

AMERICAN STUDIES

The major and minor in American Studies provides an interdisciplinary approach to the study of United States culture, considered in relation to the Americas and in the context of global languages, cultures, and creative industries represented in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures (SMLC). Students gain admittance to the programme by taking **AMER1050. Foundations of American Studies, I: The origins of the nation (6 credits)**. Normally students should take this course in their first or second years, although they may take it at any time in order to complete the requirements for the major. There are three more courses required for a major (**AMER2021, AMER2050, AMER3050**). For a minor, there are only two more required courses (**AMER2050, AMER3050**). The remaining credits that are required to fulfill the total number of credits of a major or minor will be taken from electives offered (listed below) in the American Studies Programme and in collaborating departments across the Faculty of Arts.

The Major (72 credits)

In order to ensure reasonable coverage and interdisciplinary understanding, students who intend to pursue a major in American Studies must, in their second and third years, take a minimum of 72 credits from the list below. Only in exceptional cases may a waiver be granted for a core course.

- **Prerequisite course (6 credits):**
AMER1050. Foundations of American Studies, I: The origins of the nation (6 credits)
- **Other Arts Faculty introductory courses to be taken from any Arts programmes (12 credits)**
- **Core courses (12 credits):**
AMER2021. On the road again: Field trip in American Studies (6 credits)
AMER2050. Foundations of American Studies, II: Reconstructing the nation (6 credits)
- **Capstone experience course (6 credits):**
AMER3050. Foundations of American Studies, III: Capstone (6 credits)
- **Interdisciplinary electives courses (36 credits):**
6 courses from the following list of approved courses including at least 3 American Studies courses.
*{Note:
Not all courses are offered in a given semester; students should check with individual units on course availability; students should also check on course prerequisites and other enrollment restrictions.}*

American Studies

- AMER2002. The road in American culture (6 credits)
- AMER2014. A dream in the heart: varieties of Asian American culture (6 credits)
- AMER2015. The American city (6 credits)
- AMER2018. Show me the money: doing business with Americans (6 credits)
- AMER2022. What's on TV? Television and American culture (6 credits)
- AMER2029. Current perspectives on the U.S. (6 credits)
- AMER2033. Asia on America's screen (6 credits)
- AMER2035. Addicted to war? The US at home and abroad (6 credits)
- AMER2037. Institutions in American life: home, education, work and play (6 credits)

- AMER2038. American film, from Golden-Age Hollywood to New Hollywood and beyond (6 credits)
- AMER2039. The art of crime and its detection in the United States (6 credits)
- AMER2040. Creating culture in the world: American creative industries in the age of globalization (6 credits)
- AMER2041. How the West was won: The frontier in American culture and literature (6 credits)
- AMER2042. Consuming culture: decoding American symbols (6 credits)
- AMER2043. Born in the USA: U.S. youth cultures (6 credits)
- AMER2044. Wall Street: Issues in American business (6 credits)
- AMER2045. Film beyond the mainstream: American art cinema (6 credits)
- AMER2046. Legal fictions: United States citizenship and the right to write in America (6 credits)
- AMER2047. Religion in America (6 credits)
- AMER2048. American literature (6 credits)
- AMER2049. Immigrant nation: The cultural legacy of immigration in the United States (6 credits)
- AMER2051. Extended essay in American Studies (6 credits)
- AMER2052. Studies in American culture and society (6 credits)
- AMER3007. Dissertation in American Studies (12 credits)
- AMER3008. American Studies internship (6 credits)

Comparative Literature

- CLIT2045. Colonialism/postcolonialism (6 credits)
- CLIT2076. Fashioning femininities (6 credits)
- CLIT2084. “New” cinemas across national boundaries (6 credits)
- CLIT2092. Modern American poetry: Politics and aesthetics (6 credits)

English

- ENGL2055. American gothic: Haunted homes (6 credits)
- ENGL2089. Making Americans: Literature as ritual and renewal (6 credits)
- ENGL2099. Language, identity, and Asian Americans (6 credits)
- ENGL2104. Language in the USA (6 credits)
- ENGL2139. American modern (6 credits)

