Colby

AMERICAN STUDIES

Director, *Professor Robert S. Weisbrot (History)*
Advisory Committee: *Professors Cedric Gael Bryant (English), Debra Campbell (Religious Studies), Cheryl Townsend Gilkes (African-American Studies and Sociology), and Elizabeth Leonard (History); Associate Professors Lisa Arellano (American Studies and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies), Margaret McFadden (American Studies), Katherine Stubbs (English), and Steve Wurtzler (Cinema Studies); Assistant Professors Benjamin Lisle (American Studies and Integrated Studies) and Daniel Tortora (History); Adjunct Instructor Kenneth Eisen*

American studies is an interdisciplinary major that enables students to explore the complex interactions of histories, cultures, identities, and representations that have shaped the experiences of people living in the United States. Building on foundational courses in U.S. history and textual analysis, students design their own courses of study, choosing among the program's strengths in visual culture, popular culture, gender and sexuality studies, American ethnic studies, and transnationalism.

American studies majors learn multiple approaches that enable them both to draw on and move between traditional academic disciplines. This interdisciplinary methodology informs all aspects of students' critical thinking about American cultures as they engage in analytical writing, thoughtful discussion, formal oral presentations, and independent research. Our pedagogical goal is to train students to be deeply and critically involved in the texts, forms, and practices that constitute the world around them.

Requirements for the Major in American Studies

The American studies major requires 11 courses—four in American studies (American Studies 171, 393, 493, and one elective); two in American history (History 131 or 231, and 132 or 232); three in American literature and visual culture (one pre-1900, one post-1900,) and any other American literature course, or a literature in translation course, or a course in visual culture; and two electives above the 200 level, selected from a list of appropriate courses and approved by the American studies advisor.

Of the required courses, History 131/231 and 132/232 and American Studies 171 should be taken before the end of the second year.

The point scale for retention of the major applies to all courses offered toward the major. No requirement for the major may be taken satisfactory/unsatisfactory. No more than five courses taken abroad may be counted toward the major.

Senior Projects

All senior majors will take American Studies 493, which requires them to research, write, and present a significant original project. The presentations are typically made as part of the annual Colby Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Honors Program

Students majoring in American studies may apply during their junior year for admission to the honors program. Permission is required; students must have a 3.5 GPA in the major to be eligible to apply. Successful completion of the work of the honors thesis, and of the major, will enable the student to graduate "With Honors in American Studies."

Attention is called to the major in African-American studies; requirements are listed under "African-American Studies."

Courses From Other Departments That May Be Applied to the American Studies Major

(Not all courses are offered every year; check curriculum for availability.)

Anthropology

- 313 Researching Cultural Diversity

Art

- 285 History of Photography
- 353 Contemporary Art, 1914 to the Present
- 493 Seminar (when appropriate)

Education

- 215 Children and Adolescents in Schools and Society
- 231 Teaching for Social Justice

- 235 Multiculturalism and the Political Project
- 332 Practicum in Girls' Development and Education

English

- 255 Studies in American Literary History: Puritans to the Civil War
- 256 Studies in American Literary History: Civil War to the Present
- 336 Early American Women Writers
- 341 American Realism and Naturalism
- 344 19th-Century American Poetry
- 345 Modern American Fiction
- 346 Culture and Literature of the American South
- 347 Modern American Poetry
- 351 Contemporary American Poetry
- 353 American Short Story
- 360 The Car in Modern American Literature and Pop Culture
- 364 Buddhism in American Poetry
- 413 Authors Courses (when appropriate)
- 426 African-American Women Writers
- 457 American Gothic Literature
- 493 Seminar in American Literature

