American Studies 603/630
Interdisciplinary Research Project
Dr. Bill Mullen
REC 309
E-mail: bvmullen@purdue.edu
Office: HEAV 315
Office Phone: 494-3735
Office Hours: 12-2 Monday and by appointment
Course meeting time: 2:30-5:20 M

Course Description: AMST 603/630 is an independent research seminar designed to enable advanced M.A. and Ph.D. students to complete research towards their Special Field examination and dissertation in American Studies (see attachment from American Studies Graduate Manual) or their M.A. thesis. The course is the capstone experience for the Ph.D. and M.A. degree. Students are expected to work independently and in collaboration with their peers and supervising professor to produce an extended interdisciplinary research project by the end of term. The project should demonstrate the direction their research will take in completion of the Special Field examination and/or dissertation or M.A. thesis. The project must demonstrate mastery of research technique suitable to the Ph.D or M.A. It must also articulate the relationship between their Special Field examination and/or dissertation/thesis and the field of American Studies. To this end, students will include in their completed work for the course a statement of research method that reflects both of these objectives.

Description of the Special Field Examination
From the American Studies Graduate Manual
Ph.D. Requirements

Each student chooses an interdisciplinary “special field” research project defined by the student in consultation with the major professor and any other appropriate faculty members. Usually such additional mentors will be members of the student’s advisory committee. In the past, students have produced two kinds of projects. One is an AMST course proposal that includes not only lecture topics, readings, and assignments, but also a substantial course justification that explains how the course melds two or more disciplinary approaches into a single, interdisciplinary lens through which course materials will be studied. The other is a lengthy, interdisciplinary essay that explores a research problem from multiple analytical perspectives and that explains how the intertwining of disciplinary approaches produces insights unavailable through a single analytical lens. In the past, students producing the teaching/course design project have used the proposal as a way of articulating American Studies pedagogy not only for their special field exam but also for their job market preparations. Students working on the research option have gone on to successfully submit their work for publication. Students enrolled in AMST 602 may use the final project to develop a first draft of the Special Field exam.

For examples of recent Ph.D. Special Field exams completed for the degree in American Studies go to: http://www.cla.purdue.edu/american-studies/curr_students/examples.html.

Course Requirements: See schedule below.
**Prerequisites:** Normally, completion of AMST 601 and 602 and three full semesters of coursework.

**Attendance:** You must attend every scheduled class meeting. If you miss one scheduled class meeting your final grade will be reduced by 2 percentage points and 5 points for every missed class thereafter.

**Plagiarism:** May be grounds for failing the course.

**Lateness:** Every late assignment will be taxed 5 points for every day it is late after the due date.

**Citation Style:** Throughout the semester, please use the citation style that is conventional for the primary academic discipline in which you consider your work situated (e.g. English, History, Sociology, etc…)
Course Schedule and Requirements:

The course is designed as a collaborative research seminar and workshop. Each week will be dedicated to either self-directed research or results sharing with your peers. The course will be structured to allow you to articulate at each stage of your work the methods, objectives and sources central to your research.

Hence there are two primary areas of work for the course. Primarily, you will act as an independent researcher defining the terms and conclusions of your work. Secondly, and crucially to the success of the seminar, you will be a critical respondent to the projects of your peers. Grades for the course will be determined by how effectively you accomplish each of these tasks (see below). This means that for every due assignment (see below) you must make a hard copy available to every member of the class by the due date. (Note: if you make the materials available to me by the Monday the week materials are due, I will photocopy them for you and bring them to class. You must deposit the materials in my mailbox in the English department by Monday at 5 p.m. and notify me by e-mail that you have done so in order for me to get the copies made.) Please bring those copies to class. The exceptions will be the first draft essay/syllabus due March 6th and the final essay due April 24th. In those cases, please make an electronic copy available via e-mail to your classmates. A hardcopy of every assignment must be made available to me by the due date for grading.

Option 1:

The goal of this Option for the course is to produce the best extended work of independent scholarship possible. The minimum required steps for that final project are as follows:

1) Preliminary statement of research plan and preliminary statement of research method. Due Monday Feb. 1. Week IV.

