Department of American Studies

American Studies at the University of Kansas is an interdisciplinary department whose faculty and students think critically about community, identity, and social justice in American culture, politics, and society. We study the multiple and contested meanings of “American” both nationally and transnationally, in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, class, region, age, and sexuality. To prepare students to engage a diverse and globalized society, we must learn from and about communities who have been too often marginalized in society and in the academy.

Such an inclusive definition of “American” requires an equally capacious understanding of scholarship. Recognizing the critical impact of difference and power on the formation of traditional scholastic disciplines, American Studies embraces research methods that combine, cross, and stretch conventional academic boundaries. We encourage scholars to advance civic discourse at the local, national, and global levels. Through rigorous analysis of historical and current events, encompassing official institutions, social and religious movements, popular and media culture, and other areas, we illuminate the complex formations of American community and identity, both within and beyond US borders.

American Studies produces undergraduate and graduate students who are global citizens and understand the meanings of America and its populations, its cultural and social history and diversities, and its dynamic place among other nation-states. Our undergraduate majors and minors develop practical and intellectual skills that support their careers as advocates and non-profit organizations, marketing and human resources, education, mediation, social services, and the law. Our graduate students go on to varied and successful careers as university faculty members and administrators, as well as staff members and directors of non-profit organizations such as museums and historical societies.

Undergraduate Programs

American studies offers an interdisciplinary undergraduate program in which faculty and students think critically about the many institutional and cultural meanings of America, popular culture, society, and identity. Through studying topics such as film, jazz, literature, visual culture, gender, race, and religion, American studies investigates America in the present and the past, beyond both disciplinary and national boundaries. Given our recognition of the critical impact of difference and power in American life, we insist that a student’s program consider the profound impact of diversity on society and address differential power structures in American life and social relations. Motivated advanced students have the opportunity to work independently on research and service projects.

Graduate Programs

American studies is an interdisciplinary program offering graduate work on society and culture in the United States — past, present, and in global context. It accommodates a variety of individual academic objectives. All students are asked to define 3 concentrations — such as historical periods, conceptual problems, or topical subjects — and to draw on appropriate university resources relating to those areas. Students must demonstrate coherence in their graduate work and be able to show relationships between their concentrations and the wider sociocultural system. To accomplish this, students must develop knowledge (including historical perspective) in the humanities and social sciences.

For a current list of participating faculty members, please visit the department’s website (http://americanstudies.ku.edu/faculty/).

Students who are interested in enrolling in graduate level coursework in the Department of American Studies without formal admission to a graduate program at KU are encouraged to apply for graduate non-degree seeking student status. See the department’s admission webpage (http://americanstudies.ku.edu/non-degree-seeking/) for further details.

Courses

AMS 100. Introduction to American Studies. 3 Hours HT AE41/GE3H / H.
An introduction to the history and key concepts of American Studies.
Students explore major changes in American culture through the critical reading and analysis of primary and secondary source material. Not open to students who have taken AMS 101. LEC.

AMS 101. Introduction to American Studies, Honors. 3 Hours HT AE41/GE3H / H.
An introduction to the history and key concepts of American Studies.
Students explore major changes in American culture through the critical reading and analysis of primary and secondary source material. Not open to students who have taken AMS 100. Prerequisite: Membership in the University Honors Program or approval by the American Studies Program. LEC.

AMS 110. American Identities. 3 Hours SC AE41/GE3S / S.
An interdisciplinary introduction to individual and group identities over time. Students explore theories and methods relating to identity from various perspectives, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, age, religion, and region. Not open to students who have taken AMS 112 or SOC 112. (Same as SOC 110.) LEC.

AMS 112. American Identities, Honors. 3 Hours SC AE41/GE3S / S.
An interdisciplinary introduction to individual and group identities over time. Students explore theories and methods relating to identity from various perspectives, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, age, religion, and region. Not open to students who have taken AMS 110 or SOC 110. (Same as SOC 112.) Prerequisite: Membership in the University Honors Program or approval by the American Studies Program. LEC.

