

# American Studies Spring 2017 Course Booklet

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UNIVERSITY  
OF MIAMI



## American Studies

The Program in American Studies at the University of Miami fosters the interdisciplinary study of American culture and society, and explores the place of the United States in an increasingly interconnected world. Our faculty come from a wide range of fields, including history, literature, religion, art, philosophy, law, music, ethnic studies, architecture, sociology, communications, and education. What unites them is the commitment to examining the U.S. from multiple perspectives, highlighting the diversity of people, cultures, and experiences that have shaped the past and present United States. The Program places analysis of globalization at its center, and offers a hemispheric perspective that allows students and faculty to explore interests in the United States, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Pacific Rim, and other border crossings.

The undergraduate curriculum in American Studies encourages students to bridge the divide between disciplines by examining specific themes and topics in an engaging, dynamic, interdisciplinary manner. By exposing students to courses that place questions of cultural diversity, regional difference, ethnic and racial identity, gender and sexuality, class dynamics, and popular culture at the forefront of intellectual investigation, the **Program in American Studies** enables them to situate their own experiences in a wider context. It also exposes them to a multiplicity of perspectives that inform our understanding of the United States and its place in a global society. The Program strongly encourages its majors to study abroad, and faculty members help students plan their curriculum to make that option feasible.

### **MAJOR in American Studies** (30 credits)

1. Introduction to American Studies (**AMS 101**). Specific topics for this course may change annually; its purpose will be to acquaint beginning students with the approaches and areas of inquiry common to the field.
2. **AMS 310**: The U.S., Transnationalism, and Globalization.
3. At least two advanced seminars in American Studies at the 300-level or above.
4. At least one course in American history and at least one course in American literature.

Three courses, chosen in consultation with an American Studies advisor, in a specialized area of American Studies (200 level or higher). Students may work in areas including, but not limited to, ethnic studies, Caribbean Studies, Latino/a Studies, environmental studies, communication studies, women's literature, urban studies, African American studies, religious studies and material culture studies.

Students must take courses from at least three different departments in order to fulfill the requirements for the major.

**AMS 501**: Senior Project. In addition, all majors must complete AMS 501: *Senior Project*. This capstone course can take the form of an individual research project or an internship at a local cultural or civic institution. For the research option, students will identify an appropriate faculty member to supervise and grade the project, and then obtain approval from the program director before proceeding with the project. The student must produce a substantial written report or research paper, the format of which will be determined by the faculty member and student in consultation with the program director. For the internship option, students will partner with any

number of local institutions and produce a creative and/or scholarly project for evaluation. The internship will be arranged through the program director, in consultation with the Butler Center. The final product will be evaluated by the program director.

American Studies majors with a cumulative GPA of at least 3.5 in AMS courses and an overall GPA of at least 3.0 may earn departmental honors by completing AMS 505: Honors Thesis. Candidates for departmental honors are responsible for finding a faculty member to serve as thesis advisor. Students then must complete a thesis proposal of approximately 500 words that must be approved by the thesis advisor and the program director. The format and length of the thesis will vary according to the nature of the project. Students would take AMS 501 in the fall semester of the senior year and AMS 505 in the spring to complete the honors thesis.

**MINOR in American Studies (15 credits)**

1. Introduction to American Studies (**AMS 101**).
  2. **AMS 310**: The U.S., Transnationalism, and Globalization
  3. At least one course in American history or American literature.
  4. Advanced seminar in American Studies (**300-level or higher**).
- Five electives (300 level or higher).

For an advising appointment, please contact the Program Director.

# Spring 2017

## **AMS 101- Intro to American Studies**

Section G: MWF 2:30pm-3:20pm

Instructor: Roxane Pickens

### **"Forming Identities in American Culture"**

This course is structured as an introduction to the key ideas and methods in the field of American Studies, particularly American cultural studies. To accomplish this, we will take a thematic approach, looking at the theory and practice of identity formations and how they manifest in American life. To imagine one's identity in relation to the imagined space of the United States is an effort that is at once fraught and yet full of possibilities. This course will explore those problems and possibilities in identity formation through a variety of written and visual texts from the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. We will endeavor through the theme of identity to learn about American culture in a local and global context, and about the processes of studying American culture. Coursework will include readings, class discussions, group presentations, and papers.