European Studies

- EUST2018. Early modern Atlantic worlds, c. 1500-1800 (6 credits)
- EUST2019. Atlantic revolutions, c.1760-1830 (6 credits)
- EUST3018. European empire: Comparative British and French imperialism (6 credits)
- EUST3020. The making of the West: From Descartes to Rorty (6 credits)

Fine Arts

- FINE2020. American art (6 credits)
- FINE2029. Modernity and its discontents (6 credits)
- FINE2031. The rise of modern architecture in Western culture (6 credits)

Global Creative Industries

- GCIN2001. Creative industries in practice: Labor, organization and management (6 credits)
- GCIN2002. Commercializing creativity: A cultural critique (6 credits)

- GCIN2003. Cultural policy: A complex marriage of business, politics and culture (6 credits)
- GCIN2006. Fashion and luxury: Cultural and organizational dynamics (6 credits)
- GCIN2007. Film and media: Cultural and organizational dynamics (6 credits)
- GCIN2008. Advertising: Cultural and organizational dynamics (6 credits)
- GCIN2009. Art worlds: Aesthetics, money, and markets (6 credits)
- GCIN2010. Fairs, festivals and competitive events (6 credits)
- GCIN2012. Introduction to video games studies (6 credits)
- GCIN2014. Communication strategies in advertising (6 credits)
- GCIN2015. Entrepreneurship in creative industries (6 credits)
- GCIN2017. Luxury markets in East Asia (6 credits)
- GCIN2018. Publishing industry in digital age (6 credits)

Hong Kong Studies

- HKGS2009. We are what we eat: Cantonese cuisine in Hong Kong and America (6 credits)

History

- HIST2015. The United States before 1900 (6 credits)
- HIST2016. The United States since 1900 (6 credits)
- HIST2031. History through film (6 credits)
- HIST2053. The Cold War (6 credits)
- HIST2069. History of American popular culture (6 credits)
- HIST2092. The United States and Asia (6 credits)
- HIST2107. The Second World War in Asia and the Pacific, 1931-1952 (6 credits)
- HIST2113. New worlds: Exploring the history of Latin America (6 credits)
- HIST2118. Chinese and Americans: A cultural and international history (6 credits)
- HIST2126. The American family: Histories, myths, and realities (6 credits)
- HIST2131. Growing up 'girl': Histories, novels and American culture (6 credits)

Japanese Studies

- JAPN2068. Japan, the United States and the international relations of Asia-Pacific (6 credits)

Music

- MUSI1024. Jazz: history and appreciation (6 credits)

Philosophy

- PHIL2002. Early modern philosophy (6 credits)
- PHIL2035. Philosophy of the Enlightenment (6 credits)
- PHIL2360. Political philosophy (6 credits)
- PHIL2380. Philosophy and literature (6 credits)

Politics and Public Administration

- POLI2105. Introduction to comparative politics (6 credits)
- POLI2106. Introduction to international relations (6 credits)
- POLI3005. Capitalism and social justice (6 credits)
- POLI3010. Democracy and its critics (6 credits)
- POLI3044. American democracy (6 credits)
- POLI3047. United States foreign policy (6 credits)

- POLI3079. Global justice (6 credits)
 POLI3080. Global political economy (6 credits)

Sociology

- SOCI2011. Gender and crime (6 credits)

The Minor (36 credits)

Students may take American Studies as a minor by completing 30 credits of second-, third-, and fourth-year courses. Of these courses, students must take:

Prerequisite course (6 credits):

- AMER1050. Foundations of American Studies, I: The origins of the nation (6 credits)

Core courses (12 credits):

- AMER2050. Foundations of American Studies, II: Reconstructing the nation (6 credits)
 AMER3050. Foundations in American Studies, III: Capstone (6 credits)

The remaining 3 courses may be drawn from the following (18 credits):

