Los Angeles has always had an underbelly that belies this hope of inclusive opportunity and shared prosperity: the chance of reinvention has always been accompanied by sharp residential segregation, significant economic deprivation, and an uneasy relationship with the natural setting that attracted so many in the first place. Contradictions seem to abound: celebrated for its cultural openness and its multiethnic fusion of identities, it is also known as a place that both perfected a modernized form of residential segregation and experienced two major waves of civil unrest (the Watts riots of 1965 and Los Angeles uprising of 1992). Considered the capital of working poverty in the United States, it is also host to a revitalized labor movement. And while L.A. has been the epicenter of immigration to the United States – in the 1980s, it was receiving one quarter of the nation’s immigrants – it has also been a focal point for anti-immigrant sentiment and action.
This class will ask you to read a set of novels, essays and social science studies in order to think deeply about the place of sex in American life since the nineteenth century. From slave narratives to lynching photographs, from coming out stories to films where sexuality appears only as a coded set of interactions, and from memoirs to high theoretical meditations on the history of sexuality, our archive will show us just how much we talk, think and write about sex – about wanting it, not wanting it, having it, avoiding, punishing those who do have it, pathologizing those who don’t and policing bodies that seem predatory or dangerous. We will think about the history of sex panics, the medical production of sex as a field of pathologies, and ask about how and why sex and religion have become so intertwined in this country. By the end of this intense spring session, you should be able to explain why we care about whether NFL players are gay; why we expect female softball players to be lesbians; and why male politicians should not get caught soliciting sex from men in airports while running on an anti-gay platform? Questions about gay marriage, transgenderism and the history of heterosexuality will be answered as we go!
This course offers an introduction to the people and cultures of the Americas; the social, historical, economic, and cultural formations that together make up the Latino/a American imaginary. This course starts with the U.S. Latino experience then works its way back to understand the origins of contemporary Latin America. Recent statistics show Latinos have become the largest minority group in the nation. We take a closer look into the societies of countries in the Americas and how their economic and historical past has shaped the course of the people of the Americas.
The Viet Nam War remains as the most controversial and divisive war for Americans in the 20th century. The war is still invoked in debates over American wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This course provides an introduction to the war’s history in order for today’s Americans to understand some of the key factors leading the US into its current geopolitical situation. The course is a multidisciplinary, multicultural and international overview of the war’s history and its afterlife in American and Southeast Asian memory. Student reading will draw primarily from films, literature, art, journalism, historical writing, and political discourse, while lectures will provide necessary historical and political background. The course corrects some fundamental flaws in the American pedagogy and scholarship on the war, beginning with how the name indicates that the war was fought only in Viet Nam. The war was also fought in Cambodia and Laos, and the course examines the war’s impact on those countries and their peoples. Americans have also seen the war purely from the perspective of American self-interest and ethnocentrism. In contrast, this course stresses the diversity of American experiences, the importance of Southeast Asian points of view, and the existence of international actors in the war who were neither American nor Vietnamese.

This class meets USC’s diversity requirement
This course offers an interdisciplinary introduction to American and Ethnic Studies. A principal goal is to help students understand how people in the United States live in and think about their country as well as how the world views them. The central themes and topics addressed will include identity formation, immigration, imprisonment, militarism, cultural production, religion, sexuality, and political change. This course will encourage students to formulate connections between these issues by placing them in their broad historical and cultural contexts. We will consider a variety of types of evidence such as novels, photographs, films, the built environment, and material culture to show that we can and need to analyze everything in the world around us.

This course satisfies the diversity requirement and fulfills the core requirement for the ASE majors/minors.

Under the new GE requirement, this course fulfills GE-C, Social Analysis.

