PROPOSAL FOR A GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN AMERICAN STUDIES
Date: 4/20/15

MISSION & PROGRAM THEMES: The Program in American Studies (AMER) advances the interdisciplinary study of the diverse cultures, identities, and histories of the United States. AMER students and faculty explore how understanding the ideas, beliefs, and practices of the past can help us imagine and inform solutions to the problems of the present. All aspects of the Program in American Studies, including the graduate certificate, incorporate three basic themes:

1. American Studies at Vanderbilt demonstrates the value of interdisciplinary thinking. We view interdisciplinary thinking as necessary, generative, and essential to the success of our Program. The challenges facing the United States cannot be sufficiently examined or addressed by looking at them from only one perspective. Scholars in American Studies contribute to solutions by revealing the histories of ideas and practices that have too often resulted in these challenges. Representing multiple disciplines, we answer the twin questions: How did we get here, and how can we make things better?

2. American Studies at Vanderbilt takes up contemporary problems of social justice. As a community of scholars, we do not share a partisan or ideological position. We support the value of the free expression among and between our colleagues. Acknowledging that students and faculty will necessarily have multiple and sometimes discordant political beliefs, we nevertheless seek for our curriculum to be a place for the scholarly and civil exploration of contemporary social justice issues in the United States, including but not limited to those associated with climate change and systemic patterns of inequality.

3. American Studies at Vanderbilt addresses the intersections between local, national, and global contexts. We believe strongly in the value of comparative, cross-cultural, and transnational analyses. We do not want to be experts in U.S. culture who only understand it only within a self-referential vacuum. Instead, we want our students and faculty to have expertise that travels, sometimes literally, between local, national, and international iterations of “American” ideas and identities. To this end, we seek continued engagement with the university’s international partner institutions and their faculty, students, and staff.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND PATTERNS: To meet these commitments, the Program in American Studies has offered a Graduate Certificate since the early 2000s. Because the designation has not gone on the official university transcript, and because we are concerned that our internal records may be incomplete, we are not certain how many have been issued in that time. In recent years, however, there have been between one or two students per year
enrolled in the graduate certificate program in AMER. Currently two students are enrolled, and both of them are from the English department.

The graduate course in American Studies (formerly AMER 300, now AMER 8000) has been taught by Vanderbilt University faculty representing a wide range of disciplines, including English, Communication Studies, History, Philosophy, Political Science, and Sociology. The goal of the Program is to offer it annually, but challenges with staffing the course have meant that there have been times when it has been offered once every other year.

RATIONALE: BENEFITS TO STUDENTS & FACULTY. The graduate certificate in AMER requires that graduate students take courses from across disciplines to in order to: (a) enrich their graduate education generally, (b) broaden their understanding of multiple research methodologies, and (c) cultivate a sense of the wealth of interdisciplinary scholarship on their individual area, theme, or topic of expertise related to U.S. culture(s), history, and/or identities. The certificate also serves as a professional credential for graduate students, demonstrating that they have obtained a focus of concentration within graduate coursework and thus strengthening students’ ability to compete for jobs, postdoctoral awards, and related opportunities (i.e., fellowships and grants). All students’ programs are highly individualized, and each graduate student enrolled in the certificate program receives one-on-one advising by the director. The coursework required for the AMER graduate certificate is, and should remain, focused on the goal of each student expanding her/his research interests to include more interdisciplinary literatures and a greater appreciation of diverse methods.

Offering the graduate certificate in AMER also creates an opportunity for faculty to teach a graduate level course in the Program in American Studies. Given that the Program has no permanent faculty of its own, we must build our teaching faculty and related elements within our curriculum anew every year. This arrangement is challenging, and yet it also affords the opportunity to create an intentional and expanding scholarly community, novel avenues for interdisciplinarity in both teaching and research, and professional relationships between graduate students and faculty members outside of their home department. Furthermore, offering the graduate certificate in AMER can play a role in the recruitment and retention of both graduate students and faculty whose research centers on U.S. culture(s) and identities. The Program in American Studies has been pleased to engage with faculty candidates in departments seeking to hire Americanists, for example, and the teaching the required course for the AMER graduate certificate is a way to offer potential faculty an opportunity for scholarly engagement and creativity outside of their home departments.

CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS: Many of Vanderbilt’s peer institutions offer much more robust graduate-level coursework and directed research opportunities in American Studies than we do. See, for example, Princeton University’s Program in American Studies, [http://www.princeton.edu/ams/](http://www.princeton.edu/ams/); Harvard University’s American Studies, [http://americanstudies.unix.fas.harvard.edu/](http://americanstudies.unix.fas.harvard.edu/); and Yale University’s American Studies Department; [http://americanstudies.yale.edu/graduate-program](http://americanstudies.yale.edu/graduate-program). In all three of these institutions, opportunities for graduate students interested in American Studies coursework
and/or a degree extend far beyond a certificate. Other peer institutions only offer an undergraduate major and minor in American Studies; see, for example, Stanford University, http://amstudies.stanford.edu/overview. It is difficult to find an exact match for Vanderbilt University’s AMER graduate certificate offering. However, maintaining the current graduate certificate option offers Vanderbilt graduate students an opportunity for focused and/or further training in this field while maximizing the limited resources the College of Arts and Science has chosen to dedicate to American Studies up to this point.

**CATALOG COPY: DESCRIPTION, ELIGIBILITY, REQUIREMENTS:** Vanderbilt University’s Program in American Studies offers an interdisciplinary graduate certificate. This certificate has been designed to complement students’ disciplinary training, expose them to larger interdisciplinary traditions and academic literatures, and enhance their career options. The American Studies certificate provides graduate students with training across an array of disciplines as well as training in interdisciplinary methodology. The certificate provides students with a valuable professional credential and strengthens their ability to compete for jobs as well as national fellowships and postdoctoral awards.

The certificate in American studies is open to any student enrolled in graduate study at Vanderbilt University. Students wishing to enroll must complete an “Intent to Enroll” form, which must be signed by the student, the director of the Program, and the director of the Graduate Program (DGS) for the degree program in which the student is enrolled. A signed copy of the form should then be submitted to the Graduate School (richard.hoover@vanderbilt.edu) and to the University Registrar’s Office (university.registrar@vanderbilt.edu).

Acceptance to the program requires the approval of both the graduate director of the student’s home department and the director of the American Studies program. Students must also submit an application that includes (1) a one-page rationale for their course of study to the American studies graduate committee for approval and (2) a plan of study focused on a specific theme, forming an intellectually coherent whole.

Graduate courses successfully completed at Vanderbilt University prior to admission to the program may be counted toward the certificate requirements with the approval of the director of the program if the course can satisfy one of the curriculum requirements of the program. An undergraduate course may be substituted for a graduate course required by the program’s curriculum with the approval of the director of the program and the Graduate School.

The awarding of a certificate requires a cumulative GPA of 3.3, satisfactory performance of B+ or better in AMER 4000, completion of all requirements, and successful completion of the graduate certificate paper. Please contact the American Studies program for more information at americanstudies@vanderbilt.edu.

The required coursework (total of 15 credit hours) and related scholarship is as follows:
1. Required course (3 credit hours): American Studies 8000. Major approaches. Introduction to interdisciplinary American Studies: major debates, research methods, theoretical terms and directions.

2. Four additional graduate-level American Studies courses appropriate to the student’s program of study (12 credit hours): Courses must be approved by the Director of the Program in American Studies and must include at least three courses outside the student’s home discipline. No more than two courses (6 credit hours) of courses required for the primary degree may be applied toward the certificate. No more than two courses (6 credit hours) of specifically-named courses required for the primary degree may be applied toward the Certificate. A maximum of one course (3 credit hours) may be satisfied through an independent study with a faculty member affiliated with the American Studies program, with the approval of the Director of the Program in American Studies.

3. A paper (30-35 pages) or comparable scholarly project submitted to the Director of the Program in American Studies. The paper must demonstrate the application of an American Studies methodology to research, teaching, or fieldwork. It should also feature evidence of synthesis of interdisciplinary American Studies scholarship and point to relevance in the candidate’s primary field. Papers should be submitted in a timely fashion, ideally in the semester before dissertation work commences.

Oversight: The graduate certificate in AMER will be the responsibility of the Director of the Program in American Studies. The Director will convene an ad hoc committee of at least two other faculty members for each enrolled student for assessment purposes.

Approved List of Courses with Approval from Chairs & Directors of Relevant Units: Below please find the current list of graduate courses that may be counted towards the graduate certificate in American Studies. Likewise, attached to this document are the e-mails in which most of the Chairs and Directors of these departments/programs indicate approval of continuation.

American Studies: 8000, Graduate Workshop in American Studies.