AMS 177. First Year Seminar: ____. 3 Hours GE11 / U.
A limited-enrollment, seminar course for first-time freshmen, addressing current issues in Americana Studies. Course is designed to meet the critical thinking learning outcome of the KU Core. First-Year Seminar topics are coordinated and approved by the Office of First-Year Experience. Prerequisite: First-time freshman status. LEC.

AMS 260. America’s Latinos/Latinas. 3 Hours AE41 / U.
An introduction to the Latino/a population (Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban-Americans, Dominican-Americans, and Central and South Americans) in the US. Students discuss how US and Latin American societies have shaped Latino incorporation into the United States. We also discuss contemporary political, cultural and social issues that pertain to Latinos/as in the US. (Same as SOC 260) LEC.

AMS 290. Religion in American Society. 3 Hours HR AE41/GE3H / H.
A broad introduction to religion in American culture. This class emphasizes the well-established religions with large followings (viz. Judaism, Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism). Some attention is also given to other religions active in America. Other topics covered include the relationship of church and state, religion in ethnic and...
 AMS 310. American Culture, 1600-1876. 3 Hours H.
An examination of the major historical shifts, trends, and conflicts that have shaped the multicultural nature of life in the United States from the initial European settlements to 1876. In addition to tracing developments in literature, architecture, drama, music, and the visual arts, this course will investigate patterns and changes in the popular, domestic, and material culture of everyday life in America. (Same as HIST 310.) Prerequisite: AMS 100 or AMS 110 or H IST 128. LEC.

 AMS 312. American Culture, 1877 to the Present. 3 Hours H.
An examination of the major historical shifts, trends, and conflicts that have shaped the multicultural nature of life in the United States from 1877 to the present. In addition to tracing developments in literature, architecture, drama, music, and the visual arts, this course will investigate patterns and changes in the popular, domestic, and material culture of everyday life in America. (Same as HIST 312.) LEC.

 AMS 316. Ministers and Magicians: Black Religions from Slavery to the Present. 3 Hours AE41 / H.
This course examines the history and diversity of African American religious expression from slavery until the present, emphasizing both mainstream and alternative faiths. It covers the religious world views of enslaved Africans, and examines faiths inside and outside of Christianity. Topics may include: independent black churches, magical practices, the Holiness and Pentecostal movements, black Islam, religious freemasonry, and esoteric faiths. The class emphasizes the influence of gender, class, race, migration, and urbanization on black religion. (Same as AAAS 316 and HIST 316.) LEC.

 AMS 317. African American Women: Colonial Era to the Present. 3 Hours H.
This interdisciplinary course covers the history of African American women, beginning in West and Central Africa, extending across the Middle Passage into the Americas, and stretching through enslavement and freedom into the 21st century. The readings cover their experiences through secondary and tertiary source materials, as well as autobiographies and letters, plays and music, and poems, novels, and speeches. (Same as AAAS 317, HIST 317, and WGSS 317.) LEC.

 AMS 320. Border Patrolled States. 3 Hours H.
Examines the politics of immigrant, citizenship and space through official, intellectual and popular responses to the growth of Latino/a populations in the U.S. and to international migration to and from Mexico and Central America. Topics include consideration of how responses to immigration articulate racialized and culturally specific (including linguistic and religious) concepts of the nation, and how questions of citizenship and residency dovetail with issues of community "voice", public space, and diverse notions of "security". LEC.

 AMS 323. Sex in History. 3 Hours HT / H.
This course offers a survey of the history of human sexuality in the Western world; the second half of the semester emphasizes the American experience. Topics for consideration may include: masturbation, pornography, sex work, homosexuality, bisexuality, "perversions" (paraphilias), sex and marriage, racialized sexualities, sexual violence, trans* identities and experiences, sexuality and national identities, and colonialized sexualities. The course demonstrates the various ways in which sex, specifically the social and political meanings attributed to physical acts, changes over time and shapes human experiences and interactions far beyond the bedroom. (Same as HUM 332, HIST 332 and WGSS 311.) LEC.

