American Culture Studies

The Master of Arts in American Culture Studies addresses the intellectual and moral questions of American identity and belonging that no single disciplinary perspective can comprehensively and satisfyingly resolve. What does it mean to live and work in an American culture devoted to individual success and autonomy and at the same time be a citizen of a nation devoted to collective needs and well-being?

The Master of Arts in American Culture Studies provides the instruction, both in specific disciplines and in cross-disciplinary conversations, to help students answer important questions about American society. It also introduces some of the social, political, and cultural issues that have shaped American culture and identity. Most fundamentally, it provides a critical skill set that fosters analysis of an array of cultural objects — a place, an event, a work of art, a political institution — from a rich and diverse foundation of knowledge and perspectives.

Students' studies culminate in a self-directed project that allows them to explore an area of personal interest while participating in a multidisciplinary scholarly community. Part of the excitement of this kind of learning is the opportunity to engage in creative, rigorous exchange with the faculty in the humanities and social sciences at Washington University in St. Louis, and with leading practitioners in the St. Louis professional and policy world.

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Degree Requirements

Master of Arts in American Culture Studies

The Master of Arts in American Culture Studies is a 30-unit program in which students take a minimum of two courses in each of the following distribution areas:

- Humanities courses from literature, history, religion, or philosophy
- Social Sciences courses from anthropology, education, economics, or political science
- Arts courses from music, art history, or theater/film

The course AMCS 445 Introduction to American Culture Studies is recommended for all students. Remaining electives are drawn from course work in different aspects of American culture.

Courses

Visit online course listings to view semester offerings for U89 AMCS (https://courses.wustl.edu/CourseInfo.aspx?sch=U&dept=U89&crslvl=4:8).

U89 AMCS 412 Sports and Culture: Reading Race and Racism through Spectator Sports

This course will examine the role of spectator sports in American life, seeking to understand the way athletics have influenced the politics and discourse of the United States and its citizens. In particular, we will consider the prominent role sports have played in affecting the way Americans understand race and racism.

We will focus on athletes of significance since the Civil War, including Isaac Burns Murphy, Jack Johnson, Jesse Owens, Jackie Robinson, Muhammad Ali, Michael Jordan, and others. At the same time, we will examine how media shapes our understanding of athletes and the competitions we consume.

Credit 3 units. UColl: ACH, ACS

U89 AMCS 413 Writing the Documentary Lyric

This course explores American culture through poetic accounts that focus on the personal experience of social issues ranging from ecological crisis, consumer culture, race, labor, war, and autobiography as coextensive with local history. Students will blend research with creative writing, reading exemplary texts (such as Birdlovers, Backyard; Giscombe Road; Citizen; Port of Los Angeles; Shut Up, Shut Down; and 100 Notes on Violence) while producing their own creative work. The readings and writings will be focused on documentary writing which incorporates quotations from daily life, the news, films, diaries, public documents, and maps. The readings studied are "lyric" instead of journalistic, following a poetic approach that connects inner experience and outer event, intimate and distant occurrences, people and places, private and public life. Students will engage in weekly creative-writing exercises while developing a final research-based creative-writing project. The course will include conversations with some of our books' authors, who will offer insights into their processes of cultural research grounded in personal experience and language-conscious cultural critique.

This course will count toward the major in American culture studies for day students. This course fulfills the Art distribution requirement for the AMCS MA program.

Credit 3 units. UColl: ACF

U89 AMCS 4135 Tobacco: History, Anthropology, and Politics of a Global Epidemic

Tobacco is the most important public health and medical problem of our time, the leading cause of cancer and other chronic diseases. This course examines tobacco’s important role in shaping the modern world and global health over the course of the last five centuries, from indigenous uses of tobacco to plantation slavery to the cigarette boom to the politics of health and smoking in the 21st century. Through in-depth historical and anthropological case studies, tobacco provides a window into trends in government and law, medicine and public health, business and economics, society and culture, including changing social meanings of gender, race, class, sexuality, advertising, consumerism, risk, responsibility, and health in the United States and worldwide. This course also introduces students to public health approaches to noncommunicable disease prevention, environmental health, and healthy lifestyle promotion. No background in anthropology or public health is required.
U89 AMCS 420 The History of American Architecture
“The perennial architectural debate has always been, and will continue to be, about art versus use, visions versus pragmatism, aesthetics versus social responsibility. In the end, these unavoidable conflicts provide architecture's essential and productive tensions; the tragedy is that so little of it rises above the level imposed by compromise, and that this is the only work most of us see and know.” — Ada Louise Huxtable. This course examines the ideological, political, economic and social determinants that have shaped the look of American architecture. Starting with a thorough survey of the historic development of American architecture pursued in a chronological reading of styles, forms, and major architects, the course examines key tensions in the development of American architecture. Students will undertake readings, site visits, and discussions that probe whether there is a distinctly American mode of creating architecture, and what contingencies illuminate or obscure that mode. The central questions of this course: What are the definitive characteristics of American architecture? Does the American practice of architecture espouse an exceptionalism, or does it emulate international precedents (or both)? Do the characteristics of American architecture reveal the social, economic, and political structures of its production? Ultimately, can we read an American building to reveal sense of national identity, individual political agency, the evolution of gender roles, the assertion of disciplinary and economic power, and the evolution of the American artistic sensibility? This course fulfills the Humanities and Fine Arts distribution requirement for the AMCS master's program. Credit 3 units. UColl: ACF, ACH