The research plan should describe the scholarly and intellectual problem you seek to explore in your research for the course. The Plan should articulate how the existing scholarship on the subject has treated (or neglected) this problem, and how your research will contribute to and supplement the existing scholarship. The Plan should also explain how the problem relates to the field of American Studies. That is, what are the intellectual, political, philosophical or aesthetic dimensions of your project that resonate with currents in the field of American Studies. Cite examples from American Studies scholarship that demonstrate the latter. The plan should be 5-7 pages total. For a recent bibliography on “Theory and Methods in American Studies” see this website available at the American Studies homepage at the “Resources” link: http://www.cla.purdue.edu/american-studies/links/amst_bib.html
2) **Preliminary abstract of research essay and preliminary bibliography.** *Due Feb. 15th Week VI.*

The abstract for your research essay should provide a 3-5 page précis of the fundamental argument of the paper, and provide a brief outline of how the argument will proceed. As opposed to your research plan, this abstract should provide a clear sense of how your argument in the essay itself will develop. The Bibliography must include a minimum of 15 primary and secondary sources. The Bibliography must also include a 1-2 pages bibliographical essay explaining how the Bibliography will inform the final research essay, specifically which sources will be most central to your own argument and interpretations.

3) **First draft essay of preliminary research findings with bibliography and revised statement of research method.** *Due Monday March 8th Week IX. 8-12 pages minimum (may be longer).*

This should take the form of an 8-10 page essay with a 1-2 page revised statement of research method. The research statement should as fully as possible explain how the research informed the conceptualization and composition of the draft essay.

**Spring Break!**

4) **Review session.** *Week XI March 29th.*

For this meeting, each member of class is responsible for reading everyone else’s March 8th essay. You must bring to this seminar session a **minimum 1 page written critique** of each essay by your peers. The critique should be pointed and *constructive.* Your objective in this seminar exercise is to act as a supportive peer reviewer. Specifically, what you can you tell the writer that would, in your scholarly assessment, strengthen and improve upon the work. The seminar will be dedicated to a workshop discussion of the first drafts. Everyone will share their written comments with their peers, and be provided 5 minutes to discuss the essays of each of the other students. In turn, the writers of each essay will have a chance to respond to all of the peer reviews.

5) **Optional:** Meeting to update progress on Final Essay. *April 12th Week XIII.*

This seminar will be dedicated to questions and answers related to the final draft of the essay, fine-tuning arguments, and re-articulating (orally) the progress on the final paper.

6) **Final Research Essays Due Week XV April 26th.** The Final research essay should include the following:
Critical Essay: 30-60 pages for Ph.D. students; 25-50 for M.A. students
Final Essay on Research Methodology: 3-5 pages
Bibliography: 25 source minimum

Please make an electronic version of your final paper available to every peer in the class, and a hardcopy available to me for grading. I will not accept an electronic version. I also strongly encourage you to share your final research papers electronically with your peers. By the end of term they will be heavily invested ‘stakeholders’ in the outcome of your work. Beyond that, it’s a nice way for everyone to get smarter!

Grading:

1) Preliminary research plan and statement of research: 10%.
2) Preliminary abstract and bibliography: 10%
3) First Draft of essay: 20%
4) Final Essay and bibliography: 40%
5) Class participation in discussion and critiques: 20%

*Second Reader for Ph.D. students: Because this project will for Ph.D. students become a part of your Special Field examination by a faculty Committee, they are obligated to identify *one* faculty member outside of our seminar to serve as a reader for the project. This faculty member will not *grade* the project. However, she/he will provide you with guidance and advise on the development of the project. She/he will also be consulted by me at the end of the term. I will ask the faculty member to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the project. These comments will be incorporated into my overall evaluation of your final grade for the class. They will constitute no more than 10 percent, however, of the total evaluation, and are unlikely to be determinative of the grade itself.
Option II: Available only to Ph.D. students.
The goal of this objective is to produce a syllabus and course design for an American Studies course you propose to teach.

