

## **New Course Proposal for AMST 100**

### **“The American Experiment: Formation”**

#### **Includes:**

- AoI Proposal Form (WT)**
- UCC New Course Proposal Form**
- Syllabus**

**ED. Note: click [here](#) to see a resubmitted version of this**

**Department** \_Leadership and American Studies\_\_\_\_\_

**Course Number** \_\_AMST 100\_\_\_\_\_

## AREAS OF INQUIRY

**Course Name:** The American Experiment: Formation

Check Box for Honors Course Consideration ☐

## Western Traditions

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This form must be submitted to the Faculty Council on Liberal Learning and Academic Life as part of the submission process.  
Please attach a proposed syllabus for this course and the Undergraduate Curriculum Course Proposal Form.

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### DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS:

Please answer the following questions:

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### Check Only One:

**X**◊ This is a new course that we are now proposing for this Area of Inquiry.

### 1. Name and contact information for the department chair administrating this course.

Dr. Robert E. Colvin

Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Leadership and American Studies

(757) 594-7972

[rcolvin@cnu.edu](mailto:rcolvin@cnu.edu)

### 2. In any given semester, how many sections of this course is your department willing to offer?

Our goal is two per regular semester at a minimum.

### 3. Why is this course being offered/what is it designed to achieve (Course purpose/goal)?

This course serves as an introduction to the discipline of American Studies. Students will examine the ways in which America was, and is, an experiment in democratic life. This course critically examines the intellectual and cultural foundations of American life as well as the formation of American identities and competing ideals. Students will explore the extent to which American has been shaped by issues such as unity, equality, liberty, individualism, civic engagement, and democratic values.

Thus, this course is designed to (1) introduce American Studies as an interdisciplinary academic experience for students, (2) help students gain an understanding of the distinctiveness of the American experiment, (3) enable students to gain insight into American culture, and (4) allow them to achieve a greater civic awareness and sense of civic responsibility.

4. **Check the objectives below that the course will address. The first two objectives are required and every proposal must include at least one more objective from the list below.**

X◇ Critically examine the thought processes that have evolved in Western culture (**required**)

X◇ Analyze primary works within the framework the course provides (**required**)

◇ Place one or more of the historical, artistic, or intellectual traditions of the West in its cultural context

X◇ Describe how the material under study has influenced the development of Western culture

◇ Connect the historical roots of phenomena with later aspects of the tradition

5. **Briefly explain how this class addresses the above objectives. A course may cover more than three objectives.**

**a.) Critically examine thought processes** – Students will discuss and debate what it means to be an American by using related primary and secondary sources. They will also critically examine these issues by completing quizzes, response papers, and a formal paper.

**b.) Analyze primary works** – Students will examine several relevant primary sources, including the writings of John Locke, James Madison, and Alexis De Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. Please review the assigned readings in the tentative schedule at the end of the attached syllabus for a more extensive list of primary works.

**c.) How material has influenced Western Culture** – Students will analyze the works of significant authors to determine the philosophic and cultural origins of the "American Dream" and the influence on contemporary issues related to religion, politics, race, gender, and freedom.

6. **Course Assessment: Identify how this course will accomplish the above objectives (choose at least one).**

X◇ Participating in class discussion and debate

◇ Engaging in teamwork and other collaborative exercises

X◇ Writing analytical or evaluative papers, perhaps incorporating original research

◇ Making oral presentations

◇ Creating an artistic product or a performance

◇ Participating in fieldwork

◇ Other means – please identify

7. **Attach a proposed syllabus, which includes a statement of purpose, course objectives, and how these objectives will be accomplished.** Done

8. **Please identify and explain if this course contributes to the Foundations of Liberal Learning expectations for:**

**◇ Oral Communication Literacy:**

Students will be required to contribute regularly to class discussions and share thoughtful and articulate comments and questions on the subject of the day.

**◇ Information Literacy:**

Students will use the internet extensively in this course, finding assigned online articles and reviewing relevant and appropriate websites.

**◇ Writing Literacy:**

Students will be required to complete several written assignments in this course, including reaction papers and a formal paper.