## **AMS 101- Intro to American Studies**

Section O: MWF 11:15am-12:05pm

Instructor: Marta Gierczyk

"The purpose of this course is to explore significant issues in American cities in a global frame. Topics will include immigration, race, social activism, practices of urban renewal and anti-gentrification movements. Although we will attend to several metropolitan spaces, there will be a primary focus on New York City and Miami. Our multidisciplinary approach will draw from popular cultural representations as well as history, literature, film, and photography. By engaging with theories and practices of local and digital activist communities, we will develop a specialized vocabulary for explaining how issues of race, opportunity, and metropolitan space are connected. In what ways do cities figure as a locus of multiethnic experience? Students will also engage with the city around them to consider local examples of cultural and political expression."

## **AMS 301 Topics in American Studies**

Section C: MWF 10:10am-11:00am

Instructor: Tim Watson

*Literature of the Americas*

McNULTY: I gotta ask you: if every time Snot Boogie would grab the money and run away, why'd you even let him in the game? SNOT BOOGIE'S FRIEND: What? McNULTY: If Snot Boogie stole the money, why'd you let him play? SNOT BOOGIE'S FRIEND: Got to. It's America, man. *The Wire*, season 1, episode 1 (2002)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYgKmOJT\\_gM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYgKmOJT_gM)

How can we find out and try to understand the unwritten rules that underlie customs and ways of living in the many places called “America”? There are the legal documents, the bureaucratic reports, the written regulations, and then there are the other ways of organizing and structuring everyday life. In the indelible words of vigilante philosopher Omar Little, “The game is out there, and it’s either play, or be played.” This class will investigate the idea that literature, film, and television are powerful ways to understand the unwritten rules of everyday life in the Americas: how we play, how we’re played. We will be looking at the big issues—slavery and freedom, crime and punishment, gender and sexuality—but we will be looking at them through lenses that will always take us back to individual and local lives and examples. Texts will come from across the Americas, from the sixteenth century to the present. The class will be discussion-based, with opportunities for you to think, talk, write, and present your ideas in an intensive but supportive classroom setting. Instructor provides extensive feedback on written work and opportunities for revision, so this class is for you if you want to continue working on your writing.

*Co-Listed ENG 261*

### ***AMS 301 Topics in American Studies***

Section K: MW 6:25pm-7:40pm

Instructor: Aldo Regalado

#### ***Comics in America***

This course invites students to explore, examine and otherwise engage the historical development, cultural significance, aesthetic characteristics and cognitive dimensions of sequential art in the United States. The course aims to understand the unique and historically evolving ways in which comic strips, comic books, and graphic novels inform American society and culture, with emphasis placed on how they engaged (and continue to engage) American notions of race, class, gender and nationalism in the context of an emergent modernity.

### ***AMS 301 Topics in American Studies***

Instructor: Ta-Shana Taylor

Section P: TR 11:00am-12:15pm

#### ***Natural Disasters***

This course will explore the causes, effects, and societal response to disasters. We will use popular media as a starting point for discussions and a learning tool for analyzing the characteristics and hazards of disasters. Using segments of disaster films in conjunction with lectures on the scientific principles of disasters, we can identify the causes, consequences, public perceptions of natural hazards, and appropriate safety responses. We will look at a variety of

natural hazards and disasters including earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, storms, and climate change.

*Co-listed with GSC 107*

### **AMS 321- Topics in American Studies: History**

Instructor: Donald Spivey

Section O: TR 9:30am-10:45am

#### ***History of The United States, II***

This hard-hitting survey course focuses on exactly what is promised: “The making and breaking of modern America.” HIS 102 has traditionally been used to acquaint the student with the history of the United States from 1877 to the present. This semester we will do that and far more. We will begin by exploring the components that made modern America and fostered the American Dream. Following that, we will engage in a sustained, critical examination of what went wrong as “made in America” became a relic of a bygone era and the middle class continues to decline. Throughout the course, in lectures and discussions, we will dare to wrestle with the fierce urgency of now and the pressing question: Where do we go from here? The student’s grade for the course will be based on a midterm examination (50%) and a final examination (50%) both based upon lectures, readings, and documentaries. \*A service-learning project may be done in lieu of the midterm examination or for extra credit. This option does not alter the student’s responsibility to do all of the required reading. More on this option in class. Participation in class discussion of required readings will count for extra credit.

*Co-listed with HIS 102*

### **AMS 321 Topics in American Studies: History**

Instructor: Donald Spivey

Section O: TR 12:30pm-3:45pm

#### ***History of the United States II***

This hard-hitting survey course focuses on exactly what is promised: “The making and breaking of modern America.” HIS 102 has traditionally been used to acquaint the student with the history of the United States from 1877 to the present. This semester we will do that and far more. We will begin by exploring the components that made modern America and fostered the American Dream. Following that, we will engage in a sustained, critical examination of what went wrong as “made in America” became a relic of a bygone era and the middle class continues to decline. Throughout the course, in lectures and discussions, we will dare to wrestle with the fierce urgency of now and the pressing question: Where do we go from here? The student’s grade for the course will be based on a midterm examination (50%) and a final examination (50%) both based upon lectures, readings, and documentaries. \*A service-learning project may be done in lieu of the midterm examination or for extra credit. This option does not alter the student’s responsibility to do all of the required reading. More on this option in class. Participation in class discussion of required readings will count for extra credit.