- AMER2002. The road in American culture (6 credits)
 AMER2014. A dream in the heart: varieties of Asian American culture (6 credits)
 AMER2015. The American city (6 credits)
 AMER2018. Show me the money: doing business with Americans (6 credits)
 AMER2022. What's on TV? Television and American culture (6 credits)
 AMER2029. Current perspectives on the U.S. (6 credits)
 AMER2033. Asia on America's screen (6 credits)
 AMER2035. Addicted to war? The US at home and abroad (6 credits)
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 AMER2048. American literature (6 credits)
 AMER2049. Immigrant nation: The cultural legacy of immigration in the United States (6 credits)
 AMER2051. Extended essay in American Studies (6 credits)
 AMER2052. Studies in American culture and society (6 credits)
 AMER3007. Dissertation in American Studies (12 credits)
 AMER3008. American Studies internship (6 credits)

CORE COURSE

AMER1050. Foundations of American Studies, I: The origins of the nation (6 credits)

This is the first of three Foundation courses in American Studies (including AMER2050 and AMER3050). It focuses on the historical period beginning with Columbus's voyage and concluding with the Civil War. Our goal will be to develop a definition and understanding of American Culture by reading, viewing and discussing documents and images that are central to the theory and reality of the United States as a nation. Texts will include political and legal documents, novels, poems, an autobiography, a slave narrative, speeches, visual art and contemporary films. We will consider the ways in which the story of the United States has changed over time as we look for consistent ideas in what it means to be American. We will identify the authors' various claims of American distinctiveness and evaluate these claims in relation to the legacies of slavery and Manifest Destiny in an international context. As we study the past, we will see how important it is to understand the present and thereby enrich our skills of interpreting contemporary literature, film and current political events. The course will also introduce theories of nationalism and print culture that students will find extremely useful in other courses and in interpreting the world today.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2021. On the road again: Field trip in American Studies (6 credits)

Concentrating on North American points of interest from cities to landscape to cultural sites—this course will explore the variety and complexity of American life. Locations to be visited in the summer will typically vary in the years the course is offered. We will trace important historical developments of the United States through site visits as well as explore contemporary issues of American society and culture.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2050. Foundations of American Studies, II: Reconstructing the nation (6 credits)

This is the second of three Foundation courses in American Studies (including AMER1050 and AMER3050). In this course, we will focus on period from after the Civil War to the twenty-first century and on the internal problems and international conflicts that shape the face of the United States today. Among the topics for study and discussion may be the post-Civil War Reconstruction Era, the changing terms of civil rights, policies of racial segregation and desegregation, the Gilded Age, immigration at the turn of the 20th century, the gangster-friendly Jazz Age, the Great Depression, World War II, the worldwide Cold War and the conformist '50s, the struggle for civil rights, the psychedelic flower-power '60s, and the Vietnam War and its aftermath, the wars on terror, and the influence of multinational corporations on United States electoral politics. Through lectures and class debates we will attempt to compare our popular knowledge of America with the sometimes different historical reality behind it. From documentary sources and literary nonfiction, through film, novels, comic books and rap music, we will lay foundations for a better understanding of the United States and its changing relation to the world.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER3050. Foundations of American Studies, III: Capstone (6 credits)

This course is the third of three foundation courses in American Studies (including AMER1050 and AMER2050). It required of all majors in the American Studies Programme and is designed to cap students' university careers with a rigorous, interdisciplinary and theme-based program of study. The specific area of study may vary from year to year depending on students' background, interests and the expertise of the instructor. Students will deepen their research and writing skills, conduct discussion sessions, participate in intensive group work, get involved in a mentoring program and continue to hone the critical thinking skills nurtured during their education in American Studies. The seminar will seek ways to prepare students to make the transition from the university setting to a variety of employment settings.

Prerequisite: **AMER1050**

Assessment: 100% coursework

ELECTIVE COURSES**AMER2002. The road in American culture (6 credits)**

The popular hit song, "Hit the road, Jack," is as much a part of American culture and slang as Jack Kerouac's bestselling account of his life on the American highway, *On the Road*. For better or worse, North Americans have always been on the road, pushing westward towards California, Oregon and British Columbia, moving around the country in pursuit of the American Dream, or just driving along Route 66 to escape the mundane suburban life. This restlessness and the ease with which large segments of the population move and resettle characterizes many aspects of US and Canadian life, turning the road into one of the most powerful symbols in North American literature and culture. Through the analysis of various media forms, which may include film, fiction, music, material culture and architecture, this course will consider the road in America as reality and icon, extending it to the recent emergence of the Internet and the "information highway."

