

# AMERICAN STUDIES (AMS)

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## AMS 102 Introduction to American Studies (3 credits)

This course is an introduction to American Studies, a field of knowledge about the ongoing formation of the United States and its borderlands that seeks interdisciplinary answers to the problems framing our nation. An interdisciplinary approach to U.S. cultures allows us to integrate the ideas, information, and collective feelings (or affects) that are usually studied separately in art, critical race/ethnicity studies, economics, film and TV studies, gender/sexuality studies, history, law, literature, media studies, modern languages, philosophy, political science, psychology, and sociology/anthropology. Using many analytical frameworks, we will explore case studies of real-world events and learn to interpret cultural texts, and by the end of the semester, you will have completed your own case study.

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Fall, Spring.

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

## AMS 196A Topic: Comics Grow Up: From Cartoons to Graphic Novels (3 credits)

This survey of major works in comic literature follows the history of innovation in the medium, from 19th-century political cartoons to the 21st-century graphic novel, webcomics, and our access to global literatures such as manga and bande dessinée. As comics have grown up, these literary and artistic works have continually tested the limits of what is socially acceptable in terms of our cultural tastes and attitudes, as well as our political viewpoints. We will study a wide range of graphic narratives as windows onto society at different times.

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Spring

## AMS 199Z Topic: A "Ground Beneath Our Feet" Experience (1 credits)

Unlock place-based knowledge in this 1-credit in-person learning experience while engaging with communities around our campus through site-specific activities, such as: participating in mutual aid projects; going on walking tours or fieldtrips; learning and sharing skills; and developing personal connections and networks in the city. Designed as a pass-fail course using labor-based grading, each section may be dedicated to a different theme and/or community partner organization or site.

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Fall & Spring.

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

## AMS 200 Introduction to Critical Race and Ethnicity Studies (3 credits)

This course serves as an introduction to Critical Race and Ethnicity Studies, an interdisciplinary academic field which is organized around the insight that race and ethnicity are major ideological and experiential frameworks that inform every aspect of human experience, from the formation of the individual to the organization of diverse societies. This course will introduce you to the robust academic and social justice field of Critical Race Theory. By the end of the semester you will be conversant in both the historical development of this field as well as its present manifestations.

**Course Rotation:** Fall; NY

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

## AMS 210 Native and Indigenous Peoples Studies (3 credits)

This course explores the past, present, and future of Native and Indigenous Peoples Studies by studying the new rituals, ceremonies, and stories that characterize contemporary Native American performance, literature, and film. We will learn how American Indian tribes and other indigenous communities have used different styles and forms of cultural performance and relied on Indigenous theories to respond to historical, political, and social events. This class will involve decolonized instruction with major emphasis on group discussion and opportunities for creative writing and reflection.

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Spring.

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

## AMS 296A Topic: Public Cultures: Museum Studies (3 credits)

This course spotlights exciting changes in the 21st century museum, drawing on the unique and changing resources in New York City. This course asks how we shape the past through museums and how we shape public space and public memory (for example, Ground Zero). The course looks closely at NYC institutions, and students will visit many of the institutions considered: the National Museum of the American Indian, Ground Zero, the Brooklyn Museum, Ellis Island, among others.

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Fall.

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

**AMS 296B Topic: Public Cultures: Urban Cultural Life and the Downtown Culture Explosion (3 credits)**

From the late 1960's to the 1990s, Downtown New York became an artistic community that nurtured punk, art, fashion, film and literature. A rollicking collection of artistic cadres flaunted edgy urban lifestyles and wove their cultural creations into a texture of customs firmly rooted in urban space. These mavericks defined the Villages and Soho as a riposte to mainstream career paths and suburban norms. This course explores the roots of this cultural explosion, situating specific works and personalities in the historical context and particular geography of Downtown New York. Course work will include research in the important archives of the Downtown New York Collection at the Fales Library, fieldwork and observation, and assignments integrating analysis across genres and media.

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Spring.