Students who choose this option will develop an American Studies course proposal for a course in American Studies. The purpose of this option is to allow you to imagine teaching an American Studies undergraduate or graduate seminar that draws upon your coursework training in the program and your independent program of research. The course proposal should take the form of a complete syllabus along with an extended pedagogical essay. The essay should give a full description of the rationale for the course and a statement of teaching philosophy. The statement of teaching philosophy should explain in particular how the interdisciplinary nature of the course will be integrated into your teaching. That is, how exactly is this course to be delivered as an interdisciplinary American Studies course. You might consult the American Studies Crossroads on Teaching and Learning for ideas about organizing an American Studies syllabus: http://crossroads.georgetown.edu/teachingandlearning/ You may also consult the newly added resource link “American Studies and Articles about Teaching American Studies” at the American Studies homepage: http://www.cla.purdue.edu/american-studies/links/amst_articles.html

This page was designed by program assistant Jennifer Lindquist.

Following are the minimum steps and deadlines for the Syllabus Assignment:

1) Due January 31st Week IV: Preliminary statement of research plan and preliminary statement of pedagogical method. Due Feb. 1st Week IV.

The research plan should describe the scholarly and intellectual problem you seek to address in the course you are designing. The Plan should articulate how the existing scholarship on the subject has treated (or neglected) this problem, and how your course will contribute to and supplement the existing scholarship and teaching of the subject. The Plan should also explain how the subject of the course relates to the field of American Studies. That is, what are the intellectual, political, philosophical or aesthetic dimensions of your project that resonate with currents in the field of American Studies. Cite examples from American Studies scholarship that demonstrate the latter. You must also state the level at which the course will be taught (undergraduate/graduate) as well as some of the pedagogical goals and objectives of the course. 5-7 pages.

2) Preliminary abstract of research essay and preliminary bibliography. Due week February 15th Week VI.

The abstract for your American Studies course should provide a 3-5 page précis of the fundamental teaching and learning objectives of the course, and provide a brief outline of how the course will proceed. The Bibliography must include a minimum of 15 primary and secondary sources. The Bibliography must include a 1-2 page statement of teaching philosophy explaining how the selection of texts will inform the
final course syllabus, particularly as it relates to the arrangement of texts for the course. At least five of the sources in your bibliography must pertain to teaching.

3) **First draft essay of course syllabus with bibliography and revised statement of teaching philosophy.** *Due February March 8th Week IX.* 8-12 pages minimum (may be longer).

This should take the form of an 5-7 page syllabus with a 4-5 page revised statement of teaching philosophy and learning outcomes. The teaching philosophy statement should as fully as possible explain how the pedagogical theory informed the conceptualization and composition of the course.

**Spring Break!**

4) **Review session. Week XI March 29th.**

For this meeting, each member of class is responsible for reading everyone else’s March 8th essay/syllabus. You must bring to this seminar session a **minimum 1 page written critique** of each essay/syllabus by your peers. The critique should be pointed and *constructive.* Your objective in this seminar exercise is to act as a supportive peer reviewer. Specifically, what you can you tell the writer that would, in your scholarly assessment, strengthen and improve upon the work. The seminar will be dedicated to a workshop discussion of the first drafts. Everyone will share their written comments with their peers, and be provided 5 minutes to discuss the essays of each of the other students. In turn, the writers of each essay will have a chance to respond to all of the peer reviews.

5) **Meeting to update progress on Final Essay/Syllabus. April 12th Week XIII.**

This seminar will be dedicated to questions and answers related to the final draft of the essay/syllabus, fine-tuning arguments, and re-articulating (orally) the progress on the final paper/syllabus and pedagogical essay.

6) **Final Research Essays/Syllabi Due Week XV April 26th.** The Final research essay should include the following:

**Course Syllabus:** 8-10 pages  
**Essay on Teaching Philosophy/Pedagogy:** 20-40 pages.  
**Final Essay on Research Methodology:** 3-5 pages  
**Bibliography:** 25 source minimum

Please make an electronic version of your final paper/syllabus available to every peer in the class, and a hardcopy available to me for grading. **I will not accept an electronic version.**
Grading:

1) Preliminary research plan and statement of pedagogy philosophy: 10%.
2) Preliminary abstract and bibliography: 10%
3) First Draft of syllabus/essay: 20%
4) Final syllabus, essay and bibliography: 40%
5) Class participation in discussion and critiques: 20%