 AMS 324. Being Deviant in America. 3 Hours AE41 / S.
In this course students will study traits, conditions, actions, and behaviors that violate social norms and elicit negative societal reactions. This includes the social, cultural, and individual factors that explain deviance; motivations behind deviant behavior; and efforts by society to control deviants. In short, you will undertake a sociological examination of those on the margins of society and societal efforts to "deal with" them. (Same as SOC 324.) LEC.

 AMS 330. American Society. 3 Hours H.
The social structure and organization of American society with special reference to recent social changes. (Same as SOC 330.) Prerequisite: An introductory course in sociology or American studies. LEC.

 AMS 332. The United States in Global Context. 3 Hours AE42 / S.
Examines the influence abroad of US culture, policies and practices and the impact of other countries on US culture, society, and politics. Among the topics that may be examined are race, ethnicity, colonialism, imperialism, migration, technology, communications and media, popular culture, language, health, domestic and transnational organizations, as well as economic, political, religious, military and educational institutions. (Same as SOC 332.) LEC.

 AMS 340. Black Leadership. 3 Hours H/W.
The course focuses on the concept of leadership and on black leadership in the United States: an in-depth analysis of selected case studies on black leaders, both historical and contemporary. Some attention will be given to the dispersion of Africans into the Americas and the leadership that emerged, conditioned both by environmental factors and the psychology engendered by the system of slavery. Selected successful black leaders will be invited to visit the class from time to time. (Same as AAAS 330.) LEC.

 AMS 344. Case Study in American Studies: ____. 3 Hours H.
This course examines in depth a specific American studies or theme. LEC.

 AMS 345. Cultural Studies. 3 Hours H.
Students gain awareness of major scholars and "schools" that have pursued critical, interdisciplinary research or cultural processes and products in the field of American Studies. Topics may include cultural materialism, semiotics, nationalism, ethnic/racial identity, gender and sexuality, cultural politics, mass media, public spheres, social space and place, commodity consumption, music, and popular culture. LEC.

 AMS 360. Theory and Method. 3 Hours H.
An introduction through a topical theme to theories and methods currently used in American Studies. Prerequisite: AMS 100, AMS 110 and AMS 332 or their equivalent, or consent of instructor. LEC.

 AMS 390. Geography of the United States and Canada. 3 Hours S.
A study of the different physical, economic, and cultural settings in the United States and Canada which form the basis for the various forms of livelihood. Emphasis on the United States. (Same as GEOG 390.) Prerequisite: An introductory geography course, or background in United States or Canadian history, social science, or culture, or consent of instructor. LEC.

 AMS 494. Topics in: ____. 1-4 Hours H.
Interdisciplinary study of selected aspects of American society or culture or of the American experience. LEC.

 AMS 496. Social Justice Perspectives and Experiences. 3 Hours S.
An experiential learning course in which students select and participate in public/civic engagement activities in a selected area undertaken in consultation with and under the direction of a faculty member. Students meet regularly to discuss and evaluate their field experiences and
to collectively problem solve identified challenges to the justice work with which they are engaged. Students produce a final project on the experience that integrates the engagement experience and academic materials. Prerequisite: AMS 100 and AMS 110. LEC.

AMS 510. History of American Women--Colonial Times to 1870. 3 Hours AE41 / H.
A survey of women's roles as housewives, mothers, consumers, workers, and citizens in pre-industrial, commercial, and early industrial America. (Same as HIST 530 and WGSS 510.) LEC.

AMS 511. History of American Women--1870 to Present. 3 Hours AE41 / H.
A survey of women's history in the United States that will include radical and reform movements, the impact of war and depression, professionalization, immigration, women's work and the biographies of leading figures in women's history. (Same as HIST 531 and WGSS 511.) LEC.