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

**AMS 296C Topics: Entertaining America's Children (3 credits)**

From Huck's raft to Andy's room, entertainment for children in America has sought both to delight and to inculcate particular sets of values-and this course will emphasize the ongoing balance between the amusing and the didactic. The class will examine both content and the evolution of form, considering paperback books and the transformation of publishing, the evolution of film animation, and the digital software revolution. Emphasis of the class will be on popular culture of the 20th and 21st centuries. Among topics to be discussed: L. Frank Baum, the Oz phenomenon both in print and on screen, and the creation of a particularly American children's literature; Walt Disney, animated anthropomorphism, and the social conservatism of the classic Disney features; the contrast with the more surrealist house style at Warner Bros.; the reimagination of the amusement park, from carnies to family vacation spot; vertical integration and its centrality to corporate culture - off the screen and onto the lunch boxes and bed sheets; multiculturalism, including *Song of the South*, its production and reception, and attempts to write it out of history; and the notions of universal preschool and kindergarten, and the Children's Television Workshop; the influence of focus groups on children's entertainment - or, how Steve graduates from Blue's house and goes to college; Pixar as digital pioneer and heir to the Hollywood studio tradition. Restrictions/Requirements: Fulfills 3 credits in Western Heritage (Area of Knowledge II) or 3 credits in Humanistic & Creative Expression (Area of Knowledge IV).

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Fall.

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

**AMS 296D Constructing Whiteness in America (3 credits)**

This course will explore the construction and function of the social category of whiteness in American society from colonial times to the present. We will explore the development of idiosyncratically American social categories of race and ethnicity, and discover how American whiteness was fashioned in contrast to the identities constructed for indigenous, enslaved, immigrant, and borderlands peoples. The intersection of whiteness with sexuality and gender discourses is also evident in the interdisciplinary range of texts on our syllabus: primary historical documents, legal texts, scientific theories of race, literature (novels, plays, and poems), visual media from political cartoons to films and TV, and empirical studies of housing and policing. Special emphasis will be placed on understanding contemporary debate about such issues as "white privilege" and "white fragility" and the rise in open expressions of white supremacy in American culture in recent years.

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Fall

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

**AMS 296E Topic: Anarchism in the U.S. (3 credits)**

The history of American anarchism as revealed in the stories of immigrants, activists, educators, and thinkers is also the history of progressivism in America. Just as their writing and stories have been consigned to footnotes in the history of American thought, the adherents of "the Idea" of freedom from government, authority, and hierarchies were relegated to the margins of American society. From labor struggles to anti-war movements, these anarchists have been the avant-garde of progressive thought and social change since the nineteenth century. This course will examine the history and writings of the American anarchist tradition in order to understand anarchism in the twenty-first century. Coursework will include a survey of associated writings and lectures, fieldwork, research and peer review, the in-class retrials of both the Haymarket activists and Sacco and Vanzetti, and culminate in a unit about representations of anarchy today, including the direct-action protest network known as Antifa. A survey of readings may include selections from Emma Goldman, Lucy Parsons, Voltairine de Cleyre, Katherine Anne Porter, John Dos Passos, Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Benjamin R. Tucker, Henry David Thoreau, Josiah Warren, Samuel Yellen, Philip Selznick, Karl Jay Shapiro, and others.

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Spring, Even Years

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

**AMS 296F Topic: Legal Literacy and Defense (3 credits)**

This course students will engage with a variety of materials in order to gain an understanding of legal principles and their usefulness when applied to everyday disputes. Students will be tasked with writing intraoffice memos to supervisors, drafting laws, and producing essays to defeat inadequate proposals. In addition, students will learn how to efficiently navigate grievance systems and seek remedies and will practice "high-stakes" forms of writing such as requests for leniency. The course will also require students to apply their understanding of legal principles to the facts in a given case and will address how to represent a client through the use of adversarial writing. We will engage in frequent brainstorming sessions in order to anticipate reasonable counterarguments and strengthen our position while still in the planning phase. Let's learn to think like a lawyer!

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Fall

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

**AMS 296G Topic: Postwar New York and the American Empire (3 credits)**

This class explores postwar New York City, with a particular focus on the 1950s, as a powerhouse for the expansion of American culture around the world. Guided by the titanic figure of the mid-century urban planner Robert Moses (and Robert Caro's biography *The Power Broker*), we will consider how the built environment of New York City supported the development of numerous social and cultural movements, including: Abstract Expressionism, which moved the capital of the modern art world from Paris to New York; the emergence of the independent film movement and John Cassavetes; the "Golden Age of Television," and New York re-establishing itself as a rival to Los Angeles in the entertainment business; Salinger, Updike, Mailer and the postwar literary scene; Steinem, Friedan, and the women's movement; racial integration, the displacement of communities of color, and suburbanization; the pre-Stonewall gay community; the birth of off-Broadway, as well as the folk music and coffeehouse scene; and standup comedy's transition from the Catskills to Lenny Bruce.