## 9. Explain how this course connects to Vision 2010 – the CNU Strategic Plan.

This American Studies course examines the formation of the American experiment from an interdisciplinary perspective. Students will examine the ways in which America was, and is, an experiment in democratic life. They will critically examine the intellectual and cultural foundations of American life as well as the formation of American identities and competing ideals. Students evaluate the theories, values, and ideas that founded this nation, as well as the corresponding development of civil society in America. Any solid understanding of the extent to which American society and civic life have changed over time requires that we begin with the philosophic and cultural origins of the “American Dream.” This course provides an educational opportunity that challenges students to achieve increased knowledge of America and a sense of civic awareness and responsibility. These goals are directly related to Vision 2010 and the CNU Strategic Plan as demonstrated by the relevant excerpts shown below (bold font added for emphasis):

### Vision 2010:

“We will ignite in our students a love of learning and instill a **sense of responsibility and civic duty** that will give our graduates the **knowledge and confidence to engage as responsible leaders and citizens in their communities**, the nation and the world” (Vision 2010).

### Strategic Plan Priorities:

#### I. A Vital Curriculum

“The University’s academic programs will be founded upon the principles of **liberal learning across disciplines** and will prepare students to lead lives of significance and **responsibility in a free, democratic society.**”

#### II. A Culture of Student Learning and Engagement

“Students will achieve academic excellence to contribute significantly to society to **participate as responsible citizens.**”

### Submission Checklist:

By the deadline, submit a packet with the following documents to the Assistant Dean for Liberal Learning. Please submit in electronic and hard copy form.

☒ X\_ Area of Inquiry Course Proposal Form

☒ X\_ Syllabus for the Course

☒ X\_ Undergraduate Curriculum Committee Course Proposal Form

**UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE  
NEW COURSE PROPOSAL FORM**

**Is the course being proposed for the Liberal Learning Core? Yes, AoI Western Traditions**

**1. Title of Course:** The American Experiment: Formation

**Proposed Course Number (cleared with Registrar):** AMST 100

**Prerequisite Courses:** None

**Catalogue Description** (including credits, lecture, and lab hours): (3-3-0)

An introduction to the discipline of American Studies. Students will examine the ways in which America was, and is, an experiment in democratic life. This course critically examines the intellectual and cultural foundations of American life as well as the formation of American identities and competing ideals. Students will explore the extent to which America has been shaped by issues such as unity, equality, liberty, individualism, civic engagement, and democratic values.

**Is the course cross-listed?** NO

**\*\*A proposed syllabus, including complete text and/or reference information, as well as any relevant information to this decision, must be appended. DONE**

**NOTE:** All affected department chairs must sign approval on last page.

**2. For whom is the course primarily intended? Explain why it should be added to the curriculum.**

This course is intended for the general student population at CNU with an interest in an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the formation of America. This course would be required for students seeking the Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies with a major in American Studies. This course would be one of four core courses for students in the proposed major.

**3. If this course is required, append a description of how the course fits into the curriculum. Indicate how it affects hours required for graduation.**

This course would be required as one of four core courses in the proposed major. The major would require 39 credit hours.

**4. Has this course been offered previously as a special topics course?**

Certain elements of this course were included in an AMST 195 Special Topics Course, "The American Experiment," offered during Fall 2006 as a general elective. The enrollments were 20 and 25 for the two sections.

**5. Has this course, or one closely related to it, been offered at CNU previously?** NO

**6. What is the anticipated enrollment per offering for the next three years?** 25-27 students per section, two sections each regular semester at a minimum.

**During which term will this course first be offered?**

Fall 2007

**During which semesters will this course regularly be offered?**

Every Fall

Every Spring

Print in the 2007-2008 (academic year) Undergraduate Catalog.

**7. How will the course be staffed?**

With faculty to be hired in the Department of Leadership and American Studies, which may include new hires, or interested CNU faculty transferring their primary assignment to the Department, or CNU faculty visiting for a semester or year, or some other staffing arrangement. If the major is approved, it is expected that the Department eventually would have several tenure-track positions to teach most of the core AMST courses, advise students, and perform other duties incumbent upon faculty in departments.

8. Does the course involve a particular classroom, special equipment, or costs beyond those usually associated with a course at CNU? NO
9. Is the course repeatable for additional credit? NO
10. If this course is for an Area of Inquiry
- a. Identify the Area of Inquiry Western Traditions
- b. Demonstrate how the course will meet the objectives of this Area of Inquiry - See the Area of Inquiry form.

This course was approved by:

(Liberal learning core courses must be reviewed by BOTH academic Deans.)