Government

- 210 Interest-Group Politics
- 211 The American Presidency
- 214 Parties and the Electoral Process
- 273 American Political Thought
- 313 Federalism in American Constitutional Law
- 314 Civil Liberties in American Constitutional Law
- 316 Presidential Electoral Politics
- 318 Money and Politics
- 320 The Rights Revolution and Its Discontents
- 331 Business and American Foreign Policy
- 335 United States-Latin American Relations
- 371 Foundations of American Constitutionalism
- 413 Seminar: Policy Advocacy
- 414 Seminar: Ethics in Politics
- 432 Seminar: United States Foreign Policy

History

- 131 Survey of U.S History, to 1865
- 132 Survey of U.S. History, 1865 to the Present
- 231 American Women’s History, to 1870
- 232 American Women’s History, 1870 to the Present
- 239 The Era of the Civil War
- 245 Science, Race, and Gender
- 246 Luddite Rantings: A Historical Critique of Big Technology
- 247 African-American History, from Slavery to Freedom
- 336 After Appomattox
- 337 The Age of the American Revolution
- 342 Crisis and Reform: American Society and Politics in the 1960s
- 347 America in Vietnam
- 435 Research Seminar: The American Civil War
- 447 Research Seminar: The Cold War

Philosophy

- 213 Philosophical Inquiries into Race
- 352 American Philosophy

Psychology

- 253 Social Psychology
- 352 Sex and Gender Seminar

Religious Studies

- 217 Religion in the U.S.A.
- 221 Topics in Maine's Jewish History
- 256 The African-American Religious Experience

Science, Technology, and Society

- 271 History of Science in America

Sociology

- 231 Contemporary Social Problems
- 233 Crime and Justice in American Society
- 252 Race, Ethnicity, and Society
- 259 Activism and Social Movements
- 273 Sociology of Families
- 274 Social Inequality and Power
- 276 Sociology of Gender
- 337 Childhood In Society
- 352 American Critics of American Society
- 355 African-American Women and Social Change
- 357 Civil Rights, Black Power, and Social Change
- 358 The Sociology of W.E.B. Du Bois
- 493 Senior Seminar in Sociology (when appropriate)

Spanish

- 264 U.S. Latina/o Literatures
- 267 Transcultural Journeys: U.S. Latina/o Literature of Resilience
- 276 U.S. Latina/Chicana Women Writers
- 493B The Latina Body

Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

- 201 Introduction to Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
- 217 Boys to Men
- 232 Queer Identities and Politics
- 311 Topics in Feminist Theory

Course Offerings

AM117j Fundamentals of Screenwriting An introduction to the craft of writing film scripts, with a strong emphasis on screenplay format and the three-act structure. Besides studying films and screenplays, students will complete exercises in character development, scene construction, dialogue, and description. The final project will be a complete script for a short (no longer than 30 pages) three-act feature film. Formerly offered as American Studies 197. *Two credit hours.* WILSON

AM135Af New York City: Global Crossroads An interdisciplinary exploration of New York as a center of 20th-century American economic, cultural, and political power, focused on the city as the site both of extensive immigration from abroad and of internal migration within the United States. Key topics include the city's leadership in global economic exchange and capitalist development; its centrality to American visual arts, music, literature, film, and theater; and the role of a diverse range of immigrants and migrants in shaping local, national, and global economies and cultures. Interdisciplinary critical thinking, textual analysis, critical writing, and active discussion will be emphasized. Part of the three-course Integrated Studies 135, "New York: Global City." *Prerequisite:* Concurrent enrollment in American Studies 135B and English 135. *Four credit hours.* **H** MCFADDEN

AM135Bf Space, Place, and New York City Examines historical and contemporary New York City using the twin concepts of place and space. Pivots on the escalating significance of place in a world of modernization and globalization. Explores New York as a "global city"—an economic and cultural control center. Considers how New York capitalists "produce" space near and far, and investigates expressions and consequences (positive and negative) of global capitalism on city streets, how place constructs cultural and political identity, and the role of the built environment in cultivating identity. Discussion-based. Students develop skills of spatial, material, textual, and historical analysis and critical writing. Part of the three-course Integrated Studies 135, "New York: Global City." *Prerequisite:* Concurrent enrollment in American Studies 135A and English 135. *Four credit hours.* **S** LISLE