U89 AMCS 4220 The Presidency and American Political Culture
This course seeks to analyze the ways in which the President of the United States is not only a political, but a symbolic head of the nation. This process of constructing the nation is mutually constitutive, in which the president works to construct the nation by rhetorically and materially uniting it, and the people construct the presidency, both in the powers they confer upon it and the ways in which they imagine its significance. Along with more traditional definitions of political power, this course will examine the presidential use of power through rhetoric and self-portrayal in such forms as portraiture and campaigns. Also included are the people's depictions of the presidency, such as photography, monumental architecture, and popular films. The specific case studies of presidential administrations include James Madison, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson, Ronald Reagan, and Barack Obama. Credit 3 units. UColl: ACH

U89 AMCS 4281 Race and Science in America, 1840-2000
This course will examine a variety of theories of racial differences based on scientific (biological) theories, from the early days of anthropometry (measurements of facial angle or cranial capacity) to criminal anthropology, eugenic theories of the early 1900s, the race and I.Q. and sociobiology claims about race in the 1970s, The Bell Curve and theories of J. Philippe Rushton in the 1990s. Readings will be drawn from primary sources, including the writings of Samuel George Morton, Joshua Nott, Cesare Lombroso, Charles B. Davenport, Madison Grant, Arthur R. Jensen, and E.O. Wilson; and from secondary sources such as Stephen Jay Gould's, The Mismeasure of Man. Course format will be some lecture but mostly discussion and student presentations. There will be one mid-term writing project and a final paper. Credit 3 units. UColl: ACF, ACH

U89 AMCS 430 Images of African-Americans in American Cinema
Same as U18 Film 430 Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 4315 African-American Language and Education: Culture, Language, and the Education of Black Students
This course examines the communicative patterns of what is called variously African-American language, Pan-African linguistic systems, and Ebonics within the context of public school policy and practice. In addition to a review of the structural and pragmatic aspects of Black speech, the course highlights relationships between controversies within the linguistic community, contrasting views of speech within Black lay communities, public discourse, and educational policy. Students will also conduct a field-based research project in accord with their particular interests. Credit 3 units. A&S: SS, CD A&S IQ: LCD, SSC Art: SSC

U89 AMCS 4317 Illness and the American Cultural Imagination
This multidisciplinary course examines how representations of illness in America reveal a culture that is always negotiating philosophical, ethical, and political questions about the body and disease. We will study a range of texts — medical articles, religious treatises, films, and history of public health — with a particular emphasis on fiction. Students will be asked to consider the distinction scholar Arthur Kleinman makes between illness and disease — illness as the patient's experience and disease as medicine's focus — in order to negotiate the subjective experience of illness and the biological reality of disease. We will explore how we understand illness through our metaphorical descriptions of it, our characterizations of those who contract it, and our visions of who/what cures it. Readings will demonstrate shifts in both popular and medical views of illness as we think about how different historical periods are marked by a preoccupation with specific diseases: small-pox, yellow fever, cholera, tuberculosis, polio, cancer, AIDs, etc. This course fulfills the Humanities and Social Science distribution requirement for the AMCS MA program. Credit 3 units. UColl: ACH, ACS

U89 AMCS 435 Topics in African-American Literature
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 436 Black and White in American Drama
This course explores race in America through 19th- and 20th-century drama by black and white American writers. There is an emphasis on uses of the Classical tradition, on melodrama, the modernist theater as well as the theater of the Black Arts Movement. Writers include Dion Boucicault, William Wells Brown, Marita Bonner, Eugene O'Neill, Lillian Hellman, Zora Neale Hurston, Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Lorraine Hansberry, Adrienne Kennedy, Arthur Miller, and August Wilson. Credit 3 units.
U89 AMCS 459 Philosophies of Education
This course will introduce students to the history and methods of the interdisciplinary field of American studies. Questions we will ask throughout the semester include: How do we define “culture,” and how has that definition changed over time? What are the social, intellectual, and political stakes of how we define culture and the ways we study it? Throughout the semester, students will have the opportunity to read published work by AMCS-affiliated faculty, who will join the class to discuss their work and the practice of American studies. While the course will use AMCS’s four program initiatives — American Intimacies, Modern Segregation, Visual and Material Culture, and Performance and Pop Culture — as a means to consider the range of analytical methods commonly utilized by American studies scholars, the course will be useful to students in other fields interested learning more about social and cultural history and/or cultural studies.
Credit 3 units. UColl: ACF, ACH, ACS

U89 AMCS 444 American Conspiracy
This course will trace the prevalence and power of modern conspiracy theories in American culture that have their roots in the birth of the republic and continue to flourish today. We will analyze the specificity of conspiracy theories — UFOs, Communists, the Moon landing, JFK’s assassination, AIDS and the CIA, 9/11 Truthers — but our purpose will be to “theorize” the conspiracy theory. How do Americans perceive and misperceive their culture, and for what ends? Much of our work will be methodological insofar as distrust and paranoia are produced in many realms — psychological, social, political — and we must organize and analyze these overlapping anxieties in our practice of American culture studies. This course fulfills the Humanities distribution requirement for the AMCS MA program.
Credit 3 units. UColl: ACH

U89 AMCS 445 Introduction to American Culture Studies
This course will introduce students to the history and methods of the interdisciplinary field of American studies. Questions we will ask throughout the semester include: How do we define “culture,” and how has that definition changed over time? What are the social, intellectual, and political stakes of how we define culture and the ways we study it? Throughout the semester, students will have the opportunity to read published work by AMCS-affiliated faculty, who will join the class to discuss their work and the practice of American studies. While the course will use AMCS’s four program initiatives — American Intimacies, Modern Segregation, Visual and Material Culture, and Performance and Pop Culture — as a means to consider the range of analytical methods commonly utilized by American studies scholars, the course will be useful to students in other fields interested learning more about social and cultural history and/or cultural studies.
Credit 3 units. UColl: ACF, ACH, ACS