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Fall

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

**AMS 296H Topic: American Shadows: Coercion, Conspiracy, and the Mysteries of State (3 credits)**

This course offers a critical examination of US empire through an interdisciplinary lens that includes parapolitics, an emerging academic discipline offering a theoretical emphasis on the political role of elite criminality. The course examines theories of human sociality and applies these to issues of injustice, race, and conflict in the contemporary US. The goal of the course is to encourage students to think critically about the serious cultural challenges presently facing US and European societies in particular, to hone their writing skills, and to provide a conceptual framework according to which certain claims of state may be meaningfully assessed, including assertions of mal-, mis-, and/or disinformation, attributions of "conspiracy theory," as well as the perceived need for state and/or corporate censorship.

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Spring

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

**AMS 296K Topic: Legal Concepts for Creatives (3 credits)**

Build your awareness of the legal protections, consequences, injustices, remedies, and common misconceptions about the law affecting cultural workers and content creators today. In this practical introduction to contemporary free speech and its legal limits, we will cover a range of legal concepts pertaining to creative expression, and you will learn how to analyze causes of legal action, read and brief case law, and participate in collaborative efforts to devise litigation strategies that can help protect cultural workers and their creations in the 21st century.

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Spring

**AMS 296L Topic: 10K Years of Land Art in the Americas: Creativity, Ecology, Geology (3 credits)**

This class will focus on aspects of representation and information built into an array of land art and related writing produced by inhabitants of the American continent over the past 10,000 years, from ancient petroglyphs to future augmented reality.

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Spring

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

**AMS 296M American Religious Thought and NYC (3 credits)**

From Puritan precedents for tolerance to socially progressive elements in the Religious Left, this course explores internal challenges to dominant Christianities and other critiques of mainstream of American religious thought, as revealed by the histories of our own neighborhood institutions. In this civic engagement course, students will engage in research projects based in the archives of Trinity Church and other downtown communities, historic and present—such as the city's first African American congregation, the Mother AME Zion Church, which split from the John Street Methodist Church in 1796—reinterpreting historic materials for classroom and public use, while assisting with direct service such as weekly/monthly community meal and food pantry services in Chinatown, the Seaport, and other sites which are supported by Trinity Church and other community partners. To contextualize these different modes of experiential learning, we will be studying major debates, events, and movements that have transformed American Christianity, including but not limited to: the white church's resistance to abolitionism and relationships to the spiritualities of enslaved peoples; relationships to Indigenous peoples and Lenape land stewardship; women's traditional exclusion from leadership roles; failures to respond to postbellum manifestations of white supremacy; the ongoing struggle for LGBTQIA+ acceptance; confronting and defining Antisemitism and Islamophobia. The cultural study of American religious thought can teach us about how to rethink and overcome established orthodoxies by directly engaging fundamentalism and learning from religious difference, starting with one neighbor at a time.

**Course Rotation:** NYC: TBD

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

**AMS 296P Topic: The Business History of Slavery: The African Burial Ground and Slavery in New York (3 credits)**

In this course, we will examine the business history of slavery, slavery in New York, and the African Burial Ground (located in Lower Manhattan). The streets of Lower Manhattan are teeming with stories and artifacts that point to New York's slave past. Pace University is within walking distance of historic sites that point to this. Students will construct narratives based on the lives of the enslaved while also chronicling New York's major financial/economic linkages to one of the most "peculiar institutions" that existed in the United States. We will visit the African Burial Ground Monument and hear from archeologists and conservators who preserved artifacts from the site. By the end of the semester, you will facilitate bringing to life the obscured voices of one of New York's earliest marginalized communities.

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Fall.

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

**AMS 296Q Topic: American Queer Aesthetics (3 credits)**

This course is a survey of the major art movements and artists that have shaped the perception of queerness—and the recognition of LGBTQ+ communities—in the U.S. since 1900. Locating queer aesthetics and art practices (including visual art, fashion or self-fashioning, and other fields of humanistic and creative expression) in the tradition of American countercultures, we will be constructing a timeline of queer history in the U.S. based on discourses of sensation, perspective, and embodiment that are certainly not exclusive to the spectrum LGBTQ+ identities which find themselves emerging alongside new works of art, decade by decade, to the present and beyond.

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Spring.

