

## **Spring 2011 (1101) AMST Course Descriptions**

### **AMST603 Current Approaches to American Studies**

0101 Tu 4-6:40pm M. Sies

*For AMST majors only or permission of department. Permission of instructor required for non-AMST graduate students.* Builds on AMST601 and explores contemporary literature, theory, and intellectual issues in American Studies.

### **AMST628E The Strong Black Woman in American Culture and Mythology**

0101 M 4-6:40pm S. Parks

Strong Black Women in American Culture traces the images and roles of the Sacred Dark Feminine and the secular Strong Black Woman into and through American life and popular mythology. The course moves between the larger cultural images and the lives of African American women through history to the present. The figure is presented as a traditional, organic model of female power and emphasis will be placed upon the roles that the images and the women have played as agents of personal and national transformation including recent developments in environmentalism, new age spirituality, and neo-feminism. Sheri Parks is the author of *Fierce Angels: The Strong Black Woman in American Life and Culture*.

### **AMST628J Seminar in American Studies: Life History Research**

0101 Th 4-6:40pm J. Caughey

This is a seminar about methods and styles of life history research--about how to adapt ethnographic methods (including interviews and participant observation) to obtain, organize, and write a culturally oriented portrait of an individual life. Special emphasis will be placed on developing a double or "dialogic" life history approach involving a systematic comparison between the subject's cultural life and that of the researcher. We will consider: 1) the nature of cultural traditions as meaning systems, or language-concept systems, through which individuals seek to make sense of their worlds, their lives; 2) the ways in which individuals develop self conceptions and senses of identity, including conceptualizations involving race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability from their encounters with social and cultural systems; and 3) the ways in which the contemporary individual typically juggles and negotiates a variety of different cultural traditions, and hence a variety of different life perspectives and senses of self. Course readings will include methodological readings on how to do interviews, observations, and autoethnography as well as examples of life history portraits in articles and books. The major course assignment will be to conduct an interview-based cultural exploration of another individual's life history and to write a paper based on this research.

### **AMST629D Social and Ethnic Issues in Historic Preservation**

0101 W 7-9:40pm M. Sies

Also offered as AMST498X and HISP635.

Relatively few historic sites across North America do a good job of interpreting women's experiences, never mind the histories and cultures of non-privileged and non-white racial groups, socially-marginalized groups like the poor, or GLBTQ people. This seminar will focus on the issues, challenges, and some theoretical and practical techniques for documenting, recovering, and interpreting the everyday lives and cultures of people whose heritage often gets overlooked, distorted, erased, or made invisible. New preservation practices implemented since the 1980s are shaping our understandings of heritage and of the built environment in important ways. They provide powerful tools for local citizens and grassroots groups engaged in historical research and small-p planning, as well as preservationists, planners, designers, and policy makers. The new critical preservation practices raise fundamental questions about what preservation and heritage encompasses, who gets to be a preservationist, the functions of grassroots preservation in a democracy, and how best to research, conserve, and interpret both tangible and intangible heritage of a much broader range of North Americans. Students will explore these issues through weekly readings and the occasional viewing; we will also take some fieldtrips.

The class will also function as a "practice" course; students will be involved in community-engaged research. We will form a partnership with members of the Lakeland Community Heritage Project (LCHP) to produce a semester long grassroots heritage research project focusing on the history of Lakeland, a historically African American community adjacent to the College Park campus. The project, which will model best practices in community-grounded preservation, will focus on oral histories of present or former Lakeland citizens. Students working in groups will conduct, transcribe, and interpret oral histories and contribute them to the building of a heritage and archival website for the Lakeland Community Heritage Project using Omeka software.

### **AMST629G Seminar in American Studies: Queer Theory**

0101 W 7-9:40pm J. McCune

Queer theory is one of the most exciting, quickly developing fields of thought in contemporary cultural studies. It has emerged from the meeting of feminist theory, sexuality studies, and activism. This course will explore key contemporary authors and texts which are moving conversations about race, gender, sexuality, and class in new directions. While this course is not an introduction to queer theory, nor an exercise in defining its meaning, it will still engage some of the earlier texts to better place newer works in their proper context. Most importantly, this course will look closely at how queer theories can be, or have been, put to work in everyday politics and policy.

### **AMST655 Introduction to Museum Scholarship**

0101 W 4-6:40pm E. Hughes

*Restricted to graduate students in American Studies, Anthropology, Historic Preservation, or History (including HILS), or others by permission of department. Also offered as HIST 610. Credit will be granted for only one of the following: AMST 638C, AMST 655, HIST 610, or HIST 619C. Formerly AMST638C.* Provides students a basic understanding of museums as cultural and intellectual institutions. Topics include the historical development of museums, museums as resources for scholarly study, and the museum exhibition as medium for presentation of scholarship. Meets in the Smithsonian Institution Library Conference room on the ground floor of the National Museum of Natural History near the 10th Street NW and Constitution Avenue entrance. The first class session will meet at the information desk.

### **AMST698 Directed Readings in American Studies**

Individual Instruction Course

### **AMST798 Non-Thesis Research**

Individual Instruction Course

### **AMST799 Master's Thesis Research**

Individual Instruction Course

### **AMST857 Museum Scholarship Practicum**

0101 TBA M. Sies

*Prerequisite: AMST856 and Permission of Museum Scholarship Program. Credit will be granted for only one of the following: AMST857 or HIST811.* Students devise and carry out a research program using the collections at the Smithsonian Institution or some other cooperating museum, working under joint supervision of a museum professional and a university faculty member. Also offered as HIST811.

### **AMST898 Pre-Candidacy Research**

Individual Instruction Course

**AMST899 Doctoral Dissertation Research**

Individual Instruction Course