U89 AMCS 465 Studies in American Cultural Identity: Beginnings to the Civil War
The course is an exploration of later 19th- to early 20th-century American literary, visual, and musical art in relation to key themes, decisive moments, and cultural developments which have shaped our national character and influenced our first internationally recognized artists, as the formation of a distinctly American art begins. Struggles for religious, racial, and gender rights, American violence, polarities of innocence and experience, individualism and conformity, The American Dream and its dreamers, all receive attention. Viewing of American Neoclassical and Romantic visual art and architecture, listening to colonial, Federalist, Jacksonian and post-Jacksonian era songs and ballads, and reading from major and less well-known 17th-, 18th-, and 19th-century literary and historical figures. This course fulfills the Humanities or Arts distribution requirement for the AMCS master's program.
Credit 3 units. UColl: ACF, ACH

U89 AMCS 455 The Politics of Immigration: The United States and the World
We will study immigrant populations and the politics of migration, focusing on the social, economic, and political status of immigrant groups in the United States in the comparative context of global trends. In the 1990s, redefinitions of national boundaries and the dislocation of many cultural and political groups catalyzed new waves of immigration around the world. U.S. economic strength at this time attracted many of these migrants to this country. The new millennium has witnessed significant shifts in global migration patterns. We will evaluate national factors such as immigration laws, housing, education, and economic policies, as well the impact of international forces such as war and economic globalization.
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 451 Human Nature and American Politics
The political behavior of presidents, politicians, and voters is often explained by saying “that's human nature.” We will examine and critique our theories of human nature, and how we acquire and justify them. Readings will be drawn from American popular culture, political philosophy, political behavior research, sociobiology, and humanistic psychology. Prerequisite: junior standing.
Same as U25 PolSci 451
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 4511 Race, Ethnicity, and Culture: Qualitative Inquiries in Urban Education
Drawing on traditional and recent advances in the field of qualitative studies, this course is the first in a series to examine ethnographic research at the interlocking domains of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and culture. The emphasis in this course is on how these concepts are constructed in urban educational institutions. The course includes a field component that involves local elementary and/or middle schools.
Same as L90 AFAS 4511
Credit 3 units. A&S: SS, SD A&S IQ: SSC, SD Arch: SSC Art: SSC BU: BA

U89 AMCS 474 Studies in American Cultural Identity: The Civil War to the Jazz Age
The course is an exploration of later 19th- to early 20th-century American literary, visual, and musical art in relation to key themes, decisive moments, and cultural developments which have shaped and defined our national character. Struggles for religious, racial, and gender rights; American violence; our polarities of innocence and experience, of individual and group welfare, individualism and conformity; and complex expressions of The American Dream and its dreamers, all receive attention. We view American Post-Romantic, Realistic, Naturalistic, and Post-World War I visual art, architecture, and photography; listen to late 19th-century, turn of the century, and Jazz Age music; and read from major and less well-known literary figures to consider how the social and political developments of the
time influenced our artists as the flourishing of a distinctly American art became an internationally acknowledged fact. The course counts toward the American culture studies major for day students, and fulfills the Humanities or Arts distribution requirement for the AMCS master’s program.
Credit 3 units. UCall: ACF, ACH

U89 AMCS 475D Landscapes Through Time: The History of St. Louis’ Built Environment
From the Mississippian mound builders to the urban conditions of the present day, this course will investigate the different approaches of various cultures to creating built environments that meet the needs of their time in terms of landscapes and structures. Using the City of St. Louis and particularly its riverfront district as an example, the course will examine the layout and infrastructure of the city at various periods, discussing the effects of technological changes in the creation of structures, improvements to transportation and sanitation, facilitation of trade and the effects of these forces on the cultural and built landscape of the city. We cover the structures and landscapes that defined individual eras in the history of the city, and the ways in which these were successful or unsuccessful. Further, the course investigates the cultural needs, whims and desires that dictated certain types of structures and landscapes for civic, recreational, commercial, residential and religious purposes. Students will be expected to make a short 15-20 minute presentation to the class on a local structure, based on a personal field trip to the site, during the course of the semester. Credit 3 units. UCall: ACF, ACH

U89 AMCS 4771 Gender in 19th-Century Art
The representation of gender, and the role of gender in artistic practice. Focus on American, French, and English. Double-listed with Art-Arch L01-4771. Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 4782 Topics in Religious Studies
This seminar seeks to explore the relation of religion and violence. Major themes include sacrifice, the scapegoat, martyrdom, scarification, forms of ritual circumcission and piercing, cannibalism, holy militias, holy terror, and holy war. Concrete examples will be discussed. Viewpoints range from the anthropological to the psychological, sociological, and theological. Among key writings to be studied are Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life; Freud, Totem and Taboo; Hubert & Mauss, Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function; Robert Lowie, Primitive Religion; René Girard, Violence and the Sacred; and Mark Juergensmeyer, Terror in the Mind of God. Same as U66 RelSt 478
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 478A American Folklore in Context
For the last several election cycles, candidates and supporters from across the political spectrum have invoked “the real American.” But what does it mean to be authentically American? A simple answer might be that they are “us.” A more complex one requires that we dive into American folklore. The scholarly field of Folklore may be defined loosely as exploring what we say, what we do, and what we believe. Following this schema, this course will probe the question of what it means to be “American folk” by examining how folklore informs and shapes the world around us and our everyday lives. More particularly, we ask how race and ethnicity, class and gender are encoded and contested through folk expression. Beginning with the question “who are the folk,” we will look at classic and contemporary texts in folklore studies to explore how our food, our stories, our daily rituals, and our music, to name a few, interweave to create a complex, multilayered, and uniquely American folk. Readings pair specific genres with different theoretical approaches and include jokes, urban legends, folktales, foodways, music, and material culture. Crucially, we seek to trouble popular notions of folklore as “antiquities” to question how the lens of Folklore studies may reveal how American culture not only consists of folklore but is constructed by it as folk forms are deployed in contemporary contexts, from Slenderman to Snopes to modern slave auctions. The course will entail several small collection projects to give students an understanding of the work a folklorist does in the field and how folklore is coproduced within a community, and a longer research project. This course satisfies the Humanities requirement for the master’s program in American Culture Studies.
Credit 3 units. UCall: American Culture Studies