Professor Chrisshonna Nieva
What defines the African diaspora—a genetic inheritance or spiritual connection? a shared history or a repertoire of cultural practices? a political strategy, internally contested and forged in struggles? If it’s the latter, what does that politics have to offer to contemporary struggles? Does this diaspora begin in Africa, or outside it? Are its limits defined by the physical movements of bodies marked as black, or by the boundless black imagination? Surely it includes North America, South America, and the Caribbean, but also Europe, the whole Atlantic Ocean really…and what about Asia? what about the Pacific? Why have so many great black musicians claimed to be from outer space? Is the African diaspora defined by its past, or by its future, or some other temporality altogether? The movements of the diverse peoples who have been defined, in various ways, as black or African—abductions and escapes, coerced and free migrations, rebellions and revolutions—map out the space and time of the modern world. The history, political struggles, and cultural forms associated with these peoples are crucial to the survival and destiny of everyone in the world, though we are not all positioned equally and in the same way in relation to them. There is more than enough in this subject for a lifetime of study, but this course will help you find your bearings within it. Which you need to, because it’s on the move again.
This course explores the complexities of race/ethnicity in America through analyses of films. We shall ask such questions as: What is ethnicity? How is ethnicity shaped, or how does one “become” ethnic?, What is at stake in claims and visual representations about ethnicity; what politics surround ethnic representations and performances?, How is ethnicity actualized and/or performed?, Can there be an “authentic” ethnicity?, and, finally, How are such complexities reflected and/or constructed in film? Towards these ends, the initial weeks of the semester will be devoted to developing a critical vocabulary for speaking about race/ethnicity. We will also (continuously) hone our visual literacy by looking at the ways notions of ethnicity are privileged, constructed, and contested in film via such techniques as editing, sound, lighting, narration, etc. This middle of the course will focus on case studies in film that illuminate the complexities of ethnicity in relation to specific American ethnic groups. The latter weeks of the course will explore broader complexities of ethnicity, such as ethnic hybridity and inter-ethnic relations encompassing political conflict, interracial love and identity, and residential strife.
AMST 301gp: America, the Frontier, and the New West

We will study what historians term “the New West,” by which they mean how the West has been shaped by many different historical forces and peoples. Reading “New West” scholars like Richard Slotkin, Reginald Horsman, Patricia Nelson Limerick, we will also read and view novels, plays, films, and visual art works that give us a solid understanding of how Native Americans, African Americans, Euroamericans, Asian Americans, Mexican Americans, women, and LGBTs have contributed to our lived realities in the West.

Monday/Wednesday 2–3:50pm
Class #10408R
Location: THH 201

Taught by Professor Thomas Gustafson

AMST 301g fulfills the Category 1: Western Cultures and Traditions requirement in General Education at USC & GE-G (Traditions and Historical foundations).
Is there such a thing as “Black American Islam?” Can there be? Should there be? What would distinguish it from historical Islam, and how will/should it relate to the global Muslim community? How do Black American Muslims relate to those Muslims who came to America from the Muslim world? What about Black American Muslim women? And how has 9-11 affected all of these relationships? As for Hip Hop, what role have/do Muslims play[ed] in its development and substance, and what challenges or opportunities does Hip Hop pose for Black American and other Muslims? Finally, what does all of this tell us about the future of Islam in Black America?
This seminar is designed to allow students to explore the complex and contested interactions between the law and the construction of group and individual identities. Students will study theories of identity and community including racial, gender, religious, national, and sexual and will focus upon how the law has been central in defining, rewarding, and punishing difference. After a general examination of how diverse communities define themselves and their legal and contemporary problems, the class will examine cases studies.
This course is designed to introduce students to a diverse range of theories and methodologies relevant to the study of American culture. We will draw from a number of interpretive and analytical models including 3 case studies: the memoirs of women of color, the history of AIDS in the US, and contemporary US politics. While committed to the introduction of critical methods, the course will also be content-driven. We will focus on two immediate case studies: AIDS and the upcoming national elections. These two events will form the content of the class and provide us the occasion to think in interdisciplinary ways.

This course is a core requirement for all ASE Majors and Minors.
AMST 357m
Latino Social Movements

Prof. Juan De Lara

For more information, please contact the Dept. of American Studies and Ethnicity at (213)740-2426.

This course fulfills the diversity requirement. It also fulfills the requirements for the majors in American Studies and Ethnicity and the Chicano/Latino Studies as well as the minors in American Studies and Ethnicity and the American Popular Culture.
Community leadership is fundamentally about empowerment, that is, empowering others to develop the skills, strategies and the confidence to solve their own problems. Study leadership within the context of a community-based organization through a hands-on internship experience. Explore theory and research on leadership, as well as principles of behavioral and social change, using specific examples from your own community leadership efforts.

- In the past, students have been placed with organizations such as ACORN, A Place Called Home, the Boys & Girls Club, the Korean Immigrant Workers Association (KIWA), Planned Parenthood, and the Salvation Army.” Then follow that with “Students are encouraged to choose their own internship with instructor approval. Those who are already doing an internship should approach the instructor to find out if it qualifies.

- USC Students at all levels (including Freshmen), and from all disciplines, are encouraged to enroll.

- Students who are already doing an internship can approach the Instructor about the possibility of getting course credit.
Spring 2016m
AMST 373 History of the Mexican American

Mondays/Wednesdays 2-3:20pm
Class # 10428R
4 Units
Professor Alicia Chavez Location GFS 108

This course is an exploration of the history and culture of Mexican Americans and other Latinos in the United States from the colonial era to the present. We will examine the diversity of experiences among this group across the United States, paying particular attention to issues of race, region, gender, class, and immigrant status. Topics will include the varied experiences of colonialism and immigration; the role of race prejudice and discrimination in shaping social mobility; cultural transformation and regional variations in language, religion and music; gender as a central variable in defining issues of identity and opportunity; and the birth of a Chicano/ Latino civil rights movement.

