

2010-2011 American Studies Program course listing

FALL 2010

AMST 301-1

SEMINAR FOR MAJORS: **The History of Higher Education in America**

WILLIAM HAARLOW

T, 2-5/UH 018

FALL QUARTER 2010

The only western institution older than the university is the Church. Yet the history of education, especially higher education, had always been a minor field within history. Education is universally regarded as essential to individual and social improvement, yet relatively few people are familiar with its history and its philosophical underpinnings. For example, Weinberg students graduate with a bachelors of arts, but what does that mean? What constitutes a liberal arts education? What exactly are the liberal arts? Hint: traditionally, there are seven of them.

Course Description (will be modifications): This course will study both the growth of colleges and universities and the major social factors and philosophical rationales that have shaped their development. Although relevant material from the classical and medieval periods will be discussed, emphasis will be placed upon the historical development of higher education in British colonial America and the United States. It is anticipated that the design and conduct of this course will provide participants with an understanding of the traditional and emerging patterns and roles of universities and other major institutions of higher education. Special stress will be placed upon the changing concept of “university” from its medieval beginnings through its contemporary variations. Through research, presentations, readings, discussions and seminar lectures, students will investigate the evolving aims, structure, functions, curriculum, administration, financing and faculty roles inherent in the university concept.

In developing this informational and conceptual perspective, students should have more specifically:

- a. Increase their understanding of the relationship between institutions of higher education and social, economic, political and religious currents.
- b. Strengthen their ability to evaluate and interpret historical sources.
- c. Broaden their academic knowledge base via reading, research, presentation, and discussion.
- d. Gain perspective into the historical context of value positions and ideological commitments that both sustain and produce conflicts within the contemporary university.
- e. Develop a deepened awareness of the domestic and foreign ideals and practices that have and are influencing the course of higher education in the United States.

Teaching Method: Class seminars will be held on Mondays from 2:00 to 5:00 in University Hall 018.

Evaluation Method: Students will be graded on: short weekly responses to the readings; a research paper; an oral presentation on their research; a final essay; and class participation. Students will be required to read a combination of books, articles and primary sources.

AMST 310-20**STUDIES IN AMERICAN CULTURE: The Power of Sympathy**

ABRAM VAN ENGEN

M, 2-5/UH 018

FALL QUARTER 2010

Course Description: Sentimentalism—a cultural movement grounding ethics, politics, and literature in theories of feeling—flourished in colonial and early national America. This course examines the roots and branches of that movement, taking seriously three different fields: religion, philosophy, and literature. We begin in the seventeenth-century with Puritan accounts of the religious affections, then examine the eighteenth-century school of moral sense philosophy, and conclude with sentimental novels. Throughout the course, students will give presentations on modern forms of sentimentalism—something seen in a movie or read in a recent book or article—comparing it to earlier forms and elucidating the complex dynamics of politics, aesthetics, gender, and race as discussed in class. In these ways, we will ask together what it means to be sentimental—and how the sentimental has shaped and continues to influence American culture.

AMST 310-21: IS CANCELLED**AMST 310-22****STUDIES IN AMERICAN CULTURE: Performance of/in Politics: The 2010 Mid-Term Elections**

PETER CIVETTA

MW, 11-12:30/UH 018

FALL QUARTER 2010

Course Description: It is no great bit of news that politicians perform, particularly when running for office. In fact, our entire electoral process can be viewed as a series of intertwined and interconnected performances: the performance of the media, of polls, of campaign commercials, of the money trail as well as the performance of the candidates themselves. This class will specifically explore *how* performance is used to influence the electoral process. We will seek to formulate and articulate how the political process is performed and what impact that performance has upon elections.

Each member of the class will serve as a research correspondent to a significant House, Senate, or Governor's race. The course will seek to provide the students with the skills needed to decode and understand complex performance environs, ultimately leading us to explore performance's role in determining electoral contests. In addition to the academic goals for this class, it is my hope that by engaging viscerally in the electoral experience we will gain further understanding and investment in our country's political processes.

Teaching Method: This class will be seminar-based, dominated by discussion of the readings and topics at hand. In-class presentations will be required.

Evaluation Method: Assignments will include weekly update reports, one 5-7 page paper exploring the student's chosen area of study, and two in-class presentations. These elements combined with participation in regular class discussions will determine the final grade.

AMST 390-1**SENIOR PROJECT**

JAY GROSSMAN

TH, 2-5/UH 018

FALL QUARTER 2010

Course Description: A year-long sequence to complete a thesis or field study required of majors.

