong'o
Theater and performance as a source of social dissent, protest, and experimentation since the 1960s. Study of how artists and collectives used mass media technologies—radio, television, film & video, and the Internet—to adapt and disseminate their art. The relationship between agitprop and popular culture and whether agitprop belongs more to the left or to the right. WR, HU

* AMST 441b / ER&M 370b / HIST 130b, Indians and the Spanish Borderlands  Ned Blackhawk
The experiences of Native Americans during centuries of relations with North America's first imperial power, Spain. The history and long-term legacies of Spanish colonialism from Florida to California. WR, HU
* AMST 450a / ER&M 430a / WGSS 461a, Islam in the American Imagination  Zareena Grewal
The representation of Muslims in the United States and abroad throughout the twentieth century. The place of Islam in the American imagination; intersections between concerns of race and citizenship in the United States and foreign policies directed toward the Middle East.  SO

* AMST 451a / HIST 174a / RLST 260a, Religion, War, and the Meaning of America  Harry Stout
The relationship between religion and war in American history from colonial beginnings through Vietnam. The religious meanings of Americans at war; the mutually reinforcing influences of nationalism and religion; war as the norm of American national life; the concept of civil religion; biblical and messianic contexts of key U.S. conflicts.  HU

* AMST 457a / HIST 113a, Cultural Capital: New York in the Twentieth Century  Jean-Christophe Agnew
An interdisciplinary study of New York City as a global cultural capital in the twentieth century. Social, political, and economic forces shaping the principal institutions of the city’s patrician, popular, and mass cultures. The formation of identifiably “New York” styles in the arts, architecture, photography, literature, and film. The changing geography of cultural creation, reproduction, and distribution in the city.  WR, HU

* AMST 460b / AFAM 408b / ENGL 443b, African American Poets of the Modern Era  Robert Stepto
The African American practice of poetry between 1900 and 1960, especially of sonnets, ballads, sermonic, and blues poems. Poets include Paul Laurence Dunbar, Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown, Gwendolyn Brooks, Margaret Walker, and Robert Hayden. Class sessions at the Beinecke Library for inspection and discussion of original editions, manuscripts, letters, and other archival material.  HU

* AMST 463a and AMST 464b / EVST 453a / FILM 455a and FILM 456b, Documentary Film Workshop  Charles Musser
A yearlong workshop designed primarily for majors in Film and Media Studies or American Studies who are making documentaries as senior projects. Seniors in other majors admitted as space permits.  RP

* AMST 466b / ENGL 444b, Contemporary Historical Novels  James Berger
Attempts of contemporary American authors to put the complexities of history into written form. Narrative as the privileged mode of historical representation; differences between what is regarded as academic history, popular history, and historical fiction; the influence of power and of the writer’s own historical position on historical narrative; effects of ethnicity, gender, and race on the creation and reception of history; writers’ use of historical fiction to change the ways readers think about the present and the future.  HU

* AMST 469b / EP&E 396b / PLSC 251b, Progressivism: Theory and Practice  Stephen Skowronek
The progressive reform tradition in American politics. The tradition’s conceptual underpinnings, social supports, practical manifestations in policy and in new governmental arrangements, and conservative critics. Emphasis on the origins of progressivism in the early decades of the twentieth century, with attention to latter-day manifestations and to changes in the progressive impulse over time.  SO

* AMST 475b / ENGL 438b, Performing American Literature  Wai Chee Dimock
A broad selection of short stories, poems, and novels, accompanied by class performances, culminating in a term project with a significant writing component. “Performance” includes a wide range of activities including: staging; making digital films and videos; building websites; game design; and creative use of social media. Readings include poetry by Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Yusef Komunyakaa, and Claudia Rankine; fiction by Herman Melville, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Junot Diaz.  WR, HU

* AMST 478a / ENGL 436a, Global Cities, New York, Chicago, San Francisco  Wai Chee Dimock
Explore the vibrant openness of New York, Chicago, and San Francisco through study of geographies invoked, literary genres experimented with, sights and sounds produced, collective pasts recalled, and collective futures intimated. Readings examine Upton Sinclair’s immigrant labor force in *The Jungle*; Teju Cole’s interweaving of Africa, Europe, and America in *Open City*; the detective fiction of Dashiell Hammett; the science fiction of Philip K. Dick; the poetry of Carl Sandburg; and the generational sagas of Sandra Cisneros, Julia Alvarez, Jonathan Safran Foer, and Amy Tan.  WR, HU

* AMST 484b / HSAR 493b / WGSS 462b, Visual Kinship, Families, and Photography  Laura Wexler and Thy Phu
Exploration of the history and practice of family photography from an interdisciplinary perspective. Study of family photographs from the analog to the digital era, from snapshots to portraits, and from instrumental images to art exhibitions. Particular attention to the ways in which family photographs have helped establish gendered and racial hierarchies and examination of recent ways of rethinking these images.  HU

Special Projects and Senior Project

* AMST 471a and AMST 472b, Individual Reading and Research for Juniors and Seniors  Michael Denning
Special projects intended to enable the student to cover material not otherwise offered by the program. The course may be used for research or for directed reading, but in either case a term paper or its equivalent is required as evidence of work done. It is expected that the student will meet regularly with the faculty adviser. To apply for admission, a student should submit a prospectus signed by the faculty adviser to the director of undergraduate studies.

* AMST 491a or b, Senior Project  Staff
Independent research and proseminar on a one-term senior project. For requirements see under “Senior requirement” in the American Studies program description.
* AMST 493a and AMST 494b, Senior Project for the Intensive Major  Christopher Kramaric

Independent research and proseminar on a two-term senior project. For requirements see under “Senior requirement” in the American Studies program description.