[AM136A] Culture and Politics in Postwar United States An exploration of the intersections of American culture and politics, from the emergence of the United States as a superpower at the end of World War II through the turbulent years of the 1960s. Particular focus on the role of social movements, including the antiwar, civil rights, feminist, gay liberation, environmental, and antipoverty movements. Primary texts include historical documents, literature, films, and other forms of mass media. Special attention to critical analysis of cultural historical sources and to intensive practice in writing and discussion. Part of the three-course Integrated Studies 136 cluster, "America in the Postwar World: 1945-1970." *Prerequisite:* Concurrent enrollment in American Studies 136B and 136C. (Elect IS136.) *Four credit hours.* **H**

AM136Bs Material Landscape of Postwar United States We will examine the postwar United States through "things,"

considering how materiality culturally constructed class, gender, race, and sexuality. We will explore the meanings of objects at all scales; differences and continuities between "high" and "low" design; gendering and racializing of public and private spaces; automobile aesthetics and spatiality; consumption-based progress narratives; and restricted access to postwar abundance. In this discussion-based course, students will develop their skills of material, spatial, visual, and historical analysis and their critical writing skills. *Four credit hours.* **W1** LISLE

[AM137] Comedy and Tragedy in Depression America The Great Depression produced two powerful but opposing responses in American culture. The 1930s were both a "golden age" of popular comedy and a decade in which images of heroic figures defeated by calamity were wildly popular. We will focus on the visual and sound cultures of the 1930s, including painting, sculpture, photography, advertising, film, music, and radio, and will explore how these forms were used by a wide variety of artists to shape audiences' responses to economic, political, and social upheaval. Special attention to skills of visual analysis and critical writing. Part of the three-course Integrated Studies 137 cluster, "American Stories: Understanding the Great Depression." *Prerequisite:* Concurrent enrollment in English 137 and History 137. (Elect IS137.) *Four credit hours.* **A**

[AM137B] History and Culture in 1930s America An exploration of key historical developments of the years of the Great Depression. What caused the Depression and how did it pose a crisis of faith in capitalism and in the government? And how did Americans respond, creating vibrant new forms of politics and culture? Through analysis of primary historical and cultural texts like films, photos, novels, and varied forms of popular culture, students will develop critical-thinking skills, learn to write clear and precise analytical essays, and practice articulating their ideas effectively. *Prerequisite:* First-year standing. *Four credit hours.* **H,W1**

AM171fs Introduction to American Studies An introduction to methods and themes in American studies, the interdisciplinary examination of past and present United States culture. A wide selection of cultural texts from all periods of American history explore the dynamic and contested nature of American identity. Literary, religious, and philosophical texts, historical documents, material objects, works of art and music, and varied forms of popular culture are studied, with a focus on what it means, and has meant, to be an American. Open to first-year students. Formerly listed as American Studies 271. *Four credit hours.* **U** ARELLANO, LISLE

[AM197] Hands-On Approach to Quilts in American Culture Quilts are a ubiquitous but little-understood form of material culture. We will explore how quilts function and have meaning and value in our society. By acquiring hands-on experience with quiltmaking, including selecting fabric, hand-piecing, and basic quilt block theory, and through readings and direct experiences with quilt-culture magazines, quilt shops, and guilds, students will gain theoretical and historical understanding of textiles. Includes analysis of the relationship between quilts and their presentation in scholarly and mainstream publications. Topics may include identity performance in and gender claims for quiltmaking. Materials fee: $40. Nongraded. *Two credit hours.*

[AM214] African-American Elites and Middle Classes Listed as Sociology 214. *Three credit hours.* **S, U**