U89 AMCS 480 Women’s Health Care in America
This course will provide a broad historical overview of women's health care in America. We will begin with an examination of midwifery in 18th-century America, then look at the increasing medicalization of childbirth and the new emphasis on women's biological difference in the 19th century, and finally study changes in the medical profession and their impact on women's health care in the early to mid-20th century. Through a wide range of material — including primary texts, such as doctor-authored tracts, diaries, letters, and fiction, as well as secondary material written by historians, feminist scholars, and medical writers — we will trace the changing perceptions and conceptions of women's bodies and health. Authors will include: Catherine Maria Sedgwick, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Dr. Mary Putnam Jacobi, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Louisa May Alcott, Joan Jacobs Brumberg, and Natalie Angier.
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 482 And Justice for All? American Inequalities
In this course we examine social inequality in the contemporary United States, with a particular focus on disparities related to health, wealth, housing and neighborhoods, criminal justice, and education. The St. Louis metropolitan region will serve as a guiding case study, tying together the course themes with a common example of how inequality shapes material and political life. We will investigate the current empirical reality and historical roots of American inequality, the key theories and methodological tools used to examine and explain inequality, the institutions responsible for its reproduction, and possibilities for reducing inequality via social policy and social movement. Within each topic area, we will pay special attention to the significance of race and ethnicity, social class, and gender — as well as their intersections and cleavages. We will largely constrain our inspection of inequality to American metropolitan areas as we analyze the spatial or place-based effects associated with disparities in urban America. Readings are drawn from sociology, urban history, geography, political science, economics, social epidemiology, and education.
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 483 Race and Real Estate in St. Louis 1869 - Present
This course analyzes how real estate continues to influence the racial history of St. Louis, focusing on the laws, policies, and practices that have shaped and hardened racial divides in
this city. While race-based policy in St. Louis has resulted in a
sharp black/white divide, these legal instruments of exclusion
were developed in tandem with an increasingly robust taxonomy
of racial classifications across the globe. Thus, the course is
focused on one city and its unique racial dynamics, but we
will also put St. Louis history in the context of the history of
ethnicity and the rise of racial science. We will conduct primary-
source research in the St. Louis city and county archives, the
Missouri History Museum Library, and the office of the recorder
of deeds. We will also read about St. Louis’ unique history of
19th-century privatized urban infrastructure, the city’s industrial
boom and post-industrial bust, suburbanization, urban decline,
and gentrification in the 21st century. We will conduct research
on specific parcels of property in the city, tracing not only the
residents of the property, but also the chain of ownership.
Credit 3 units. UColl: ACS

U89 AMCS 4861 Conservatism and the American Right in
the United States
This course focuses on the post-World War II conservative
movement, one of the most important and successful political
movements of the 20th century. The class will consider the
history and definition of the "Right" and "conservatism" in the
modern Western thought; trace the origins of the American
Right in the reaction against a modernizing, consumer-
driven American culture; assess the rise of a self-consciously
intellectually conservative movement after World War II and
the ways in which activists guided and manipulated the
broader American Right; examine the various strands of the
conservative movement, from free-market libertarianism to
anti-Communism to traditionalist antimodernism; explore the
way in which conservatives gained control of the Republican
Party and toppled the liberal establishment; explore the rise of
the New Right (including populist social conservatism and
politicized evangelical Christianity) and of neoconservatism in
the 1970s; and, finally, analyze the subsequent splintering of
the conservative coalition. Prerequisite: admission to master's
program in American Culture Studies or graduate standing
and permission of program coordinator in University College
(314-935-6778).
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 4908 Advanced Seminar: Women in History of
Higher Education and Professions
An advanced seminar with readings exploring education,
historical studies and feminist theory. Each student writes a
paper based on research in local archives and in other primary
sources, on a topic related to women in higher education and/or
professions. Prerequisite: senior standing; some background in
American history.
Same as U86 Educ 440
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 491 "St. Louis Got the Best of Me": Music in
American Culture
This course will explore how music functions as a folklore,
centering on the many musical styles, musicians, and fans that
have shaped St. Louis from the early ragtime to today's diverse
music scene. The term "folk music" may bring images of banjos
and accordions, but every kind of music has a "folk"—folk who
use music to represent their identities, their beliefs, and their
struggles. Throughout the semester, students will question what
"American" music sounds like, and what happens to music and
culture as it is played, recorded, and represented. St. Louis
provides us with a hothouse of musical cultures, incubating
the blues and Jeff Tweedy, encouraging ethnic traditions from
Ireland to Bosnia and beyond, providing a haven for fans like
the Juggalos and a nationally renowned superfan, and fostering
a homegrown fiddling style all our own. The course will use
St. Louis’ music culture — with lots of listening — to examine
what music means to both ingroup and outgroup musicians and
listeners but also the roles music plays in an ongoing dialogue
about authenticity, tradition, and difference. The move between
the individual, the community, and the larger society. This course
satisfies the Fine Arts requirement for the Master of Arts in
American Culture Studies.
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 492 Decoding the City
While architecture and infrastructure are worthy of study in
themselves, often they signify more complex cultural meanings,
mask efforts to erase or reorder the city, and conceal histories
of injustice. This course presents methods for "reading" the built
form of the American city to decode histories of architecture,
culture, public policy and economics. City space can be read
literally, but this course will unpack the symbolic meanings of
urban spaces, neighborhoods, buildings and sites. Students will
undertake readings that will present methods for understanding
and analyzing the city’s form, before delving into a specific
case study of the Mill Creek Valley. As St. Louis' largest
African-American neighborhood, but almost completely erased
between 1959 and 1965 using city and federal funds, the site of
the neighborhood remains a potent and under-examined
part of St. Louis. The course will examine the history of the
neighborhood as well as related histories of federal and local
urban renewal policies, African-American cultural history and
historic preservation. Research into the neighborhood will
include experiences at local archives where students will learn to
attain and apply primary source documents vital to urban history
including Census records, building permits, municipal ordinances
and insurance maps. Additional readings will offer insights into
possible methods for interpreting and commemorating places
that illuminate the urban built environment's historic past. The
final project in this course will entail students collaboratively
working on a public interpretive project for Mill Creek Valley
where they can apply both methods of decoding and curating
the city. This course satisfies the Humanities and Social Science
requirement for the master's program in American Culture
Studies.
Credit 3 units. UColl: ACH, ACS, HSM, HUS