*Concur*

*Do Not  
Concur\*\**

Department(s): (1) \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ ☐

(2) \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ ☐

Liberal Learning Council: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ ☐

CLAS Curriculum Committee: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ ☐

LSoB Curriculum Committee: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ ☐

Dean: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ ☐

Dean: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ ☐

Undergraduate Curriculum  
Committee: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ ☐

*Changes to the Liberal Learning requirements must be reviewed by the Faculty Senate.*

Faculty Senate President: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ ☐

Provost \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ ☐

Distribution by Provost Office following approval:  
Department Chair(s), UCC Chair, Deans, Registrar

*\*\* If "Do Not Concur" is checked, please attach a statement of explanation.*

**College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
Department of Leadership and American Studies**

**PROPOSED Course Syllabus  
AMST 100: The American Experiment: Formation (3-3-0)**

**I. Three credit hours. Required for all American Studies majors**

**II. Prerequisites:** None

**III. Professor:** TBA

**IV. Course description, Purpose and Objectives**

**Course Description and Purpose**

An introduction to the discipline of American Studies. Students will examine the ways in which America was, and is, an experiment in democratic life. This course critically examines the intellectual and cultural foundations of American life as well as the formation of American identities and competing ideals. Students will explore the extent to which America has been shaped by issues, such as unity, equality, liberty, individualism, civic engagement, and democratic values.

“American Experiment” is a phrase that describes political and cultural innovations that should not be taken for granted but that are often questioned. Because the origins of “America” are in dispute, we begin with the fundamental question, “What is America?” We next critically evaluate the theories, values, and ideas that founded this nation, as well as the corresponding development of civil society in America. Ultimately, we hope to understand the unique challenges posed by a society that claims to be based on “reflection and choice” rather than “accident or force.”<sup>1</sup> Any solid understanding of the extent to which American society and civic life have changed over time requires that we begin with the philosophic and cultural origins of the “American Dream.”

**Learning Objectives**

AMST 100 aims to (1) introduce students to American Studies as an interdisciplinary academic experience, (2) help students gain an understanding of the distinctiveness of the American Experiment, (3) enable students to gain insight into American society and political culture thereby, and to (4) allow them to achieve a greater civic awareness. The purpose of studying these things is not just to attain intellectual comprehension, but it is also to prepare oneself to flourish as a reflective human being. Only after one has thought about what America is and what it can be is it possible to live as a responsible adult citizen.

Successful completion of the course will prepare students for future interdisciplinary study in American Studies. Students should demonstrate more than a minimum knowledge of course content by scoring above an average of 60 percent on all assignments. Those who complete the course will receive three semester hours of credit.

*Please Note the Following:*

- (1) This syllabus is part of the material for which you are responsible.
- (2) You must complete all major assignments in order to pass this class.
- (3) All work in this class is cumulative.

**Academic Advising Center**

Students who believe that they may need special or additional accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Academic Advising Center as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. Please note that it is the student’s responsibility to complete their paperwork. I invite you to see me at any time that I can be of assistance in helping you with the course. I am available during office hours and by appointment. Please do not hesitate to come by. I may also notify the Academic Advising Center if you seem to be having problems with this course. The Academic Advising Center is located in McMurran. (757) 594-8763 ([advise@cnu.edu](mailto:advise@cnu.edu))

**V. Specific Assignments, Policies, and Grading Scale**

<b>Required Texts</b>	Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i> Gunn, et.al. <i>Early American Writing</i> Course pack (on-line package of readings)
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<sup>1</sup>cf. Hamilton, Alexander, John Jay and James Madison. *The Federalist Papers*.  
<http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa01.htm>

**Evaluation**

15% class participation, quizzes, and response papers (RPs)

15% one paper

40% two exams

30% final exam

***Class Instruction, Attendance Policy, and Class preparation:***

Instruction methods include lecture and class discussion. Students are expected to be on time, alert, attentive, and prepared, which means that they must bring all relevant materials with them. Students who fail to bring their class readings with them will be counted as absent. More than two absences will result in a lower participation grade. The instructor trusts that the importance of this course's goals will elicit from students a suitably high degree of participation: you should come to each class prepared for a vigorous, thoughtful discussion of the day's topic.