*Co-listed with HIS 201*

### **AMS 321 Topics in American Studies: History**

Instructor: Donald Spivey

Section R: TR 12:30pm-3:45pm

#### ***Sports in American History***

In this course we will explore the history of the black athlete in the United States utilizing a lecture/discussion format. The class will devote considerable attention to the linkages between sport, culture, politics, business, and the long struggle of people of African descent to obtain equality in America. Our approach shall be analytical and interpretive rather than a mere recounting of who did what, where, and when in a particular field of athletics. The focus shall be on the impact of athletes and their sport. What difference has sport meant to the African-American community and society at large? The student's grade for the course will be based on four book analyses of three pages each (12.5% each; 50%); participation in class discussion of required readings will count for extra credit; no midterm examination; a comprehensive in-class essay final examination (50%) based upon lectures, documentaries, and readings. \*A service-learning project may be done in lieu of two (2) of the book analyses or for extra credit. This option does not alter the student's responsibility to do all of the required reading. More on this option in class.

*Co-Listed with HIS377*

### **AMS 322 Topics in American Studies: Literature**

Instructor: Lindsey Thomas

Section H: MW 3:35pm-4:50pm

#### ***What is contemporary about contemporary literature?***

What does it mean to be contemporary? Does the contemporary refer only to the present, or does it also have a history and a future? Does it describe a specific temporal period (post-2000? post-1989? post-WWII?), or an attitude about time (being decidedly "of one's moment")? And why, in this contemporary moment, are we so captivated by these questions about the very nature of "our contemporary moment" itself? We will explore these questions and more in this course by reading some of the best works of contemporary US literature published in the past 10 years. Although all of these works are very contemporary, they also all take place in different times or are about the experience of different times, forcing us to confront what we mean by the word "contemporary," and why we mean it. We will read genres as varied as historical fiction, science fiction, speculative fiction, and "experimental" fiction; we will discuss issues as varied as time travel, apocalypse, war, slavery, racism, visual art and aesthetics, and political revolution. In addition to short pieces of literary and cultural criticism about contemporariness, class readings will include fiction and poetry by Cathy Park Hong, Rachel Kushner, Ben Lerner, Emily St. John Mandel, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Colson Whitehead, and Charles Yu. Assignments will include one short literary analysis; a review of a contemporary work of literature; one paper; and a final exam. Must be taken as ENG 380 for English credit.

*Co-Listed with ENG380*

**AMS324: Topics in American Studies: Religion**

Instructor: Henry Green

Section UV: Tu 6:25pm-9:05pm

***Hollywood and Popular Culture: The American Jewish Experience***

Analysis and interpretation of the image of the Jew and the Jewish experience in American cinema, with emphasis on how the experience and attitudes of Americans in general and the American Jewish community in particular have been reflected on the screen from the pre-World War II period until the present and on the tension between maintaining an ethnic identity and assimilating.

*Co-Listed with REL334 & JUS 360*

**AMS327: Topics in American Studies: Film**

Instructor: Catherine Judd

Section Q: TR 6:25pm-9:05pm

***L.A. Film Noir: Dark Visions***

In this course we will be looking at twelve classic Los Angeles Noir films and one 1960s homage to L. A. Noir— Tony Richardson’s comic masterpiece *The Loved One*. New York City and Los Angeles are the two most important locales in the American Film Noir tradition of the 1940s and 1950s, closely followed by San Francisco and Chicago, and each one of these four cities imparts a very different sensibility to the films shot in these distinct locations. Chicago and New York are more entirely urban and therefore generate a powerfully claustrophobic sense of a gritty “concrete jungle” with their uniform and seemingly endless sidewalks, straight, flat streets, and towering skyscrapers (see, for example, Stanley Kubrick’s 1957 *Killer’s Kiss*). The two California cities are less insistently urban than their eastern counterparts as they integrate nature, suburbia, and urbanism. Los Angeles lacks San Francisco’s natural grandeur nor does it contain the huge iron bridges, elevated tracks, or skyscrapers that characterize New York and Chicago. It is more diffuse, sprawling, and non-descript, and its very blandness makes it the most sinister Noir city of them all. Films include *Murder, My Sweet* 1944; *Double Indemnity* 1944; *Detour* 1945; *The Big Sleep* 1946; *The Black Angel* 1946; *White Heat* 1949; *Criss Cross* 1949; *Sunset Boulevard* 1950; *The Breaking Point* 1950; *The Prowler* 1951; *Kiss Me Deadly* 1955; *Touch of Evil* 1958; *The Loved One* 1964. I look forward to our cinematic journey through the dark streets, hills, and nightclubs of the “City of Lost Angels.”