U89 AMCS 4937 U.S. Foreign Relations from the Great War
to the Cold War
Impact of world conflict, revolution, and domestic political-
economic developments on the global expansion of American
interests, ideology, and power from the Great War to the early
years of the Cold War, including the war in Korea. Prerequisite:
admision to International Affairs program or senior standing and
permission of program coordinator.
Same as U84 IA 4122
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 494 Voices in Action: History and Poetry of
Protest in America (1930-Present)
What sparks and sustains people's movements for social
justice? This history and creative-writing course explores the
contexts and expressions of 20th century and contemporary
protest movements, ranging from labor, civil rights, the Vietnam
War, ethnic people and women's movements, to contemporary social and environmental justice movements. We will explore speeches, manifestos, visual and oral texts, songs, and poetry to consider how dissent is voiced in response to specific social contexts and historic events. We will consider the role of personal expression in enacting democracy, focusing on poetry that helps articulate what is at stake in the protest movements of the 20th and 21st centuries. We will examine how language moves people, raising awareness of the facts and felt experiences of injustice, helping to fuel social movements and "call forth a public" to make change. Assignments include a mix of historical analysis, ethnographic and participatory work, creative writing, and reflection.

**U89 AMCS 500 Independent Study**

An independent research project under the supervision of a member of the AMCS faculty. Approved proposal must be presented at the time of registration. Open only to students in the AMCS program. For more information, contact the assistant dean for Graduate Programs at 314-935-6700.

Credit variable, maximum 3 units.

**U89 AMCS 502 Directed Research Project**

An independent research project under the supervision of a member of the AMCS faculty. Approved proposal must be presented at the time of registration. Required for Master of Arts in American Culture Studies. Open only to students admitted to the AMCS program.

Credit 3 units.

**U89 AMCS 503 Master's Thesis**

An independent research project under the supervision of a member of the AMCS faculty. Approved proposal must be presented at the time of registration. Open only to students admitted to the AMCS program. Prerequisite: U89 502.

Credit 3 units.

**U89 AMCS 508 America by Design**

America by Design is a survey course that examines the key forms of the American built environment from the colonial period until the present. These forms include the American House, Workplace, The Street, Civic Spaces, and Shapes of the Land such as the National Park System. The course combines readings, lectures, audio-visual presentations, field trips, and class discussions to explore such "growths out of our past" in their historic and cultural contexts. This course will enable students to better understand the relationship between American culture and how we have shaped our landscape. Their new understanding should help students to better interpret the many layers of the American landscape as well as help communities thoughtfully design a more sustainable, meaningful future that grows gracefully out of its past.

Credit 3 units.

**U89 AMCS 509 Philosophy in the United States**

Examination of the works of such major philosophical writers as Emerson, Peirce, James, Santayana, and Dewey, and supplementary readings with a range of selections that emphasize the philosophic, historical, scientific, religious, or literary and artistic context in which these philosophers wrote. For example, supplementary readings may include selections from Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Hegel for philosophic background; from Darwin and Einstein for scientific context; and from Shakespeare and Whitman for literary background. Students are encouraged to examine works of art, magazines, and journals from the same period as each philosophical writer. Discussion of such philosophic topics as metaphysics, religion, art, morals, and scientific method.

Same as U98 MLA 509

Credit 3 units.

**U89 AMCS 513 Rhetoric of Law in American Society**

This course will introduce students to the classical rhetorical tradition (with which virtually all of the Founding Fathers were familiar), and will then examine a variety of American legal (and other) materials in order to determine what role the rhetorical tradition generally, and the rhetoric of law specifically, have played in shaping American legal and political culture. Course requirements include a series of weekly writing assignments.

Same as U98 MLA 5134

Credit 3 units.

**U89 AMCS 515 American Social Character: Individualism and Community**

An exploration of the American social character from its earliest beginnings to the present day. The class will seek the sources of American values, and the political, economic and social forces that have changed these values over the centuries with an emphasis on the conflict between individualism and the need for community. Readings begin with two key sources of American values from British political thought: Hobbes and Locke. Tocqueville will then teach us about the American social character in the 1830s, a set of values that is still with us but under attack in the present day. We will see these values expressed in practical terms by Emerson, Thoreau, Lincoln and Martin Luther King. Henry Adams will give us a picture of the corruption of America's earlier values in the period after the Civil War. We will also read from three analytical works on changes in American social character.

Same as U98 MLA 5135

Credit 3 units.

**U89 AMCS 515 Discovering the Heartland**

The central regions of the United States, most especially the prairies, were slow to find their place in America's sense of itself. Called the "Great American Desert" on many early 19th-century maps, the interior grassland — with time and cultivation — proved able to feed a vast nation. What travelers dismissed as a "waste" and described as a kind of inland sea separating east from west came to epitomize America, became its heartland. This course will examine literary, political, and historical texts that mark our passage through this transition of thought and place. Readings will include exploration narratives, scientific reports, political speeches, and historical commentary (as well as, of course, novels and poems).