AM215j The Image of Women and Men in American Film How Hollywood films of a particular era reflected and helped determine the vast social and psychological changes that women, men, and the country were experiencing—or were denying experiencing—during tumultuous time periods of U.S. history. Topics include gender roles, genre, directorial style, historical background, the effects of camera placement, movement and lighting, and the function of narrative—how to "read" a film. January 2013 topic: to be determined. Previously offered as American Studies 115. *Prerequisite:* First-year standing. *Three credit hours.* EISEN

[AM217] Religion in the U.S.A. Listed as Religious Studies 217. *Four credit hours.* **H**

AM232f Queer Identities and Politics Listed as Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies 232. *Four credit hours.* **U** ARELLANO

[AM236] Introduction to the Francophone World: The Americas Listed as French 236. *Four credit hours.* **I**

AM241s Cultural Work of American Football Examines the place of football in American culture. Identifies the game's core ideologies through investigations of its origins, development, and major historical crises, paying particular attention to how football constructs gender, race, and nationalism. Students emerge from this discussion-based course with enhanced skills in analyzing material, visual, and literary cultural expression and improved abilities to speak and write cogently and clearly about complex and contested ideas. *Four credit hours.* LISLE

AM255s Women in American Popular Comedy An interdisciplinary examination of the ways that female comedians have used comic genres to advance powerful and influential critiques of American culture and politics, since 1970. Students will learn to situate the humor in historical context; to analyze the formal aspects of comedic performances; and to understand a variety of genres, including stand-up, character comedy, comedy/variety shows, and sitcoms. We will address the particular constraints that gender norms and ideologies place on women participating in a male-dominated form of entertainment and will attend to the ways that female comedians' work tracks ever-shifting and contested notions of gender roles and relations. *Four credit hours.* MCFADDEN

[AM264] U.S. Latina/o Literature: "New" American Identities Listed as Spanish 264. *Four credit hours.* **L, U**

AM268s Latino/a Cultural Expressions in Literature and Film Listed as Spanish 268. *Four credit hours.* **L, U** GARCIA

AM275s Gender and Popular Culture In the 21st century, popular culture is a key site for the dissemination of ideas about gender roles, gender relations, and sexuality. Students will use recent feminist approaches to the study of popular culture to analyze how contemporary films, music, advertising, toys, television, magazines, and popular fiction help to construct us as gendered individuals and to sustain systematic gender inequality. Students will write weekly informal papers, longer analytical papers, and a comprehensive final exam and will be expected to participate actively in class discussions to develop their analytical capacities and hone oral communication skills. Also listed as Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies 275. *Four credit hours.* **U** MCFADDEN

AM276s African-American Culture in the United States An interdisciplinary examination of black cultural expression—including folktales, the blues, gospel music, work songs, jazz, sermons, dance, literature, and social institutions—from the slave era to the present, tracing the stages of development of a distinctive black culture in America, its relationship to the historical, social, and political realities of African Americans, and its role in the cultural formation of the United States. Also listed as African-American Studies 276. *Four credit hours.* **S, U** GILKES

AM285f History of Photography Listed as Art 285. *Four credit hours.* **A** CLARK

AM297j Short-form Digital Storytelling Through hands-on learning and analysis, students will critique current popular short-form videos and create their own short-form digital stories. We will learn the basics of production (lighting, shot composition, and audio), storytelling (scriptwriting, storyboarding, timing, and pacing), and editing. Students will produce a 1-2 minute documentary portrait, 1-2 minute visual narrative, and 5-minute video in a style of their choosing. They will also be the "crew" and "editing assistants" for other student productions. In addition to essential reading, students will write entries on the course blog. *Two credit hours.* MURPHY

AM298s Television in Postwar United States Explores the development of American television culture in its many forms and varied genres during the years after World War II. We will pay special attention to the development of television as a medium central to American culture as well as the way television reflected and affected class, gender, and racial relations. In this discussion-based course, students will develop their skills of visual and historical analysis as well as their critical writing skills. *Four credit hours.* **A** CLARK