***Exams:*** There will be two midterm exams and a final exam. All exams are comprehensive.

***Quizzes/RPs:*** Quizzes cover the week's work—including readings and lectures. For the purposes of quizzes, students are expected to have completed all readings by the first day they are due. Quizzes take two forms: (a) short answer or (b) reaction papers (You will be given about 15 minutes to write on a topic related to that day's readings. RPs will be very hard to write if you fail to do the reading.) You can expect quizzes on Thursdays, though I reserve the right to give unannounced quizzes or assignments if deemed necessary. Attending class late on the day of a quiz will result in a zero for the quiz or RP missed. *There will be no make-up quizzes or RPs; I will drop your lowest quiz from your average.* Any additional homework will be averaged with your quizzes.

***Paper:*** The take-home essay will entail textual analysis and should demonstrate the student's comprehensive understanding of class material. Appeals to computer problems do not automatically result in an extension on the paper. Be sure to back-up your work and save your work frequently. Keep a hard copy of your paper with you.

**Grading Scale**

The Plus-Minus Grading Scale will be used in determining grades for this course.

The grading scale is as follows:

92-100% = A; 90-91 = A -;

87-89 = B+; 83-86 = B; 80-82 = B -;

77-79 = C+; 73-76 = C; 72-70 = C -;

69-67 = D+; 66-63 = D; 62-60 = D -;

59.9 and lesser scores = F.

**Academic integrity**

Academic integrity is the foundation of college life and experience at Christopher Newport University. All members of the CNU community are responsible for working together to establish and uphold an environment conducive to honorable academic endeavor. In no case will academic dishonesty be tolerated. The Honor Code is always in force. Please familiarize yourself with it if you are not already aware of its content. Students will pledge each assignment as follows: "I have neither given nor received any unauthorized aid in completing this assignment." (<http://clas.cnu.edu/honorsystem.pdf>).

***Plagiarism:*** Representing someone else's work or ideas as your own constitutes plagiarism. Be aware that if a student is discovered to have plagiarized any major assignment, he or she will fail the course. If you have any questions concerning what constitutes plagiarism, please contact me at any time.



## VI. Tentative Schedule

### I. Week 1: What is American Studies? What is a citizen? What is America?

Aug 21-23 Readings TBA

### II. National Identity and the Founding Principles: What is the Relationship between the Nation and the Individual? What are the rights and Duties of the American Citizen? How to educate the democratic spirit?

Aug 28 Reading: John Locke selections TBA <http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm>  
Declaration of Independence <http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/document/>

Aug 30 Virtue and Democratic life  
Reading: John Winthrop's "A Model of Christian Charity"  
<http://history.hanover.edu/texts/winthmod.html>  
Selections from Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography TBA  
<http://www.earlyamerica.com/lives/franklin/chapt1/>

Sept 4 Problem of republicanism: Anti-Federalists vs. the Federalists  
Reading FED 9-10; FED 51 <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/federal/fed.htm>  
Brutus #1 <http://www.liberty-page.com/foundingdocs/antifedpap/brutus/1.html>

Sept 6 Democracy in America;  
Reading: Tocqueville  
Volume 1: Author's preface (DA 9-20)  
Pt 1 ch 3-4: Sovereignty of the of Amer. People (DA50-60)  
Pt 2 ch 3-4: Freedom of the Press (DA 180-202)  
Pt 2 ch 5-6: Advantages of Democratic Gov't (DA221-245)

Sept 11 Reading: Tocqueville  
Pt 2 ch 7: Tyranny of the majority (DA 246-261)  
Pt 2 ch 8: Tempering the Tyranny (DA 262-276)  
Pt 2 ch 9: Maintaining a Democratic Govt. (DA 276-315)

### III. The American Experiment and the many ways to define the citizen: Immigration, Pluralism, Individualism, Liberalism, Education

Sept 13 Who and what are Americans?  
Black Hawk autobiography; selections TBA  
Red Jacket; selections TBA

Sept 18 "What is an American" from *Letters from an American Farmer*  
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/CREV/letter03.html>  
Roosevelt "Straight Americanism"  
Horace Kallen "Democracy versus the Melting Pot"

Sept 21 Exam 1

Sept 26 Immigration issues and non-citizen residents  
Madison's Report OF 1799 on the The Kentucky-Va Resolutions  
<http://www.barefootsworld.net/madison.html>