Credit 3 units.

**U89 AMCS 5152 Pluralism, Politics and Religion**

A graduate seminar for students in social sciences, history or philosophy, focusing on issues of multiculturalism, ethnic and religious pluralism, and governance of ethnic and religious diversity in European, Asian, and North American societies. Course is open to graduate students in all disciplines and is part of an exchange program with Societies, Religions, Laicites Laboratory in Paris. Independent research is expected; nature of research will vary by discipline but can include ethnographic,
historical, or theoretical work, to be evaluated by instructor
in consultation with appropriate departmental supervisors. Instructor's permission is required.
Same as L48 Anthro 5152
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 517 Ethics and American Culture
“How ought we live? How do we think about how to live? Who are we, as Americans? What is our character?” Robert Bellah poses these questions in his seminal work on American values, Habits of the Heart. We will explore these questions in this course by learning the ethical systems of relativism, personalism, virtue ethics, utilitarianism, deontological ethics, and some feminist ethics. We will also examine selections from Bellah’s treatment of individualism and commitment in American life, and focus on more specific ethical issues in American culture. Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 5203 America: Through a Glass Darkly
This course studies depictions of America by non-Americans. We will examine the social, political, and economic aspects of their accounts and their influence on America’s beliefs, policies, and international reputation. The class will consider fundamental values as well as ethnic and gender-based differences. Comparing historical periods from both western and eastern perspectives, students will read texts written during the past three centuries from England, France, Germany, Cuba, and China. For the colonial/Revolutionary War period, we will study Chateaubriand, History & Description of New France and Crévecoeur, “Letters from an American Farmer.” Nineteenth-century readings include Tocqueville, Democracy in America; Frances Trollope, Views of Society and Manners in America; Dickens, American Notes; Francis Lieber, The Stranger in America; and newspaper articles by Jose Marti. Our discussions of the 20th century will focus on Kafka, Amerika; Francis Hsu, Americans and Chinese; Beauvoir, America: Day to Day; and Baudrillard, America. Same as U98 MLA 5203 Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 5217 Paint It Black: Understanding American Film Noir
A product of highly diverse influences and traditions, film noir is known for its stylized visual aesthetic, crackling dialogue, moral ambivalence, and existential paranoia. Its style and language continue to inform filmmakers in Hollywood and worldwide. This seminar positions the aesthetic shapes and traumatic narratives of film noir within the context of American culture and film history during the war and post-war years. As importantly, it explores film noir as a test case in order to probe notions of film history, genre, and authorship, of cultural and intermedial transfer and the popular. Required screenings will take place during the second half of each week’s class. Films will likely include many of the following: The Maltese Falcon, Phantom Lady, Double Indemnity, Laura, Gun Crazy, Somewhere in the Night, The Glass Key, The Blue Gardenia and Chinatown. Prerequisite: Consult Course Listings. Same as U98 MLA 5217 Credit 3 units. UColl: ACF

U89 AMCS 5222 The Dysfunctional Family in American Drama
One can say without fear of exaggeration that American drama is family drama. In countless plays from O’Neill to Tennessee Williams to Wendy Wasserstein and Sam Shepard, the family and its complex series of love-hate relations has been seen by our best playwrights as a microcosm of America itself, and its dreams and illusions. This course will examine the theme of family relations on the American stage from 1920 to the present day. Along with a close study of individual plays we will also research the psychological and social underpinnings of the family in America, asking ourselves about its meanings, myths and functions. Plays include: O’Neill, A Long Day’s Journey into Night; Williams, The Glass Menagerie; Miller, Death of a Salesman; Albee, Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?; Hansberry, A Raisin in the Sun; Fierstein, The Torch Song Trilogy; Norman, ‘night Mother; Wasserstein, The Sisters Rosensweig; and Shepard, Buried Child. A large number of these plays have been made into films, and we will take advantage of these to supplement our analyses of the playscripts. Same as U98 MLA 5223 Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 5223 Film Stardom, Performance and Fan Culture
This course focuses on the Hollywood star system. We will explore stars in relation to celebrity and consumerism, especially how “stardom” is created by a system that seeks to create effects in film viewers whether conceived as audiences, fans, or spectators. We will examine the performance element of stardom and its relationship to genre, style, and changing film technology. Also of concern will be how stars and the discursive construction of stardom intersect with gender representation, race, ideology, sexuality, age, disability, nationality, and other points of theoretical interest to and historical inquiry in contemporary film studies. Films will be placed in the context of mainstream commercial U.S. cinema, students are encouraged to pursue questions beyond this framework within their own research. Required screenings. Same as L53 Film 422 Credit 3 units. A&S: LA A&S IQ: HUM BU: BA