WINTER QUARTER 2011: AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM COURSE LISTING

AMST 301-2

SEMINAR FOR MAJORS: "After the American Century"

Brian Edwards

T 4-7/ CLS Seminar Room/Crowe 1-125

Winter Quarter 2011

Course Description: What was the "American Century"? When did it end, and how do we understand the emerging formation that follows in its wake? What does an American Studies approach help us to understand about the relationship of material history and politics to literature and cultural production? What are the limitations of an American Studies approach to understanding the ways in which "America" as a signifier travels through the world? This course takes on these overarching questions by juxtaposing statements (both historical and contemporary) about "America," the "American Century," and American Studies as a discipline with primary texts (fiction, film, and popular culture), and putting them in conversation to see what they have to say to one another. There are four units: 1) the relationship between American cultural production (especially literature and film) with the end of World War II and rise to global power of the U.S., and the ways the two played off each other. 2) The disruption of technologies and financial processes of "globalization" coincident with the crisis in American (and global) politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s. 3) Whether (or not) "everything changed" on 9/11/01, and how writers, intellectuals and artists both within and without the U.S. have responded to the various tragedies of September 11. 4) The global spread of American Studies as a discipline itself in the past decade, from American-style campuses to American Studies curricula in places both friendly and hostile to the U.S. Thus the course makes tentative links to 301-1 and 301-3, but stands too fully on its own and students are welcome who are not taking the entire 301 sequence.

Readings: by writers and theorists such as Henry Luce, Ralph Ellison, Chester Himes, Norman Mailer, Jane Bowles, Joan Didion, Dave Eggers, Arjun Appadurai, Fareed Zakaria, Gayatri Spivak.

Films such as: *Casablanca*, *Star Wars*, *The Godfather*, *Avatar*. These are indications of the type of works we will consider, not a definitive list. Substitutions will be satisfying.

AMST 310-0-20

STUDIES IN AMERICAN CULTURE: Bad News

Larry Stuelpnagel

M 2-5/UH 018

Winter Quarter 2011

Scott Hall 313

847-491-4853; 312-503-8529

lls768@northwestern.edu

Lecture: Kresge 4310

Course Description: Bad News. That is what Americans are experiencing as a result of the corporate media mergers that took place in the closing years of the last century. Today there are six major companies that control much of what people read, hear and see. Those firms are AOL-Time Warner, General Electric, Walt Disney, News Corporation, Viacom/CBS, and Bertelsman.

As the firms passed from largely family owned to publicly traded companies, the pressure for profit from Wall Street has led to cutbacks in the size of the firm's news divisions and a change in news story values that have "softened" the types of news that people see on television.

This course will begin with an examination of the monetary forces that are driving the industry away from its primary mission of information. Critics, of whom the professor is one, contend that the drive for increasing profits is coming at the expense of both the quality and quantity of news that appear on television and radio, newspapers and magazines, and the Internet. The ever-diminishing number of news providers is also threatening democracy by limiting the number of voices that can be heard in our society.

We will examine the impact of these mergers on several areas of news coverage and public discussion:

1. Privacy and scandal, particularly the stories about President Bill Clinton.
2. The transformation of how the press has covered wars from Vietnam to the new Gulf War. Has the media gone from watchdog to lapdog?
3. Race. Former U.S. Senator Bill Bradley has said, "America is a nation obsessed with the interplay between African Americans and White Americans." We will examine how the press has covered the issue of race in America and how the press deals with the issue in its own newsrooms.
4. Politics. Reporting of scandals and personality has replaced critical evaluations of policy. The "horse race" with its poll-driven coverage is now the norm. We will examine the phenomenon through the lens of the 2000 and 2004 presidential races.

Evaluation Method (s): Your grade will be determined in the following way; 25% for an OP-Ed piece on a subject of your choice that is germane to the class and approved by the professor; 35% for a 10-15 page term paper; 25% take home examination; 15% class participation. **No P/N.** I do not grant extensions for any written assignments. They are due at the beginning of the class as noted on the syllabus. Failure to make the deadline will result in a lower grade for that assignment.

AMST 310-21/ PERF_ST 330-0

STUDIES IN AMERICAN CULTURE: Sounding America: Popular Music, Performance, and the Nation
Ramon Rivera-Servera M 2-5/AMS Hall 103 Winter Quarter 2011

Course Description: This undergraduate seminar will introduce students to cultural studies approaches to popular music in the United States. We will engage musical cultures as diverse as jazz, punk, hip-hop, blues, mambo, house, pop, salsa, reggaetón and emo with special attention to the ways these cultural scenes create public spheres that engage, challenge, or expand our definitions of national belonging. We will look at both historical and contemporary examples that showcase the ways in which songs, dances, fashion, and fan practices affiliated with particular musical cultures produce knowledge, memory, and affects about the nation while also gesturing towards histories, material interconnections, and political possibilities beyond it. Students will gain introductory understanding of scholarship and methods in ethnomusicology, performance studies of music, and American cultural studies.

