The Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud Center for American Studies and Research (CASAR)

Director: Lubin, Alex
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The Center for American Studies and Research offers a Master of Arts in Transnational American Studies. We conceive of Transnational American Studies in terms of the cultural, political, and social relations between, among, and across the United States and the Middle East/North Africa region. CASAR’s goals are to increase understanding of the interdependencies between the United States and the MENA region, as well as to understand how American culture and U.S. geopolitical power circulate beyond the borders of the U.S. The MA program aims to assist students in acquiring an academic grounding in the theories and methods of the discipline of American Studies, as well as to foster transnational scholarship at the intersections of interdisciplinary U.S. and MENA Studies. The Center offers some of its own seminars in transnational American Studies. CASAR is an interdisciplinary unit and the MA program draws on other departments to provide elective course work and thesis advising for its students. To complement students’ course work and to promote scholarship related to transnational American Studies at AUB, the Center sponsors visiting lectures and conferences and holds occasional events such as film screenings and readings.

Students structure their own course of study in such areas as Arab and Middle East Studies, contemporary politics, international relations, history, anthropology, sociology, fine arts, media studies, and literary studies. The courses and the thesis and project requirements encourage students’ critical and independent thinking and the undertaking of analytical in-depth research.

The CASAR MA program offers a thesis option and a project option. Students are strongly encouraged to select the project option.

Project Option

Students following the project option are required to complete a minimum of 27 credit hours in courses numbered 300 and above, in addition to a three-credit project. In addition to the nine credits of CASAR MA courses and a three-credit final project, students will select electives in consultation with the director of CASAR. No more than three credits of the program of study can be in Arabic language study, unless the student petitions to include in their program of study additional Arabic credits.
Thesis Option

Students following the thesis option are required to complete a minimum of 21 credit hours in courses numbered 300 and above, in addition to a nine-credit thesis. In addition to the nine credits of CASAR MA courses and a nine-credit thesis, students will select electives in consultation with the director of CASAR. No more than three credits can be in Arabic, unless the student petitions to include in their program of study additional Arabic credits.

All CASAR students are required to take the three Transnational American Studies core courses, AMST 300, AMST 301, and AMST 302.

Course Descriptions

AMST 300  Introduction to Transnational American Studies  3.0; 3 cr.
This graduate seminar introduces students (1) to current theories and methods in the field, (2) to the history of American Studies nationally and transnationally, and (3) to the participating faculty in the program. It is the required introductory seminar for all Transnational American Studies graduate students and is open only to those who have been accepted into the MA program. During the course of the term, other affiliated American Studies participating faculty members will visit the seminar to introduce themselves and their fields of specialization.

AMST 301  America in the Middle East 3.0; 3 cr.
Although the United States' encounter with the Middle East may appear to be a relatively recent phenomenon, this course illustrates that America has imagined the Middle East ever since the beginning of North American colonization. Moreover, America has been in the Middle East for a period that extends long before U.S. military and diplomatic presence in the region. In addition to documenting various moments of encounter between America and the Middle East, this course also problematizes the very terms “America” and “Middle East” by introducing each region as a geographic imaginary. In this way, the course first asks what are the borders and limits of “America” and “the Middle East” and how and when are these borders and limits produced?

AMST 302  Theories and Methods of Transnational American Studies 3.0; 3 cr.
This seminar introduces students to interdisciplinary approaches to the study of transnational American culture and social history. During the semester, we will examine the history of American Studies, as well as focus on contemporary scholarship in the field. This course explores the political and social meanings of cultural conflict, national identity, and transnational culture and politics through close analysis and classroom discussion of various research methodologies that employ primary source material such as historical documents, literature, ethnography, and visual and popular culture. We will focus on how ideas about race, gender, sexuality, class, region, and nation have shaped contests over the meaning of citizenship and belonging. The seminar will be framed around the following questions: What is distinct about interdisciplinary scholarship? What kinds of questions do American Studies scholars ask and why? What does a comparative and transnational framework require and offer in terms of methodology?

AMST 375  Special Topics in Transnational American Studies 3.0; 3 cr.

AMST 397  American Studies Graduate Tutorial 3.0; 3 cr.

AMST 395  Comprehensive Exam 0 cr.

AMST 398  Final Project in Transnational American Studies 3 cr.

AMST 399  MA Thesis in Transnational American Studies 9 cr.