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2014. A dream in the heart: varieties of Asian American culture (6 credits)

Like so many other immigrants to the United States, Asians – Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Koreans, etc. – were also drawn by the dream of Golden Mountain. Yet once in America, they would confront not only promise and possibility but the dream's betrayal: hostility, rejection and exclusion. This course will explore the varieties of Asian American cultures that emerge out of the painful, disruptive struggles between expectation and reality faced by these immigrants and their children, and the representation of their experiences in the arts, media, politics and popular culture. Asian Americans are frequently stereotyped as model minorities for striving after the American dream of education, wealth and political representation. We will examine and challenge this "model minority" idea in American life and politics, especially as it relates to inter-minority conflict and cooperation, as individual American minority groups attempt to achieve their own version of American success.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2015. The American city (6 credits)

In 1800 only 6% of Americans lived in cities; in 2000 this number was more than 80%. As a center of growth, power and cultural diversity, the American city has always occupied a crucial place in

America's vision of itself as a new nation. "A cruel city, but a lovely one, a savage city, yet it had such tenderness"—this quote from Thomas Wolfe's *A Vision of the City* is representative of the varied cultural representations of the American urban environment as a place where fortunes and lives are made or lost. Through an examination of literature, art, architecture, photography, film and music, this course will take a closer look at some of the greatest as well as the "baddest" American metropolises, looking for a way to understand the people who live, commute, work, create, govern, commit crime and conduct business in them.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2018. Show me the money: doing business with Americans (6 credits)

This course is designed to familiarize students with business practice in the United States and in American corporations operating in Hong Kong, laying foundations for a better understanding of the individuals and institutions driving the economy. Weekly sessions will include lectures and, whenever possible, discussions with members of the American business community in the Asia-Pacific region. Topics may include: U.S. business history and economic cycles, American entrepreneurs, the ethics and etiquette of U.S. corporate culture, government/business relationships, gender and business, glass ceilings and opportunities for advancement, and business and technological change.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2022. What's on TV? Television and American culture (6 credits)

Television has been a powerful force in US history and culture. American TV shows and programming styles have been exported globally, and are modified to suit diverse cultural settings, including Hong Kong. The United States exerts significant global influence, in part because of its success in marketing itself, both domestically and abroad, through media and entertainment. While many contest the content or perspective of American media, few are exempt from its impact. This course offers students a chance to consider the impact of television inside and outside of the US and explore how the American media-machine reaches into every facet of the nation's life as well as into the lives of people around the world. Topics to be discussed in the course may include the history of television, strategies for critical viewing, war and TV, educational television, television's domination of politics, youth culture and TV, the technology behind television programming, and finally TV programming in Hong Kong.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2029. Current perspectives on the U.S. (6 credits)

Students in this course will be discussing current and past events as reported in newspapers, magazines, television, literature, films and on the internet. The course will focus on domestic issues facing Americans at home as well as on political, economic and cultural links between the United States and other nations. Pedagogy will be student-centered and require students to participate regularly in (and at times lead) discussions. Typical topics may include the analysis of the American political system and the presidency, the relationship between business and politics, the role of sports in American life, the fallout from September 11, the rise of rap and hip-hop, manufacturing media, regionalism, stand-up comedy and social satire, and the US university system. These and other issues will form the basis of the course taught, on occasion, with the help of representatives of various disciplines across the spectrum of the arts, humanities and social sciences.

Prerequisite: Nil
 Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2033. Asia on America's screen (6 credits)

“The Orient” has always held a dual attraction of romance and danger outside Asia, and this tradition has since been reinforced by Hollywood. The allure of wealth, trade and exoticism that brought millions of Americans across the Pacific provided rich material for movie drama. This combination of geographical attraction and cultural appeal was further reinforced during the wars the United States fought in Asia. War, violence and romance fill America's movie screens, pulling in vast crowds and in the process shaping and mis-shaping America's view of Asia. Asking what is Asia and how far it extends, this course will explore cinematic representations of the continent and its people as constructed by Hollywood during more than a century of selling romantic myths to a public that often has no first-hand experience of Asian culture and no firm grasp of its history.