[AM334] Film and Society: Films of the 1940s Immersion into the Hollywood films of the 1940s. Using the basic tenets of genre theory—that film genres mediate the general anxieties of a culture—study of a range of genres, including Westerns, film noir, melodrama, and social problem films, as well as the social conditions with which these genres are in dialogue. Of special interest are the ways that World War II and the Cold War affected ideals of masculinity and femininity and a national dialogue about race. Students will (1) learn the basic language for describing film form; (2) read a number of theoretical texts; (3) develop skills of visual analysis; and (4) develop skills in writing clear, persuasive arguments about the films and their contexts. *Prerequisite:* American Studies 171 or 198 (Spring 2011) or Art 112 or Cinema Studies 142 or English 241 or Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies 201. *Four credit hours.* **U**

AM335j American Independents: Their Art and Production The conception, content, and production of independent films. On-campus examination of classic independents from the past will be followed by attendance at the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah, in January, where attendance at selected film showings will be supplemented by class meetings. Upon return to campus students will report on and synthesize their observations and experiences. Cost in 2011: $2,600 for travel and lodging; tickets and food not included. *Prerequisite:* Permission of the instructor. *Three credit hours.* **A** MANNOCCHI

[AM355] African-American Women and Social Change Listed as Sociology 355. *Four credit hours.* **U**

[AM357] Civil Rights, Black Power, and Social Change Listed as Sociology 357. *Four credit hours.* **S, U**

[AM359] Slavery and Slave Communities in the United States Listed as African-American Studies 359. *Four credit hours.* **S, U**

[AM360] The Car in Modern American Literature and Pop Culture Listed as English 360. *Four credit hours.* **L, U**

AM368s Great Books by American Women of Color: from Hurston to Danticat Through both literary and cultural studies lenses, we will read classic works by American women of color, written in a variety of genres, including memoir, poetry, and personal essays, and review selected film adaptations of our books. Study will be chronological, beginning with Hurston and extending to Sapphire, Danticat, and Lahiri, and will include writers representing differences in culture, race, class, religion, and ethnicity. We will address topics such as marginalization versus assimilation, changing attitudes toward family and heritage, the search for a language and a room of one's own, challenges to traditional views of romantic love, sex, and sexuality, and the struggle for identity and social justice. *Four credit hours.* **L, U** MANNOCCHI

[AM375] Seminar: Representing Difference in American Visual Culture Asks how American visual culture helped

construct racial categories in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Examines painting, sculpture, photography, minstrelsy, spectacles, and early film. Considers how ideologies of class and gender intersect with constructions of blackness, whiteness, Native American, and Asian-American identity. Emphasizes skills of visual analysis. *Prerequisite:* Junior or senior standing. *Three credit hours.* **U**

[AM376] Queer Popular Cultures An interdisciplinary exploration of the vibrant queer cultures created by and for LGBT people in the United States since the Stonewall Riots (1969). Students will learn to analyze a wide range of cultural productions, including works of art, theatrical productions, popular musics, films, television programs, and comics, and to situate them in their historical, cultural, and political contexts. Extensive critical interpretation and writing as well as participation in a substantial group project to increase queer visibility are required. *Prerequisite:* A 200-level or higher course in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. *Four credit hours.* **U**

[AM378] American Dreams: The Documentary Film Perspective The American experience as viewed through the lenses of American documentary filmmakers and videographers. Issues of documentary: reality or art, truth-telling or fiction-making, propaganda or objective presentation, responsibility of the filmmaker. A study of different visions of America that documentaries created, from their historical roots (*The Plow That Broke the Plains*, Frank Capra's war documentaries) through classic examples (*High School*, *Thin Blue Line*, *Berkeley in the 1960s*, *Hoop Dreams*) to their most current realizations (*It Was a Wonderful Life*, *Tongues Untied*), which are part of a renaissance in American documentary, born out of the new filmic expression of the most marginalized groups in American society. *Prerequisite:* Senior standing. *Four credit hours.* **U**