AMS 512. History of Women and Work in Comparative Perspective. 3 Hours H.
This course explores the connection between historical changes in the labor process and the occupational choices available to women in different countries. Through discussion and analyses of texts, students will evaluate the construction of a gendered division of work as shaped over time by economic, cultural, and political forces. The chronological and geographical focus may vary depending on the instructor. (Same as HIST 532 and WGSS 512.) LEC.

AMS 515. American Women and World War II. 3 Hours H.
Examines histories of U.S. women during World War II through an interdisciplinary approach that draws on popular culture and oral history. Utilizes theories and methods of oral history and examines representations of women such as Rosie the Riveter, GI Jane and the Sweetheart at Home. Topics include the consumption of images, the function of images in war and the relationship between popular culture and war. LEC.

AMS 520. Topics in Latino Studies: ______. 3 Hours U.
The study of special topics in Latino Studies. Students may repeat this course when different topics are offered. LEC.

AMS 522. American Racial and Ethnic Relations. 3 Hours S.
Analysis of the basic sociological concepts that apply to majority-minority relations; with special emphasis on racial and ethnic interaction in the United States. (Same as SOC 522.) Prerequisite: A distribution course in sociology or American studies. LEC.

AMS 529. Race and the American Theatre. 3 Hours U.
The representation(s) of race in significant texts and performance styles in American theatre analyzed according to political ideologies, dramatic movements and the impact of these factors on the representation of the "other" in the theatre. (Same as AAAS 585 and THR 529.) LEC.

AMS 534. Global Ethnic and Racial Relations. 3 Hours NW / S.
An examination of constructions of race and ethnicity around the world. Emphasis is on the social, political, historical, cultural and economic factors that lead to the creation of ethnic and racial identities, ethnic conflict and accommodation, ethnic movements, and ethnic political organization. Racial and ethnic relations in the U.S. are compared with other countries. Major focus is placed on ethnicity in Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and/or the Middle East. (Same as AAAS 510 and SOC 534.) LEC.

AMS 536. Ethnicity in the United States: ______. 3 Hours S.
An examination of the history, sociology, and culture of U.S. ethnic categories (e.g., American Indians, Latinos, Asian Americans, Jewish Americans, Irish Americans). The specific group studied varies from semester to semester. Course may be repeated for credit. (Same as SOC 536.) Prerequisite: A principal course in American Studies, Sociology, or Anthropology, or permission of instructor. LEC.

AMS 550. Research Seminar in: ______. 3 Hours AE61 / H.
A seminar exploring a specific American studies theme. A research paper or equivalent project is required. Prerequisite: AMS 360 (a grade of C or better is recommended) or consent of instructor. Cannot be taken concurrently with AMS 551, AMS 552 or AMS 553. LEC.

AMS 551. Research Project in American Studies. 3 Hours AE61 / H.
Independent research on a selected topic under the direction of a faculty member. Students write an original research paper or complete an equivalent project in another medium, grounded in primary as well as secondary sources. Prerequisite: AMS 550 or consent of instructor. RSH.

AMS 552. Public Service in American Studies. 3 Hours AE61 / H.
Independent public service in a selected area undertaken in consultation with and under the direction of a faculty member. Students produce a final written project on the experience that integrates the public service experience and academic materials, or complete an equivalent project in another medium. Prerequisite: AMS 550 or consent of instructor. FLI.

AMS 553. Honors in American Studies. 3 Hours AE61 / H.
Honors equivalent of AMS 551. May be taken twice for credit. Three hours of AMS 553 may be substituted for a course in an appropriate category in the American Studies major. Prerequisite: AMS 550, eligibility for departmental honors, or consent of instructor. RSH.

AMS 554. Advanced Topics in American Literature to 1865: ______. 3 Hours H.
Study of American literary works before 1865. Topics may focus on a particular genre, theme, topic, historical period, author, or group of authors. May be repeated for credit as the topic changes. (Same as ENGL 576.) Prerequisite: Prior completion of at least one 300- or 400-level English course. LEC.