Prerequisite: Nil
 Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2035. Addicted to war? The US at home and abroad (6 credits)

The Vietnam War was the first war in the age of the television and the first war that America lost. The emotions aroused by the loss of American lives and the images of violence and brutality made TV and Hollywood important actors in the war for hearts and minds. This course will examine the multiple wars, police actions, military invasions, armed “liberations,” coups d'état, political assassinations, “regime changes” and other euphemisms for military aggression and intervention on an international scale. Among other issues discussed may be international weapons trade, the Cold War, the two World Wars, international peace keeping, “wars” on drugs and/or terrorism, and the state of civil liberties in the US. In the process we will also examine the role of movies, television and journalistic reportage in shaping public opinion and thus indirectly the American perception and misperception of the rest of the world.

Prerequisite: Nil
 Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2037. Institutions in American life: home, education, work and play (6 credits)

Institutions structure the lives of all Americans. While institutions can be thought of in terms of discreet organizations—Harvard University, the New York Stock Exchange, National Basketball Association, the Metropolitan Museum of Art—or even the buildings in which these organizations are housed, in the broader sense, institutions are the forms into which social activity is organized. Among the most fundamental institutions of this latter type are the family, school, business and leisure. Each of them is associated with values, beliefs and practices which, taken together, help to constitute American culture. The course will examine these and other types of institutions in order to understand the origins of the values, beliefs and practices which they embody. We will also study how these values, beliefs and practices may have been influenced by such factors as ethnicity, race, class, religion and geographic region, and how the institutions and the ideas they embody have persisted or changed over time. In the process, we will seek to identify common themes, and to consider how certain tensions—for example between individualism and community, democracy and excellence, service and profit—have shaped each of these institutions, and through them, American society. Finally, we will consider the extension of these institutions, and their values and practices, beyond the United States, asking how American ideas about home, school, work and play have impacted and interacted with other cultures, including Asian.

Prerequisite: Nil
 Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2038. American film, from Golden-Age Hollywood to New Hollywood and beyond (6 credits)

Hollywood is known to spin dreams, visions and illusions but, caught-up in the big-screen experience, viewers often forget that these dreams and illusions are spun within particular social and cultural contexts. Films are woven into national myths, myths are woven into the society that builds them, and society is woven into the people that create and recreate America everyday as they live, work and go to the movies. This course will look at many of the biggest, most famous and most representative Hollywood blockbusters—films and their movie-star icons—that in many ways define American culture. We will consider films from the so-called Golden Age of Hollywood when the studios ruled the theater to the era of New Hollywood when directors drew increasing inspiration from European films. Students will be introduced to various genres that have become synonymous with Hollywood, among them the action thriller, classic and revisionist western, MGM musical, film noir and police story, science fiction, romantic comedy, Disney animation, and others. The experience of these films and their contexts will broaden our knowledge of American cultural values and help us critique these values, so that the reality of American life is explored alongside its ideals. The course will also aim to enhance critical and creative thinking as well as speaking and writing skills.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2039. The art of crime and its detection in the United States (6 credits)

Images of the police permeate our international world of news and entertainment. In our daily lives we expect them to protect us in moments of distress but might not trust their authority to carry guns or to exercise physical power over us. This course considers the police as a modern institution of law enforcement by taking a close look at how they get represented in films, television shows, and journalism for audiences in the United States, the Americas and throughout the world. The course emphasizes contemporary depictions of the policing, but we will also consider the philosophical basis for law enforcement and the literary precedents that have shaped ways of telling a good story about solving a crime and arresting the perpetrator. The texts we read, watch and discuss may include: early literary stories of solving crimes; instructional materials that train police officers; procedural police dramas in TV and film; legal documents outlining the rules of arrest and interrogation and use of force; journalistic accounts of sensational police events; and early rock and roll music and music videos by contemporary hip-hop artists.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2040. Creating culture in the world: American creative industries in the age of globalization (6 credits)

