American Studies

Professor: Boyer Lewis (Director)

The concentration in American studies offers an interdisciplinary approach to the study of American culture. The concentration provides an excellent background for a wide variety of pursuits. Students will take six courses focusing on American institutions in fine arts, history, literature, music, political science, psychology, sociology, and religion. The concentration also offers a focus on Native American and African American Studies.

Requirements for the Concentration in American Studies

Number of Units
Six units are required.

Required Courses
One American History course: AMST/HIST 110 or 111
One American Literature course: AMST/ENGL 269, 270, 275, or 276

Core Courses
Four additional courses from at least two of the following different categories:

History
AMST/HIST 110 History of the US I
AMST/HIST 111 History of the US II
HIST 200 Colonial America
HIST 203 Revolutionary America
HIST 206 Culture and Society in Victorian America
HIST 209 Post World War II America
HIST 211 Native American History
HIST 212 American Environmental History
HIST 214 African American History: Slavery and Resistance
HIST 215 African American History: Civil War to Civil Rights
HIST 217 History of Leisure and Recreation in America
HIST 218 The American Jewish Experience
HIST 220 American Women's History to 1870
HIST 221 American Women's History since 1870
HIST 224 Exceptional America?

Literature and Fine Arts
AMST/ENGL 269 New World Narratives: American Literature 1500-1790
AMST/ENGL 270 Reform and Renaissance: U.S. Literature 1790-1865
AMST/ENGL 275 American Realisms: United States Literature 1865-1914
AMST/ENGL 276 Modernism and Postmodernism: United States Literature 1914-Present
ARTX 224 20th-Century Art
ENGL 220 African-American Literature
ENGL 222 American Indian Literatures
ENGL 230 Studies in U.S. Ethnic Literature
ENGL 260 Studies in Film (depending on topic)
ENGL 310 Constructing Blackness
ENGL 323 Chicana/o Literature
ENGL 435 Advanced Literary Studies
ENGL/SEMN 495 Building the Archive: Baldwin & His Legacy
Students interested in Native American Studies should take: ENGL 222, HIST 200 and 211, and RELG 120. Students interested in African American Studies should take: ANSO 236, ENGL 220, 310, and 495, HIST 213 and 215, MUSC 300, POLS 229, RELG 221, and THEA 155, among other offerings.

Other courses may be accepted at the discretion of the director. Concentrators should consult with the Director of American Studies as early as possible to develop their program. Concentrators are encouraged to take as many courses as possible.

Senior Individualized Project (SIP)
The SIP in American Studies is encouraged but not required. Any faculty member regularly teaching in the American Studies program may direct a SIP in American Studies. Concentrators should consult with the Director of American Studies.

American Studies courses

AMST/HIST 110 History of the United States I
This course will examine the American experience from multiple perspectives, concentrating on how Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans all helped shape American culture from the first contact of Native Americans with Europeans through the end of the Civil War in 1865. We'll look at the rich and the poor, those living in the country and in the cities, the enslaved and the free, and the immigrant and the native-born.

AMST/HIST 111 History of the United States II
This class provides a broad survey of American history since the Civil War. We will cover a variety of issues in this period, ranging from national and international politics to class, race, and gender relations, from economic and demographic developments to social and cultural changes.

AMST/ENGL 269 New World Narratives: American Literature 1500-1790
A study of the divergent and complementary tales emerging from those settled in or settling "America." Texts include American Indian and European creation myths, exploration narratives, Puritan poetry, captivity narratives, and late 18th-century fiction and non-fiction.
Prerequisite: A Reading the World course or instructor permission.

AMST/ENGL 270 Reform and Renaissance: U.S. Literature 1790-1865
"American" identity, the unsettling of indigenous populations, the movement of European populations westward, and the Slavery and Woman questions. Through an exploration of diverse texts, students will examine a literature shaped by an impulse to transform or reform pre-existing perspectives and genres.

Prerequisite: A Reading the Worlds course or instructor permission

AMST/ENGL 275 American Realisms: U.S. Literature 1865-1914
This course examines a variety of approaches to knowing a literary period. We will explore theoretical, socio-historical, formal, and thematic paradigms that can organize our understanding of the wide variety of written and cinematic texts produced in the period between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of World War I. Through a study of the frequently conflicting stories about gender, race, sexuality, art, and Americanness that come to voice during this period, students will challenge and complicate their definitions of literary realism.

Prerequisite: A Reading the World course or instructor permission

AMST/ENGL 276 Modernism and Postmodernism: U.S. Literature 1914-Present
A study of the rise of a modern aesthetic in the wake of World War I and the postmodern response in the second half of the 20th century with an eye toward the diversity of voices and formal choices that mark this period.

Prerequisite: A Reading the World course or instructor permission

AMST 593 Senior Individualized Project
Each program or department sets its own requirements for Senior Individualized Projects done in that program, including the range of acceptable projects, the required background of students doing projects, the format of the SIP, and the expected scope and depth of projects. See the Kalamazoo Curriculum Curriculum Details and Policies section of the Academic Catalog for more details.

Prerequisite: Permission of department and SIP supervisor required.

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