AMST/HIST 373 fulfills the history requirement in both Chicano/Latino Studies & American Studies majors. It also fulfills requirements in the History major. It also fulfills elective requirements in African American Studies and Asian American Studies. This course is open to all students with an interest in the topic.
This course examines a long tradition of African American humor in theatre (e.g., “blackface” minstrelsy), TV/radio (e.g., Amos ‘N’ Andy), literature/folklore, and, principally, Black or “urban” standup comedy. We will explore how these diverse comedic forms offer insights into shifting notions of race/racial “authenticity,” culture, language, and identity in and beyond Black America. Through an investigation of interdisciplinary theories of Black humor in folklore, linguistics, anthropology, and cultural/literary studies, we shall come to appreciate the themes/tropes, linguistic conventions, discourse styles, and performative genres that characterize the broad category of African American humor. Field visits to urban comedy clubs/shows and guest speakers will also afford our analysis of comics and their audiences as co-producers of Black humor, the urban comedy clubs/show as a communal forum, and comics as members of a community of practice. Throughout the course, we will assess the politics of representing Black humor and laughter that have impacted African American humorists and their audiences in poignant ways throughout history.
Asian people have been living in what is now called the United States since before the founding of the nation, and have been forming permanent, sizeable communities distinguished by race since the mid-19th century, with the rise of transpacific labor migration on a large scale upon the closing of the transatlantic slave trade. Yet the term “Asian American” is relatively recent, invented by radical students in the late 1960s to name a multiethnic political identification against racism and US imperialism. In little more than a decade, it was transformed into a widely accepted, state-recognized, politically neutral category of racial classification, gathering under its jurisdiction significant and diverse populations of new immigrants who have not always recognized substantive connections to their predecessors. Writers who’d be classified as “Asian American,” under this more neutral definition, have been achieving fleeting or lasting acclaim in US for well over a hundred years. Somewhat separately, the history of something called “Asian American literature” begins with Third Worldist revolutionary movements of the late 1960s, but it has been reimagined in dramatically different ways over the subsequent decades. In this course, we’ll learn about what it means, and has meant, to call something “Asian American literature,” by reading some of the major texts on which various conceptions of that term have been grounded, as well as newer and older texts that complicate it in useful ways.
American Studies & Ethnicity
Senior Honors Option 2015-16

ASE MAJORS:

- American Studies (ASE)
- African American Studies (ASAF)
- Asian American Studies (ASAS)
- Chicana/o and Latina/o American Studies ~CALAS (ASCL)

For more information contact ASE Academic Advisor Cynthia Mata-Flores at cmflores@usc.edu or 213.740.2534

Fall 2015: AMST 492 (10442)
Research Methods in American Studies & Ethnicity, 4 Units
Tuesdays 2pm-4:50pm KAP 445
Taught by Macarena Gomez-Barris

Spring 2016: AMST 493 (10443)
Senior Honors Thesis in American Studies & Ethnicity, 4 Units
Fridays 1pm-3:50pm KAP 445
Taught by Macarena Gomez-Barris

The American Studies and Ethnicity Department at the University of Southern California offers a two-semester honors program for qualified students, first identified in ASE 350 or by the program advisor. Students spend their first semester in the honors program in an honors senior seminar, ASE 492, focused on developing their research and methods for the honors thesis. During the second semester, all honors students are required to take ASE 493, in which each completes a thesis project on a topic of his or her own choosing under faculty direction. Contact the program advisor for further information.
Senior Seminar in American Studies and Ethnicity

Tuesday
2-4:50 pm
Professor Vince Schleitwiler

Course no. 10444R
4 units
Location KAP 150

This senior seminar will take a long detour through meditations on failure emerging from queer theory, Asian American studies, and black studies, drawing on fiction, comics, film, poetry, memoir, and theoretical texts. We'll ask what failure can reveal about higher education and related disciplinary institutions, such as prisons or the so-called “internment camps” for Japanese Americans during World War II. (Q: What's the difference between a prisoner and a college student? A: The prisoner has a richer imagination of freedom.) We'll ask what it's like to fail when you have been selected for a model of success, and to succeed when your failure has already been scripted. Eventually, we'll shift our focus from the materials assigned by the instructor to questions and projects designed by students, to consider how contemporary social movements and cultural practices on and off campus are fracturing reigning ideologies of meritocracy.