American creative industries companies exist primarily as for profit businesses. This course critically examines the relationship between American media and cultural content and the business context of its production and distribution. The seminar will introduce students to the business structures and practices of major American media industries such as film, television, music, comics, theme parks, and video games. As the United States are the most dominant global producer of media and cultural content, the course will give particular attention to overseas distribution strategies both conventional and online. The course will then critically examine examples of contemporary media and cultural content in light of their commercial origins and global distribution and consumption such as Hollywood movies, HBO Original Series, Disney comics and theme parks, animated television series, popular music, or massively multiplayer online games. Students will research a case study of one American creative industries company in which they will follow one cultural product from its inception to production, distribution and consumption.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2041. How the West was won: The frontier in American culture and literature (6 credits)

The United States grew into a trans-continental nation stretching from the Atlantic to Pacific Oceans as settlers and citizens fixed their attention on frontiers of land and technological ability. In the process, the West was mythologized as a place of economic opportunity and agricultural virtue as well as a battleground to be claimed in the conquest of Native American peoples. In the early nineteenth century, expansion into the West also raised the question of how far slavery would extend and how long its practice would continue. This course looks at representations of the frontier and the West in literature and film. How did the idea of the West inspire people to move progressively inland? What were the politics and aesthetics of living in the frontier in the midst of agricultural innovation, railroad construction, the rise of American cities and suburbs, and the pursuit of valuable raw materials such as oil and gold? How has the West changed over time as the United States looked beyond North America to the Asian Pacific and even beyond the earth to the “final frontier” of space? Through an interdisciplinary approach that includes history, sociology, literature and film, this course charts the dynamically imaginative energy of the West in the United States.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2042. Consuming culture: decoding American symbols (6 credits)

Images of America (as revealed in Hollywood films, television, advertisements, music and music videos, news media and consumer products) shape our vision of US culture. In a course specifically designed with Hong Kong students in mind, we will study and decode cultural products mediated to us by the increasingly global American media. We will approach national culture, including popular culture, as an extension and creation of national myths and propaganda and explore why Americans are so attached to certain symbols, and what these symbols mean for the United States as a whole. In the course of our discussions we may touch on the symbolism and reality of the American Dream and the myth of “rags to riches,” the notion of success, materialism and consumerist culture, as well as on the national and international symbols that for many define the image of America. We may also consider distinctions between high and low/popular cultures and see how class, gender and race affect notions of culture.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2043. Born in the USA: U.S. youth cultures (6 credits)

Baby boomers, Beats, Hippies, Yuppies and Gen (eration) Xers are labels assigned to various generations of American youth. This first-year survey course will explore the connection between historical change and adolescence/early adulthood in the United States during the second half of the 20th century. Throughout the term we will consider youth culture through the interdisciplinary mix of history, politics, literature and popular culture. From these diverse perspectives, we will discover how young people in America are defined and how they attempt to define themselves by their subcultures, fashion, leisure, music, use of the internet, slang, education and other expressions of identity. While teaching about American youth cultures, the course will offer students a chance to reflect on their own experiences as adolescents/young adults and will focus on improving critical thinking, speaking and writing skills.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2044. Wall Street: Issues in American business (6 credits)

This course will draw on selected issues in American business in order to teach us about the essential characteristics of US society, including its character, values, as well as written (e.g. legal) and unwritten codes of behaviour. Every day, decisions are made on Wall Street which affect how business is conducted in America, Asia and everywhere else around the globe. How did one address become so influential in, and such an icon of, American business? This course seeks to examine the Wall Street phenomenon, as well as its culture, influence and impact on specific components of American business. Issues under discussion may involve the nature of American business, its place in the national life (“the business of America is business,” affirmed President Coolidge), its code of ethics and failures to live by that code. Case studies will be drawn from the famous and infamous examples of American entrepreneurial spirit as they made headlines up to, and including, the 21st century. Furthermore, issues such as the rise of the Internet and the information age will be examined to explore the reverse—how they shape Wall Street and the way business is conducted in America.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2045. Film beyond the mainstream: American art cinema (6 credits)