*Co-Listed with ENG 210*



### **AMS 339 Topics in American Studies: Urban**

Instructor: Donette Francis

Section E: MWF 12:20pm-1:10pm

#### ***Housing Black Literary Imagination***

Where one lives determines quality of life conditions such as schools, employment, services and food, hence homeownership has been a defining feature of the American Dream. Given the legacy of slavery, the politics of homeownership has been central to imaginings of Black freedom in the Americas. This course examines classic African American & Caribbean narratives that address issues of Black housing (sharecropping, farming, urban tenements and suburban houses) for what they suggest about Black mobility or immobility, security and surveillance, and the perils and promise of the quest for home. Key themes: vulnerable cities, racial segregation, redlining, subprime lending, gentrification, and the black middle-class. While the classic black housing narratives

*Co-Listed with ENG396 and AAS 290*

### **AMS 350 History and Culture in South Florida**

Instructor: Jeff Donnelly

Section 01: W 3:00pm-5:30pm

#### ***From Swamp to Swamped***

Using the "city as school" methodology, the course surveys library and online resources about Florida and Miami and links them with explorations of the "hands-on" learning opportunities in the Miami area. Guest speakers and field trips will ensure engagement with today's South Florida; discussions and student blogs will provide active learning. The goal of the course is to pose significant questions about the culture, politics, and economics of contemporary Florida and to use this vibrant and unique regional history to shape and further debate about creative answers to contemporary issues. For example: does the Florida experience provide useful direction for economic revitalization in other places? The course will serve as an introduction to Florida and the Miami metropolitan area for some and provide indigenous Miamians and Floridians with new ways to think about their home and its future.

*Co-listed with HIS 381 01*

### **AMS 401 Seminar in American Studies**

Instructor: Joel Nickels

Section G: MWF 2:30pm-3:20

#### ***American Literature from 1915-1945***

In this course we will examine novelists such as Ernest Hemingway, Jean Toomer, William Faulkner and Djuna Barnes and poets such as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Muriel Rukeyser, Langston Hughes and William Carlos Williams. We will focus on the ways these writers

signaled their alienation from the socio-political realities of America in the historical period following World War I. We will also examine the visions of social redemption these authors attempted to evolve in response to the traumas of the war and its underlying causes. Crucial to our investigations will be the relationship of literary form to historical fact. Why was stylistic innovation so central to modernist writing, and how did literary “newness” relate to the accelerated pace of industrial production and social life in the early twentieth century? We will also be investigating modernism’s ideas about the human psyche and the ways in which these ideas were impacted by the mass displacements, mobilizations and conflicts of the early twentieth century. Texts: Works may include: Jean Toomer, *Cane*; Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*; William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*; Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood*; and selected poems by T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Muriel Rukeyser, Langston Hughes and William Carlos Williams.

### **AMS 401 Seminar in American Studies**

Instructor: Joseph Alkana

Section : TR 9:30pm-10:45pm

#### ***American Literature from 1800-1865***

In 1837 Ralph Waldo Emerson exhorted his contemporaries to awaken "the sluggard intellect of this continent," and American writers responded by creating a national literature that made distinctive demands of readers. In this course, we will discuss these demands, such as attention to the natural environment, moral implications of the contemporary social order, and the kinds of lived experience that resist rational categorization. Requirements will include brief writing assignments, a longer (8-10 page) essay, and a final essay examination. Texts: Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*; James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*; Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*; *Classic Slave Narratives*, ed. Henry Louis Gates In addition, a number of works will be posted on Blackboard. These will include essays by Emerson, Rebecca Harding Davis’s novella “Life in the Iron Mills,” excerpts from longer works by Margaret Fuller and Harriet Beecher Stowe, stories by Edgar Allan Poe and Herman Melville, and chapters from Sigmund Freud’s *The Uncanny*.

*Co-Listed with ENG482*

### **AMS 499 Independent Study**

Instructor: Donette Francis

Section 01: ARRANGED

### **AMS 501 Senior Project**

Instructor: Donette Francis

Section 01: ARRANGED