AMS 555. Advanced Topics in American Literature Since 1865: ______. 3 Hours H.
Study of American literary works after 1865. Topics may focus on a particular genre, theme, topic, historical period, author, or group of authors. May be repeated for credit as the topic changes. (Same as ENGL 577.) Prerequisite: Prior completion of at least one 300- or 400-level English course. LEC.

AMS 556. Gender, Culture, and Migration. 3 Hours S.
This course examines the gendered experiences of transnational migration through a combination of ethnography, literature, film, and news media. How do different people experience the desire to migrate, the logistics of movement, and life in a faraway place? How does mobility shape ideas of family, community, and nation? How do class, race, sexuality, and legal status also inflect these experiences, especially in rendering certain groups vulnerable to abuse and exploitation? Attention will also be paid to gendered thinking against migration, including the ways gender and sexuality inflect xenophobia, border enforcement, refugee recognition, deportation policy, and contemporary political debates. (Same as GIST 565 and WGSS 565.) Prerequisite: Any 100 level AAAS course, WGSS 101, AMS 100, AMS 110, or GIS 220. LEC.

AMS 576. Cultural Geography of the United States. 3 Hours S.
Distributions of major culture elements including folk architecture, religion, dialect, foodways, and political behavior are systematically studied from a predominantly historical perspective. These discussions are followed by a survey of the major culture regions in America. Although not absolutely necessary, familiarity with concepts treated in any of the following courses
would be helpful: AMS 100, AMS 110, ANTH 108, ANTH 308, GEOG 102, or GEOG 390. (Same as GEOG 576.) LEC.

AMS 580. American Art. 3 Hours H.
A survey of American painting, sculpture, and architecture from colonial to recent times. (Same as HA 570.) Prerequisite: HA 100, HA 151, or the equivalent, or consent of instructor. LEC.

AMS 629. Sociology of Sport. 3 Hours S.
Examination of organized sport as a social institution and its relation to other social institutions (e.g., political, economic, educational, and religious), with special emphasis on American society. Analysis of the social correlates of sports participation and a consideration of the role of sport in social change. (Same as SOC 629). Prerequisite: A principal course in American studies or sociology, or consent of instructor. LEC.

AMS 650. Jazz and American Culture. 3 Hours H.
This course considers cultural and social histories of jazz, from the 1920s through the present day, as sites for exploring ideological struggles over such fields as race, class, gender, sexuality, democracy, capitalism, freedom, community, Americanness, and globalization in the U.S. The course will explore such questions as the following: What was called jazz at what times and places? What did it mean to whom? Who played it? Who wrote about it? Who listened to it? Who danced to it? How did it change over time? Who produced it? How did it come to be? How did it survive? What did all of these practices mean to participants? The course will examine struggles over social meanings in the U.S. through a study of jazz performance, labor, representation, marketing, consumption, censorship, and historiography. Prerequisite: A course in American studies, American history, or consent of instructor. (Same as WGSS 652.) LEC.

AMS 694. Directed Readings. 1-4 Hours H.
Consent of instructor is required. IND.

AMS 696. Studies in: _____, 3 Hours H.
Interdisciplinary study of different aspects of the American experience in different semesters. LEC.

AMS 700. Introduction to Museum Exhibits. 3 Hours.
This course will consider the role of exhibits as an integrated part of museum collection management, research, and public service. Lecture and discussion will focus on issues involved in planning and producing museum exhibits. Laboratory exercises will provide first hand experience with basic preparation techniques. Emphasis will be placed on the management of an exhibit program in both large and small museums in the major disciplines. (Same as BIOL 787, GEOL 781, HIST 723, and MUSE 703.) Prerequisite: Museum Studies student, Indigenous Nations Studies student, or consent of instructor. LEC.

AMS 714. Conservation Principles and Practices. 3 Hours.
This course will acquaint the future museum professional with problems in conserving all types of collections. Philosophical and ethical approaches will be discussed, as well as the changing practices regarding conservation techniques. Emphasis will be placed on detection and identification of causes of deterioration in objects made of organic and inorganic materials, and how these problems can be remedied. Storage and care of objects will also be considered. (Same as BIOL 700, GEOL 780, HIST 722 and MUSE 706.) Prerequisite: Museum Studies student, Indigenous Nations Studies student, or consent of instructor. LEC.