Sept 28 Selections from Thoreau's Civil Disobedience:  
<http://thoreau.eserver.org/civil1.html>  
Selections From *Korematsu v United States* (1944)  
Selections from the U.S.A Patriot Act

- Oct 2 Individualism vs. civic engagement in America  
 Reading: Tocqueville Volume 2  
 Pt 2 ch 1-4: Equality, Liberty, Individualism (DA 503-513)  
 Pt 2 ch 8: Individualism and Self-Interest (DA 525-528)  
 Pt 2 ch 5-7 Voluntary assoc and Newspapers (DA 514-525)
- Putnam "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital"  
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/DETOC/assoc/bowling.html>
- Oct 4 Early views of education in America:  
 John Henry Newman, *Idea of a University*, Discourse V:  
<http://www.newmanreader.org/works/idea/discourse5.html>
- Oct 9 Franklin, *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensilvania*  
<http://www.archives.upenn.edu/primdocs/1749proposals.html>  
 W.E.B. DuBois, "On the Wings of Atalanta":  
<http://www2.pfeiffer.edu/~lridener/DSS/DuBois/sbf5.htm>
- Optional Film: "In America" (2002): Time and Location TBA*

#### IV. The American Experiment and Equality: the Case of Race

- Oct 11 Tocqueville pt 2 ch 10: The Three Races (DA 316-363)
- Oct 16 Incidents in the life of a slave girl; selections TBA  
<http://docsouth.unc.edu/jacobs/menu.html>
- Oct 18 Jefferson "Notes on the State of Virginia" (selections TBA)  
<http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/JefVirg.html>  
 Dred Scott Decision <http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/facts/democrac/21.htm>  
<http://www.founding.com/library/lbody.cfm?id=321&parent=63>
- Oct 23 Thoreau: Slavery in Massachusetts <http://thoreau.eserver.org/slavery.html>  
 Douglass "What to the Slave is the 4<sup>th</sup> of July?"  
[http://douglassarchives.org/doug\\_a10.htm](http://douglassarchives.org/doug_a10.htm)
- Oct 25 WEB Dubois (selections from *The Souls of Black Folk*)
- Oct 30 Exam 2

#### V. The American Experiment and Equality: "Remember the Ladies"

- Nov 1 Abigail Adams <http://www.thelizlibrary.org/suffrage/abigail.htm>  
 Judith Sargent Murray "On the Equality of the Sexes"
- Nov 6 Margaret Fuller selections from "Woman in the Nineteenth Century"  
<http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>  
 Elizabeth Cady Stanton "Declaration of Sentiments" <http://www.nps.gov/wori/declaration.htm>
- Nov 13 Susan B Anthony's speech on the right to vote:  
<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/anthony/anthonyaddress.html>  
 Margaret Sanger (selections TBA)  
 Required Film: Iron Jawed Angels (Time and location TBA)

## **VI. Religion and Politics: What does God have to do with the American Experiment? What is the Role of Religion and Religiosity in America? Do Americans Believe?**

- Nov 15                      Roger Williams' "The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution"  
John Locke: "Letter on Toleration" <http://www.constitution.org/jl/tolerati.htm>
- Nov 20                      Tocqueville  
DA 287-301: How religion helps maintain a democratic republic  
Pt 2 ch 9: Self-Interest and Religion (DA 528-530)  
Pt 2 ch 12: Enthusiasm and Religion (DA 534-535)  
Pt 2 ch 13: Restless in Prosperity (DA 535-538)  
Pt 2 ch 15: Religious Belief & Spiritual Things (DA 542-546)
- Nov 22                      No class; Thanksgiving
- Nov 27                      Madison "Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments"  
[http://religiousfreedom.lib.virginia.edu/sacred/madison\\_m&r\\_1785.html](http://religiousfreedom.lib.virginia.edu/sacred/madison_m&r_1785.html)  
Lucretia Mott "Not Christianity, but Priestcraft"

## **VII. The Future: Where Do We Go From Here?**

- Nov 29                      Tocqueville Pt 4 ch 1-4; 6-7 Avoiding Despotism (DA 667-674, 681, 690-702)  
Lyceum Speech <http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/lyceum.htm>  
  
*Optional Film: American Dreamz (2006) Time and Location TBA*
- Dec 4                        Summary and Conclusion

The final exam is scheduled by the Registrar. We will meet in our regular classroom.