AM393f Proseminar: Consuming America Contemporary American culture is commodity culture. Drawing on historical and contemporary examples, we examine the ways Americans have used consumption as a means to construct, negotiate, and resist national, collective, and individual identities, paying particular attention to the ways patterns of consumption reflect and affect relations of class, gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. This discussion-based seminar introduces students to the major methodological approaches and debates in American studies today. Students develop skills in visual and textual analysis, practice writing clear and persuasive arguments, and learn to organize and execute their own research projects. *Prerequisite:* Junior standing as American studies major or women's, gender, and sexuality studies major or minor. *Four credit hours.* CLARK

AM397f Imagining the Past: Film, Memory, History Moving images shape our collective memory. News footage, documentaries, Hollywood blockbusters, and home movies help us remember (and forget) the past. Examines the creation of film images by those seeking to preserve people and events for posterity; the use of historical images by archivists, historians, and filmmakers; and the ways in which audiences understand the past through historical films. Considers how historians use moving pictures as historical documents and how history can best be represented on film. Students will integrate theoretical concepts with visual analysis, practice writing clear and persuasive arguments, and learn to organize and execute their own research projects. *Prerequisite:* Sophomore or higher standing. *Four credit hours.* CLARK

AM398s Film Festivals: Cultures and Practices From the red carpets of Cannes to community screenings, this course looks at film festivals as key institutions in contemporary film culture. We will examine the history of major film festivals as well as the economic, political, and cultural importance of festivals today. A key component of this course will be the development of a student-run film festival. Students will oversee programming and all other aspects of festival operations. Students will (1) develop their skills in visual analysis and critical thinking; (2) practice writing clear and persuasive arguments; (3) work cooperatively to organize and execute a major class project. *Four credit hours.* **A** CLARK

AM457f American Gothic Literature Listed as English 457. *Four credit hours.* **L, U** BRYANT

AM483f, 484s Senior Honors Project Research conducted under the guidance of a faculty member and focused on an approved interdisciplinary topic leading to the writing of a thesis. *Prerequisite:* A 3.5 major average and permission of the program director. *Three or four credit hours.* FACULTY

AM491f, 492s Independent Study Individual study of special problems in American studies in areas where the student has demonstrated the interest and competence necessary for independent work. *Prerequisite:* Permission of the instructor and the program director. *One to four credit hours.* FACULTY

AM493Af Seminar: Spike Lee's United States of America An in-depth, interdisciplinary exploration of recent American culture through the lens of the African-American filmmaker Spike Lee. Working in multiple genres, Lee has offered compelling and controversial interpretations of the significance of race in shaping all aspects of American life. Students will situate a range of Lee's films in their historical and cultural contexts and will use the tools of film analysis to understand his aesthetic and representational innovations. Each student will research and write a major paper analyzing one of Lee's films and will present that work at the Colby Undergraduate Research Symposium. *Prerequisite:* Senior standing as an American studies or African-American studies major. *Four credit hours.* MCFADDEN

AM493Bs Seminar: Geographies of Play The places where we play are vital (and often overlooked) sites of identity construction and maintenance. We will examine how gender, class, race, sexuality, and nationality are written on our leisure landscapes, exploring particularly how recreational spaces are constructed, controlled, and used; how built environments express complex and often contradictory sets of values; and how users of such spaces variously experience them. Students will learn different approaches to interpreting cultural landscapes, research and write a major paper analyzing a site of play, and present

that research at the Colby Undergraduate Research Symposium. *Prerequisite:* Senior standing as an American studies major. *Four credit hours.* LISLE

AM498s Seminar: 21st Century Latino Novel and Transnational Imaginary Listed as English 493D. *Four credit hours.* ORCHARD