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

**AMS 298M Topic: American Religious Thought and NYC (3 credits)**

From Puritan precedents for tolerance to socially progressive elements in the Religious Left, this course explores internal challenges to dominant Christianities and other critiques of mainstream of American religious thought, as revealed by the histories of our own neighborhood institutions. In this civic engagement course, students will engage in research projects based in the archives of Trinity Church and other downtown communities, historic and present—such as the city's first African American congregation, the Mother AME Zion Church, which split from the John Street Methodist Church in 1796—reinterpreting historic materials for classroom and public use, while assisting with direct service such as weekly/monthly community meal and food pantry services in Chinatown, the Seaport, and other sites, which are supported by Trinity Church and other community partners. To contextualize these different modes of experiential learning, we will be studying major debates, events, and movements that have transformed American Christianity, including but not limited to: the white church's resistance to abolitionism and relationships to the spiritualities of enslaved peoples; relationships to Indigenous peoples and Lenape land stewardship; women's traditional exclusion from leadership roles; failures to respond to postbellum manifestations of white supremacy; the ongoing struggle for LGBTQIA+ acceptance; confronting and defining Antisemitism and Islamophobia. The cultural study of American religious thought can teach us about how to rethink and overcome established orthodoxies by directly engaging fundamentalism and learning from religious difference, starting with one neighbor at a time.

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Fall.

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

**AMS 321B Science, Technology & Culture After World War II (3 credits)**

This multidisciplinary seminar explores how U.S. science and technology have shaped culture and politics since World War II, covering topics such as NASA, DARPA, Silicon Valley and consumer electronics, genetics, and the internet, while paying special attention to issues of race, gender, class, and other social dynamics that define American cultures. This is a writing enhanced course in which students will design their own research projects. Designed for majors in all schools, we will study the cultural significance of these changes, and students are not expected to have an extensive scientific background.

**Course Rotation:** Spring

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have any prerequisites.

**AMS 333 Chinatowns in the Americas (3 credits)**

Is there a Chinatown in your hometown? In this course, we'll be relating to the histories and cultures of communities in the Chinese diaspora throughout the Americas (continental North, South, and the Caribbean), with an experiential focus on present-day Chinatowns in and around NYC. Holding a seemingly permanent place in the American imagination, Chinatowns are transnational spaces defined from the first by global flows of goods and people, but also continuously racialized by "perpetual foreigner" and "yellow peril" stereotypes begun in the 1850s, resulting in a civic or city space that makes visible (not to mention hearable, smellable, and touchable!) some of the contradictions of national belonging and global capitalist competition. You'll receive civic engagement (CE) core credit upon completing our course, which involves communitybased learning projects such as site-based research, language immersion, and mutual aid activities that can strengthen our campus's relationship to our neighbors. (Note: All texts will be in English and multilingualism is not required, but students who are Chinese speakers may be able to design their own language immersion experience.)

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Spring

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

**AMS 396 Internship in American Studies (3 credits)**

An internship is an assignment to a business, corporation, public agency, school, or other organization that provides on-the-job and pre-professional experience. Internships may be full-time or part-time and generally last for one semester. Students also participate in a seminar.

**Course Rotation:** NY: Fall

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

**AMS 397D Contours of Black Entrepreneurship in America (3 credits)**

Ever since landing in Jamestown, Virginia—over 400 years ago—people of African descent have been engaged in entrepreneurial pursuits in America. Enslaved and free, they forged ventures out of necessity. Possessing an entrepreneurial spirit aided them in sustaining themselves and their families; in some instances it even helped them to secure their own freedom while contributing to the American business landscape. Black entrepreneurship has continued to evolve over the centuries. Borne out of slavery, discrimination, abolition, emancipation, systemic racism, segregation/Jim Crow, protest, courage, resistance, passion, and hope, among other things, Black business owners, similar to others in the American mosaic, have always been desirous of running enterprises or establishing ventures that meet marketplace demand. Black entrepreneurs are not a monolith and come in all varieties: Anthony Johnson, James Forten, William Leidesdorff, Booker T. Washington, Maggie Lena Walker, Alonzo Herndon, Madam C.J. Walker, John Johnson, Oprah Winfrey, Reginald Lewis, Daymond John, Sean Combs, Shawn (Jay Z) and Beyonce Knowles Carter, David L. Steward, Robert Smith, and Lisa Price, among others.

**Course Rotation:** NYC: Spring; Even Years

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.

**AMS 399 Seminar in American Studies (3 credits)**

This seminar in American Studies is required for majors, who may complete it in their junior or senior year. Students prepare a thesis, which must be submitted to the American Studies program before graduation.

**Course Rotation:** NY

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have a prerequisite.