AMS 720. The Nature of Museums. 3 Hours.
The purpose of this course is to provide an overview of the kinds of museums, their various missions, and their characteristics and potentials as research, education, and public service institutions responsible for collections of natural and cultural objects. (Same as BIOL 788, GEOL 782, HIST 720, and MUSE 702.) Prerequisite: Museum Studies student, Indigenous Nations Studies student, or consent of instructor. LEC.

AMS 730. Introduction to Collections Management and Utilization. 3 Hours.
This course examines the roles collections play in fulfilling a museum's mission; the obligations ownership/preservation of collections materials create for a museum; and the policies, practices, and professional standards that museums are required to put in place. The course will cover utilization of collections for research, education, and public engagement; address how that utilization informs the need for and structure of collections policies, and introduce the basic practices of professional collections management. (Same as ANTH 798, BIOL 798, GEOL 785, HIST 725, and MUSE 704.) Prerequisite: Museum Studies student, Indigenous Nations Studies student, or consent of instructor. LEC.

AMS 731. Museum Management. 3 Hours.
Lecture, discussion, and laboratory exercises on the nature of museums as organizations; accounting, budget cycles, personnel management, and related topics will be presented using, as appropriate, case studies and a simulated museum organization model. (Same as BIOL 785, GEOL 783, HIST 728, and MUSE 701.) Prerequisite: Museum Studies student, Indigenous Nations Studies student, or consent of instructor. LEC.

AMS 737. Music in America. 3 Hours.
A survey of historical developments from the Pilgrims to the present. (Same as MUSC 759.) Prerequisite: One course in the field of music history and literature or consent of instructor. LEC.

AMS 767. Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Gerontology and Aging. 3 Hours.
A seminar coordinated by the Gerontology Program. The seminar explores essential areas of gerontology for researchers and practitioners, providing a multidisciplinary (biology, health services, behavioral and social sciences, human services) perspective on aging. The seminar surveys contemporary basic and applied research, service programs, and policy and management issues in gerontology. (Same as ABSC 787, COMS 787, PSYC 787, and SOC 767.) LEC.

AMS 787. Field Work. 1-12 Hours.
Supervised field research in aspects of American civilization. Prerequisite: Consent of instructor. FLD.

AMS 797. Introduction to Museum Public Education. 3 Hours.
Consideration of the goals of an institution's public education services, developing programs, identifying potential audiences, developing audiences, and funding. Workshops and demonstrations are designed for students to gain practical experience working with various programs and developing model programs. (Same as BIOL 784, GEOL 784, HIST 721, and MUSE 705.) Prerequisite: Museum Studies student, Indigenous Nations Studies student, or consent of instructor. LEC.

AMS 799. Museum Internship. 1-6 Hours.
Provides directed, practical experience in research, collection, care, and management, public education, and exhibits with emphasis on the particular requirements of each student. Graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. (Same as ANTH 799, HIST 723, and MUSE 799.) INT.

AMS 801. Introduction to American Studies. 3 Hours.
An introduction to the field of American Studies through an examination of some of the classic and innovative works, issues, debates, and controversies in the history and the literature of American Studies. LEC.

AMS 802. Theorizing America. 3 Hours.
Drawing from a broad range of perspectives (e.g., cultural theory, social theory, literary theory, etc.), this course will introduce students to current
of the cooperating departments, but in which there is a member of the graduate faculty competent and willing to direct a program of study. RSH.

AMS 998. Seminar in: _____ 3 Hours.
Topics vary from semester to semester. Graduate students are consulted in selecting topics. LEC.

AMS 999. Dissertation. 1-12 Hours.
Dissertation Credit. Graded on a satisfactory progress/limited progress/no progress basis. THE.