U89 AMCS 524 The American Dream: Myth or Reality
This course will examine the origins and history of “The American Dream.” What do we mean when we use this term? How does it resonate and influence our politics, advertising, and especially the arts? We will discuss the experience of immigration and assimilation, how foreigners with different cultural backgrounds enter American society. Beginning with the implications of America’s image as a “brave new world” in European thought and philosophy (including Shakespeare’s The Tempest), and the prescient view of our culture by de Tocqueville and others, we will examine how the dream of success and wealth has been depicted and employed in theater, fiction, cinema, and the visual arts. Texts include: Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby, Williams’s The Glass Menagerie, Miller’s Death of a Salesman, West’s Day of the Locust, Lorraine Hansberry’s A Raisin in the Sun, Albee’s “The Zoo Story” and “The American Dream,” and John Guare’s The House of Blue Leaves. We will consider modern painters whose work offers a commentary on the dream, such as Edward Hopper and Andy Warhol. We will also study cinematic innovators from Charlie Chaplin to Orson Welles and Francis Ford Coppola who have used “The American Dream” as significant elements in their work. Same as U98 MLA 524 Credit 3 units.
U89 AMCS 524 Transatlantic Egos: Sylvia Plath, Emily Dickinson, Ted Hughes
Same as L14 E Lit 524
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 5243 American Voices
Certain major novelists and poets exhibit a complexity of vision and voice that seems distinctly American. Emphasis will be on the personal and cultural sources and shaping of literary voice, its power to render and even create our experience, and its characteristic American registers: Romantic, metaphysical, discursive, lyrical, and colloquial. Selections may include Melville (Moby Dick), Henry James, Faulkner, Hemingway, Frost, Stevens, Bellow, Ellison, Gass, and DeLillo.
Same as U98 MLA 5243
Credit 3 units.

Our place in nature and its impact on us has been a central concern of much literary nonfiction after 1800. From the Romantic vision of nature as our spiritual home to contemporary debate about the preservation of wilderness, American nature writing has inspired reflection, celebration and passionate advocacy. Readings will examine this tradition in depth and will include samples of environmental history and ethics. Readings include The Norton Book of Nature Writing, Thoreau's Walden, Roderick Nash's Wilderness and the American Mind, William Cronon's Uncommon Ground, Donald Worster's Dust Bowl, and other selections.
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 5261 Topics in American Politics: Political Civil Rights Movement
This course is intended primarily for sophomores and juniors. The topic of this course varies by semester, dependent on faculty and student interests. Prerequisites: L32 101B American Politics.
Same as L32 Pol Sci 426
Credit 3 units. A&S: SS, SD A&S IQ: SSC, SD Art: SSC

U89 AMCS 5263 The City in American and European Modernism
The city has played an ambiguous role in the modern European and American imaginations. For some, the city offers personal freedom in an environment of social diversity and experimentation, while for others the city is a place of isolation, alienation, and fragmentation. We will consider these and other conceptions of the city, with particular attention to the relationship between the city and modernist aesthetics. The course will examine literature, theory, and film, including James Joyce's Dubliners, Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway, Ayn Rand's The Fountainhead, William Gibson's Neuromancer, Lang's Metropolis and Ridley Scott's Bladerunner.
Same as U98 MLA 5263
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 527 Art, Society, and Culture in America's Gilded Age
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 5291 St. Louis in the 1870s: from Revolution to Reaction: Social, Political, and Economic Change
The decade of the 1870s can be seen as one which began with great promise, a kind of "revolution" stemming from the victory of the Federal government in the Civil War and the hopes many had for further social reforms in a newly reunited America. But divisions were too strong, and growing stronger in the 1870s, between capital and labor, black and white, an optimistic electorate and a corrupt political system. The end of the decade heralded a new era of reaction, during which corruption flourished, the rich got richer, the poor got poorer, and the civil rights of African Americans and Native Americans reached a nadir. It was not until the middle of the 20th century that these conditions began once more to improve. During the decade, St. Louis went through several crucial changes involving education, transportation routes to and from the city, commerce, the rights of labor, progressive legislation, civic improvements, and political corruption. This course will chart these changes by approaching the decade year by year, focusing on a major local event with national repercussions that took place during each year from 1870 to 1879. Other local events will also be included in readings and discussions, including the creation of local parks (Tower Grove and Forest Park), a professional baseball team, philosophical thought in the community, and the local arts scene (drama, literature, graphic arts). Most of the readings will be from periodical publications, or excerpts from books, since no one book covers the period in any detail. The readings will be available on e-reserve. There will also be an emphasis on the use of primary sources, which are rich, particularly newspaper accounts. References to existing landmarks and historic sites for each week's major story will provide a sense of place and extend our studies into the community at large.
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 531 Vietnam and America
Examination of the impact of the Vietnam War on the United States.
Same as U98 MLA 5413
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 5310 A History of Freedom of Speech in the United States
Freedom of speech and the press are among the most esteemed and contested principles in American governance. Through a close study of some of the best historical scholarship on the topic, we will consider the evolution of free speech philosophy, law, and practice from the colonial years through the 20th century. We will focus predominately on the shifting boundaries of political speech and the press, and explore the impact and interplay of federal and state law; judges and legal culture; extralegal organizations and the public in setting those boundaries. We will examine several seminal legal cases and ponder the historical context and forces which contributed to high court legal opinions. We will reflect on whether there has been progress in free speech doctrine and practice, and what, if anything, Americans have contributed to a broader European philosophy and tradition of free speech.
Same as U16 Hist 4310
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 538 Art and St. Louis History
From the first painting loaned to the Mercantile Library in 1846 to the formation of the City Art Museum (now the Saint Louis Art Museum) in 1909, art patronage in St. Louis was tied to the
growth and development of the city’s merchant class. These businessmen-collectors recognized art’s potential as a tool for civic advancement and actively employed it at a variety of venues. This course introduces significant individuals in St. Louis as well as artists popular at this time and explores the growth of area cultural institutions within the context of social history. Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 539 Topics in American Politics: American Urban Politics and History
This course focuses on the historical and cultural environment of cities from a political perspective. American urban areas are a cauldron of decision-making and power relationships which determine not only the shape of the physical spaces within cities, but also the allocation of resources. Topics include racial discrimination through historical and current national and local policies such as “blockbusting” or “redlining”; how economic development and redevelopment reshaped and continues to reshape the physical environment of cities and the political relationships within cities in the post World War II era; and the uses and meanings of urban public schools. This course counts toward the American Culture Studies distribution requirement in the social science category. Credit 3 units. UColl: ACH