While American and international cinema has been dominated by large Hollywood productions, some of America’s most important, most popular, and most critically acclaimed films from the 1910s to the present have been art films, which were often produced independently from the major Hollywood studios. This course will first consider approaches to conceptualizing the art film and examine the question whether art films constitute a separate film genre or whether they are better defined by their production and distribution. We will discuss how art films distinguish themselves from classical Hollywood film and find out which formal characteristics they have in common despite their apparent heterogeneity. In addition to careful analysis of film form, we will consider the films’ meanings in their historical contexts and discuss how they represent the American experience differently compared to mainstream film. Films discussed may include independent art house, experimental, documentary, and low budget films, as well as Hollywood productions, which exhibit the director’s auteur style. Selected films may include examples from directors such as D.W. Griffiths, F.W. Murnau, John Ford, Maya Deren, Orson Welles, Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Kubrick, Terrence Malick, Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, Robert Altman, John Cassavetes, Sam Raimi, Spike Lee, Jim Jarmush, David Lynch, Abel Ferrara, Gus van Sant, John Sayles, the Coen brothers, Paul Thomas Anderson, Todd Solondz, Richard Linklater, Quentin Tarantino, Darren Aronofsky, and Christopher Nolan.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2046. Legal fictions: United States citizenship and the right to write in America (6 credits)

In 1776, the idea of self-evidence grounded the philosophical assertion that “all men are created equal.” And yet, political, economic and social equality in the democratic republic of the United States has often proven less of a guarantee and more of a promise. Beginning with Thomas Jefferson’s writing of the “Declaration of Independence,” the recognition of a person as fully human in the United States has depended on assumptions regarding race, class and gender. The course examines the changing definition of United States citizenship by putting legal texts (the U.S. Constitution, federal and state laws, Executive Orders, Supreme Court decisions) in dialogue with literary writings and film. In this course we will read stories by people whom federal and or state law barred from full citizenship. Through autobiographies, fiction, poetry and speeches, we will examine the cultural legacy of legal terms such as “domestic dependent nation,” “illegal alien” and “unlawful enemy combatant.” The course themes may include: property and democracy, slavery, westward expansion

and Indian Removal, immigration (with particular focus on China and Asia), the right of women to vote, and the wartime powers of the Executive Office. Our goal will be to pay careful attention to the language and genres of the American legislative and judicial system, and conversely to contextualize literature in relation to the legal history through which the U.S. Constitution has been reinterpreted and amended to broaden its terms of equality. We will read writers who used words to protest against and revise the historical circumstances in which they had to fight for legal standing. We will also consider how different kinds of writing -- legal, scientific, autobiographical and fictional -- employ different rhetorical strategies to reach audiences, affect readers and influence the world.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2047. Religion in America (6 credits)

This course surveys the history of religion in America, with a focus on the ways in which religious beliefs, movements, and conflicts have shaped—and continue to shape—how Americans view the world, their country, and ideals of self and society. The course provides the necessary religious context to understand defining moments in American history, characteristics of American culture, and the critical issues being debated in contemporary American society. It uses religion as a lens for viewing the lives of ordinary Americans from the 17th century to the present through primary sources such as sermons, heresy trial transcripts, diaries, sacred texts, advertisements, and novels, with the additional use of multimedia and reading from secondary scholarship.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2048. American literature (6 credits)

This course considers a selection of essays, novels, poetry and short stories by great American authors in the twentieth century. The course will offer a survey of excellent literature by interpreting themes that are important to American culture and that will allow us to compare and contrast styles of writing and patterns of narrative development. The reading list will embrace the rich cultural, ethnic and racial diversity of the twentieth-century literary scene in the United States and the class discussion will pay careful attention to the social context in which these authors wrote and published their work. The reading list may include a manageable amount of reading chosen from important authors such as Henry James, Robert Frost, W.E.B. Dubois, F. William Faulkner, Allen Ginsberg, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, and Toni Morrison.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2049. Immigrant nation: The cultural legacy of immigration in the United States (6 credits)

