The purpose of this course is to examine L.A.’s diverse population, not as isolated, discrete groups but in relation to one another. The city and its environs serves as our laboratory for understanding class, race, gender, political economy, and most importantly, power. We will examine, among other things, how the hierarchies of race and class are produced and reproduced, how gender, ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship shape people’s experience, and how aggrieved communities fight back.

Topics will include:
- Methodological Tools For Thinking About Race, Space, and Class
- Intersections - Place, Race, and Class
- Prisons and Projects: Black Workers in Post-Fordist Los Angeles
- The Racial and Class Geographies of Kendrick Lamar
- Building Material and Discursive Walls
- Immigrant Labor in Los Angeles
- Organizing LA For Racial and Class Justice
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.
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.
Popular culture permeates our everyday lives and has an enormous impact on how we view ourselves and the world more broadly. This course engages students in a multidisciplinary examination of the relation between U.S national culture, race, and popular culture. Beginning with an interrogation of the terms “popular” and “culture,” we will develop a theoretical framework and vocabulary for critically analyzing texts across a range of different mediums, including film, television, music, comics, magazines, visual art, Internet communications, among others. This course presses students to attend to how categories of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class accrue meaning through their representation, reproduction, and circulation in popular culture. Taking seriously questions of power and ideology, we will unpack the underlying ideals, narratives, and assumptions of the popular culture we consume on a daily basis and how they contribute to the exclusion/marginalization of certain perspectives, practices, and embodied experiences. This course critically examines the development and influence of American popular culture as well as the possibilities for dissent through sub- and/or counter-cultures.
This course examines black social movements for freedom, justice, equality, and self-determination. Beginning with the movements to end slavery and bring about full citizenship, we will examine the role of resistance, institution building, social thought, and the expressive arts in the collective action of African Americans and their allies from the 19th through the 21st century. We closely examine the manifestos and agendas of black abolitionists, women’s rights organizations, Black Nationalist, radical, and mainstream civil rights groups ranging from socialists to hip hop adherents, and from presidential campaigns to prisoners’ rights groups.
Explore the complexities of race and ethnicity in America through film

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? How are such complexities reflected and/or constructed in film? How did the hashtag #OscarsSoWhite and other movements call attention to the lack of diversity and recognition in the film industry?
This course employs a wide variety of different popular culture genres produced by and about African-Americans, including but not limited to theatre, music, sports, film, dance and literature. This course critically examines Black popular culture in the United States and its surrounding politics. Beginning with blackface minstrelsy, the Harlem Renaissance and Swing, and ending with Hip-Hop, Chappelle’s Show and Bossip.com, we will chart chronological and topic driven paths, so as to answer key questions about the genealogies of Black forms and the ways in which they have been and are popularized. Recognizing how gender, sexuality, class, region, and other identity markers inform race, we will challenge assumptions about the parameters of African-American popular culture, as well as its political stakes, aims, and functions.
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. Historical accounts of westward expansion and “manifest destiny” prior to the work of “New West” historians emphasized “How the West Was Won” by “pioneers” settling the “open frontier” of the expanding nation. Reading “New West” scholars like Richard Slotkin, Reginald Horsman, and Patricia Nelson Limerick, we will also read novels and view films and visual art works that give us a solid understanding of how Native Americans, African Americans, Euroamericans, Asian Americans, Mexican Americans, women, and LGTBs have contributed to our lived realities in the West.
Examination of Los Angeles diverse food cultures as well as the food justice issues that affect many low-income residents of neighborhoods surrounding USC campus.
Native Nations across North American hold a unique legal relationship with the United States federal government. This course examines the social, cultural, legal, and historical contexts in which that relationship was created and persists.

Students across disciplines are welcome to engage in this 500-year old conversation about Indigenous rights to land, water, and sovereignty.
AMST 350 (no prerequisites are required!) will explore narratives of freedom and abolition within the context of settler colonialism, white supremacy, the prison industrial complex, education, and heteropatriarchy. This course uses film, history, immigration law, LA museums, art, music, memoirs, political movements, women of color feminisms, and queer theory to address historical inequalities and how oppressed communities have struggled for freedom, humanity, representation, and justice. We will attempt to answer these questions: How and where can we imagine freedom in this historical moment? What work do we need to do together to make this a reality for all peoples?
AMST 357m
Latino Social Movements

Taught by
Professor
Alicia Chavez

Tuesday
2:00pm-5:00pm

*Course fulfills
these requirements:

Diversity Requirement

ASE, ASCL Majors:
- Social and Political Issues, OR
- Elective

ASE Minors:
- Elective

Explore the complexities of Latino social movements in the U.S.

Comprehensive introduction to Latino participation in social movements and US politics. Focusing on six Latino groups - Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, Salvadorans, and Guatemalans - this course explores the migration history of each group and shows how that experience has been affected by US foreign policy and economic interests in each country of origin. Civil rights, employment opportunities, and political incorporation, as well as each group’s history of collective mobilization and political activity, highlight the varied ways they have engaged in the US political system.
An introduction to Caribbean studies, using literature and film, with a focus on specific islands (Cuba, Haiti, and Martinique) examined in their transnational and global contexts.
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.
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 Eric Greer at ericgree@usc.edu or 213.740.2534

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.

Fall 2018: AMST 492 (10442) Research Methods in American Studies & Ethnicity, 4 Units Mondays 2pm-4:50pm KAP 150 Taught by Prof. Juan De Lara

Spring 2019: AMST 493 (10443) Senior Honors Thesis in American Studies & Ethnicity, 4 Units Tuesdays 2pm-4:50pm KAP 150 Taught by Prof. Juan De Lara

2018-19 ASE Senior Honors Thesis Application Deadline: Extended to April 24, 2018