U89 AMCS 542 White House Bound: Presidential Elections Past and Present
Same as U98 MLA 5422
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 5422 Anthropology Through the Arts
This course provides an overview of selected phenomena from prehistoric times to the present, illustrating how the arts and society interact. Our primary focus is on the visual arts, including fine arts and film. We will explore the process that leads to creativity in the individual. The course includes field trips to local cultural institutions.
Same as U69 Anthro 342
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 5423 Oil Wars: America and the Cultural Politics of Global Energy
This seminar explores the historical, cultural, and political relationship between America and global energy, focusing specifically on oil and natural gas. Our central objective is to examine how oil and natural gas shape our own lives and entangle us in the cultural, political, and economic lives of the rest of the world. We ask what anthropological and social science approaches might contribute to our understanding of a situation that has become, in most popular terms, a national “crisis” of global dimensions.
Same as U98 AMCS 442
Credit 3 units. A&S: SS A&S IQ: SSC Art: SSC

U89 AMCS 545 Introduction to American Culture Studies
This course introduces students to the origins and history of American studies, and to the various schools and approaches that have informed it. Through a shared case study on the American West and its myopic and mediated representations, methods of dealing with different kinds of sources — literary and historical, visual and aural, archival and ethnographic, electronic and online — are investigated. Inviting students to investigate and experiment with some of these approaches, the course ends with a project that students define and research based in part on the insights they have gained throughout the term. The course is intended for students enrolled in the master’s program in American Culture Studies. This course counts as an elective in the American Culture Studies program.
Credit 3 units. UColl: ACF, ACH, ACS

U89 AMCS 547 Violence and Nonviolence in American Culture
In this course we will look at the role of violence and nonviolence in American culture, asking ourselves whether it is possible to determine which of the two is the more powerful and effective force. We will examine some aspects of the philosophy of violence and nonviolence, using the works of Hannah Arendt, Martin Luther King, and possibly René Girard and others. We will undertake a historical analysis of the (often overlooked) role of nonviolent tactics in winning American wars from the Revolutionary War through the present war on terror. We will examine some aspects of social violence in contemporary American culture, including the school shootings at Columbine High School, and others, in order to determine the similarities and differences between social and political violence. We will look at the effectiveness of nonviolent social protest, including the civil rights movement and past and present peace movements.
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 548 Wanderlust: An Exploration of Travel in American Culture
Long before the advent of the supersonic jet and Expedia.com, Americans were driven to wander by an all-consuming passion for travel. Pilgrimage and discovery narratives were widely popular in the 19th century, and contributed to the ideal of America as a mobile and self-determined society, while souvenir-hunting and grand touring became fashionable pastimes of a growing middle class. Many of our own ideas about travel—and indeed, much of its allure—can be traced back to earlier periods and practices, images and ideas. In this course, we will explore travel in American culture during the 19th and 20th centuries, focusing on the rich visual, print, and material culture associated with the traveler and traveling (guidebooks, travel narratives, advertisements, photos, paintings, souvenirs, etc.). Our exploration will take us far and wide, from popular tourist destinations (Niagara Falls and the Catskills) to what once seemed far-flung destinations (Brazil, Japan, the Middle East, and Hawaii) to A World’s Fair to our own backyards. Our approach will be multidisciplinary and hands-on, as we seek to understand American wanderlust through the study of cultural artifacts.
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 550 Politics and Film
Examination of the role of film in 20th-century American political culture. The class will view eight films that reflect prominent political themes or issues such as the Cold War (Dr. Strangelove), corruption (All the President’s Men), and electoral strategies (The Candidate), and discuss their relationship to the American political culture of the time. Students will be responsible for classroom discussion and several short papers. Prerequisites: admission to MA in American Culture Studies or graduate standing and permission of program coordinator in University College.
Credit 3 units.
U89 AMCS 551 The Center and the Edge: American Urban Form in Historical Perspective  
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 554 "By the Sweat of Your Brow": A History of Work in America  
This course traces the history of the most mundane and near-universal of human activities: work. It argues that work has a history: that who worked, what counted as work, and how work was represented in popular culture changed dramatically over the 19th and 20th centuries. We will look at the varied nature of work in American history, including the slave system, indenture and apprenticeship, housework, farm labor, factory work and office jobs, service work, and child labor. We will, in addition, track changes in labor laws and struggles over working conditions, wages, and workers' organizations. We will consider a series of questions: Who worked? What counted as work? When and how were certain workers rendered obsolete? How were racial and gender hierarchies made and remade through labor systems? When, how, and why did workers challenge the authority of employers? When were workers' struggles successful or not? When and why did the state intervene in labor conflict? This is an interdisciplinary course; we will explore a wide variety of sources. We will read some of the major studies in American labor history along with some powerful and long-neglected primary documents — including Congressional reports, court cases, immigrant letters, slave petitions, business stationery, poetry, photographs, and film.  
Credit 3 units. UColl: ACH

U89 AMCS 556 Contemporary Native American Issues  
Credit 3 units.

U89 AMCS 568 Race and Ethnic Relations in the United States  
This seminar focuses on the social, political, and cultural factors that shape relations between different ethnic and racial groups in the United States. The course will concentrate on three general areas. In one, we will examine the socio-historical foundations of contemporary race relations by looking at the treatment of different ethnic and racial groups around the turn of the 20th century. In a second, we will consider variations in the political and social engagement of different racial and ethnic groups by looking at the Civil Rights Movement, the political emergence of Native Americans, and the activism of Hispanics to name a few. And third, we will look at specific case studies that provide insight into the different social issues experienced by different groups, such as inner city life in poorer communities and the challenges of integrating into a white dominated society.  
Credit 3 units. UColl: ACS

U89 AMCS 883 Continuing Master’s Research  
Required for continuing master of arts students. May enroll only two times. Course is audit only.