From its very foundation, the American culture has been fundamentally shaped by the arrival of immigrants who for many varied reasons decided to live and work in the United States in search of economic opportunity. This course considers the cultural, social, economic and political consequences of immigration as well as the changing patterns of immigration over the past nearly two hundred and fifty years. We will consider the shifting trends of peoples' arrivals from Europe, Africa, South and Central Americas, and Asia, and compare and contrast their accounts of becoming "American." We will trace the ways that many immigrants maintain ties with their original homeland or even travel back and forth between nations. Keeping in mind the changing legal contexts of immigration, we will analyze contemporary debates about who deserves citizenship and explore connections between contemporary conflicts over immigration policy and the early historical

developments of the nation's borders. The syllabus will include a manageable amount of reading from writers such as Jacob Riis, Willa Cather, Anzia Yezierska, Louis Chu, Henry Roth, Sandra Cisneros, Chang-Rae Lee, Gish Jen, Edwidge Dandicat, Frank McCourt, and Jhumpa Lahiri.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2051. Extended essay in American Studies (6 credits)

This is a directed reading and research course aimed at students who would like to pursue an individualized programme of research in American Studies under the supervision of a mentor, typically (though not necessarily) an American Studies Programme instructor or an American Studies Board member. The student is responsible for approaching the instructor in advance and obtaining consent for supervision. The coursework will normally consist of designing the project around a topic relevant to the Programme, compiling a bibliography, research and reading, and finally writing a research paper. The student has to submit a research paper proposal (at least 500 words), a detailed outline, and a working bibliography no later than the first school day after reading week. The full research paper (at least 7500 words) shall be completed and presented for examination by the end of the examination period of the semester in which the course is taken.

Students enrolled in this course may not enroll in **AMER3007**.

Prerequisite: **AMER1050**

Co-requisite: **AMER2050**

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER2052. Studies in American culture and society (6 credits)

This course will explore rotating themes in American culture and society and is typically taught by a visiting professor from the United States. Discipline and thematic focus of the course will vary from year to year depending on the area of expertise of the instructor and will be announced on the website of the American Studies programme during the years in which it is offered.

Prerequisite: Nil

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER3007. Dissertation in American Studies (12 credits)

This is a directed reading course aimed at top students in American Studies who would like to pursue an individualized program of research under the supervision of a mentor, typically (though not necessarily) an American Studies Programme instructor or an American Studies Board member. The student is responsible for approaching the instructor in advance and obtaining consent for supervision. The coursework will normally consist of designing the project around a topic relevant to the Programme, compiling a bibliography, research and reading, and finally writing the dissertation. A project proposal consisting of a thesis statement, preliminary outline of research (typically 3-5 pages), timetable for completion, and working bibliography will be filed with the Programme Coordinator no later than November 30. The full dissertation (approximately 40-80 pages) shall be completed and presented for examination by April 30 of the academic year in which the course is taken.

Prerequisites: **AMER1050, AMER2050**

Assessment: 100% coursework

AMER3008. American Studies internship (6 credits)

The internship course provides top American Studies students with an opportunity to gain valuable working experience in an American business or non-governmental organization. During the semester prior to the internship (internship duration must be at least three weeks full time or comprise a minimum of 120 hours part-time), students will pursue individualized research related to the industry of their hosting organization under the supervision of a mentor, typically (though not necessarily) an American Studies Programme instructor or board member. Through readings students will study theoretical frameworks from American Studies disciplines that are suited to analyzing the industry in question. Students will present their preparatory research in a short essay, which includes their expectations for the internship. During the internship, students will write a journal in which they reflect critically on their day-to-day experiences. To conclude, students write a second essay after the internship in which they summarize their experiences and compare them to their expectations as stated in the first essay. The host institution's evaluation of the intern's performance will be included in the assessment. The final essay shall be submitted no later than two weeks following the completion of the internship. Please note: Although we will do our best to assist you in your search, students are responsible for obtaining the internship position and must present the internship offer by the last day of the add/drop period to the programme director of American Studies. All students who fail to fulfill this requirement will automatically be dropped from the course.

Prerequisite: **AMER1050**

Assessment: 100% coursework

**Other courses, offered from time to time by the component departments and approved by the Programme Director in American Studies in conjunction with the department concerned, may be used to fulfill programme requirements.