AMER_ST 310-22

STUDIES IN AMERICAN CULTURE: Free Speech and the McCarthy Era
Martin Redish Th 2-5/UH 018 Winter Quarter 2011

Course Description: An intensive examination of the complex and controversial post-World War II period known as "the McCarthy era," during which the nation found itself in the grip of Senator Joseph McCarthy and other anti-Communists who sought to expose and punish those Americans who sympathized with the political theory of communism or secretly worked on behalf of the Soviet Union. The class will focus on a set of secret documents that were discovered in 1995, the so-called "Venona Documents," and their dramatic

impact on scholarly perspectives on that period in American history. The class will also view the historical period through the lens of the theory of free expression, examining how modern problems of First Amendment interpretation should be impacted by the insights drawn from the historical inquiry.

Teaching Method: class discussion

Evaluation Method: 25% class participation; 25% take-home mid-term; and 50% 12-15 page research paper.

Reading: Redish, “The Logic of Persecution: Free Expression and the McCarthy Era”(Stanford; 2005); Schrecker, “Many are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America: (Princeton; 1998); Haynes & Klehr, “Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America” (Yale; 1999).

AMST 390-2

SENIOR PROJECT

Jay Grossman

W 3-6/Parkes Hall 215

Winter Quarter 2011

Course Description: A year-long sequence to complete a thesis or field study required of majors.

SPRING 2011

AMER_ST 301-3

SEMINAR FOR MAJORS: American Teenage Rites of Passage

REL 369-20

Topics in American Religion: American Teenage Rites of Passage

Sarah Taylor

Th 2-5

UH 018

Course Description: This seminar is specially geared to American Studies and Religious Studies majors. Drawing from anthropological and sociological case studies, we will examine various rites of passage experienced by teens in North America. In analyzing these rites, students will become conversant with theories of ritual, contemporary surveys of teen demographics and cultural trends, gender studies and cultural studies literature dealing with teen popular media and consumption. Students will also be asked to generate original research for their seminar final project, applying the tools of the course to a case study of their own choosing. This seminar will make rigorous use of multimedia materials and will require multi-source digitized media viewing and analysis as integral to course assignments. Attendance is required at the first meeting of seminar in order to be admitted to the course and subsequently each week thereafter.

Note: cross-list with Religious Studies. **Enrollment:** 20 (10/10)

AMER_ST 310-20

STUDIES IN AMERICAN CULTURE: The Great Chicago Fire and its Cultural Contexts

Carl Smith

W 2-4:50

UH 018

Course Description: The Great Chicago Fire of October 8-10 1871 is one of the most well-known urban disasters. Almost immediately it became a fixture in the public imagination as the inspiration for enduring popular stories that found expression in journalism, fiction, poetry, song, and illustrations. It was also a very important historical event, occurring at a critical moment in Chicago and American history. It figured significantly in such important developments as the transition of Chicago from a commercial to an industrial city, the rise of modern philanthropic work, innovations in construction, and deepening class and ethnic divisions, as well as Chicago's reputation as a community with an indomitable will.

Students in this course will first do some reading in common to acquaint themselves with the history of the fire and the nature of its times. Then, with the advice of the instructor, they will choose individual research papers relating to the fire. These topics can be adapted to the interests of students in American Studies, Art History, English, History, and other majors, as well as those in other undergraduate schools. Students will draw on the resources of local institutions, notably the Chicago History Museum, as well as the Northwestern University Library. In addition to preparing their papers, students will present their work in a class symposium near the end of the quarter.

Prerequisites: Permission of the instructor is required. This is mainly intended to make sure that the course's contents and expectations are clear to the student. As indicated, students from majors other than American Studies are invited to enroll. No prerequisites, but some background in late nineteenth-century American history will be useful. No P/N registration. Because of the nature of the class, enrollment is limited to 15 students.

Teaching Method: A mixture of group meetings and individual or small group sessions with the instructor. One of the key purposes of the course is to acquaint students with independent research as well as with the history of the Great Chicago Fire, and the instruction is designed with this in mind.

Evaluation Method: The grade in the course will be based mainly on the quality of the final paper, but also on various assignments due throughout the quarter. These will include formulations of the student's topic and research question, a detailed outline, and a draft, as well as progress reports.

Note: No P/N. Note that registration is by permission of instructor. Interested students should email the professor at (cjsmith@northwestern.edu) for an appointment.

AMER_ST 390-3
SENIOR PROJECT

Jay Grossman

W 3-6

UH 412

Course Description: A year-long sequence to complete a thesis or field study required of majors.