Economics: 9550–9560, Labor Economics

English: 8450, Studies in American Literature; 8455, Studies in Southern Literature; The following courses when an American topic is offered: 8430, Seminar in British and American; 8137, Introduction to Literary Theory; 8138, Special Topics in Literary Theory; 8150, Special Problems in English and American Literature; 8155, Special Topics in English and American Literature.
HISTORY: 8700, Studies in Early American History to 1783; 8710, Studies in the Middle Period of American History, 1783–1861; 8720, Studies in United States History, 1861–1900; 8730, Studies in Recent American History; 8740, Seminar in Recent American History; 8750, Topics in American History; 8770, Studies in American Social History

PHILOSOPHY: When an American topic is offered: 9010, History of Philosophy; 9020, Topics in Philosophy; 9000, Figures in Philosophy; 8054, Nineteenth-Century Philosophy

POLITICAL SCIENCE: 8330, Studies in American Politics; 8331, Party Politics; 8332, Political Parties and Electoral Behavior; 8333, Political Culture, Opinion, and Behavior; 8335, Politics of American Legislation; 8336, The Judicial Process; 8339, Research in American Politics; When an American topic is offered: 8370, Topics in Political Science

SOCIOLOGY: 6301, Classical Sociological Theory and Major Theorists; 6302, Contemporary Theory; 8331, Survey Seminar on Inequalities and Movements; 8333, Survey Seminar on Cultural Sociology; 8335, Survey Seminar on Deviant Behavior and Social Control; 8339, Survey Seminar on Political Sociology; 8343, Survey Seminar on Social Psychology; 8345, Survey Seminar on Social Stratification; 9361, Special Topic Seminars on Social Phenomena at the Macro Level; 9363, Special Topic Seminars on Institutions and Organizations; 9367, Special Topic Seminars on Norms, Power, and Related Normative Phenomena; 9368, Special Topic Seminars on Social Processes and Social Change.

WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES: 8301, Gender and Sexuality: Feminist Approaches; 8302, Gender and Pedagogy.
I. Mission Statement

The Program in American Studies (AMER) advances the interdisciplinary study of the diverse cultures, identities, and histories of the United States. Together, AMER students and faculty explore how understanding the ideas, beliefs, and practices of the past can help us imagine and inform solutions to the problems of the present.

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sometimes literally, between local, national, and international iterations of “American” ideas and identities. To this end, we seek continued engagement with the university's international partner institutions and their faculty, students, and staff.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be expected to generate scholarship in the field of American Studies informed by multiple disciplines.

2. Students’ scholarship will be expected to concern a topic or question related to social justice, broadly conceived.

3. Students will be expected to demonstrate awareness of comparative and/or transnational approaches to American Studies.

III. Assessment Measures (Please provide rubrics or assessment tools if used)

Assessment Measure(s) for Student Learning Outcome 1

Papers and other evidence of scholarship from the student’s coursework will be assessed for interdisciplinary qualities. For example, the paper should demonstrate an interdisciplinary orientation to research question(s). Regarding methodology, students will be expected to have primary expertise in one methodology, and yet they should be able to defend their own methodological choices to an audience of interdisciplinary readers.
Student work will be evaluated according to the following criteria, scored on a three-point scale: highly competent (3), competent (2), not competent (1):

1. The student can identify and compare basic premises, epistemologies, and controversies from multiple disciplines.
2. The student can thoughtfully compare and contrast and otherwise synthesize scholarship from more than one discipline as part of the justification for her/his own research question.
3. The student provides a detailed rationale for methodological choice(s).

Assessment Measure(s) for Student Learning Outcome 2

Papers and other evidence of scholarship from the student’s coursework will be assessed in terms of whether or not it contextualizes and/or connects its original research to questions related to contemporary or historic understandings of social justice, broadly defined.

Student work will be evaluated according to the following criteria, scored on a three-point scale: highly competent (3), competent (2), not competent (1):

1. The student contextualizes the research question through a connection to literature concerned with contemporary or historic understandings of social justice, broadly defined.
2. The student can answer how this research will contribute to literature concerned with contemporary or historic understandings of social justice, broadly defined.
3. The student explains how the findings or argument of this research inform future understandings of social justice, broadly defined.

Assessment Measure(s) for Student Learning Outcome 3

Papers and other evidence of scholarship from the student’s coursework will be assessed in terms of its demonstration of awareness of transnational and/or comparative approaches to the study of U.S. culture, history, and identity.

Student work will be evaluated according to the following criteria, scored on a three-point scale: highly competent (3), competent (2), not competent (1):
1. The student references sources from non-U.S. scholars and/or scholarly traditions.
2. The student demonstrates the ability to synthesize scholarship revealing comparative and/or transnational approaches to the study of U.S. culture, history, and identity.
3. The student argues for the value of his/her analysis in ways that are informed by comparative and/or transnational approaches to the study of U.S. culture, history, and identity.
RE: Request for confirmation: Courses in your dept/program that can count towards AMER graduate certificate

Lewis, David Eric

Sent: Friday, April 03, 2015 2:13 PM
To: Beasley, Vanessa B

Yes! Thank you.

David E. Lewis, Interim Chair
William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor
Department of Political Science
Vanderbilt University

-----Original Message-----
From: Beasley, Vanessa B
Sent: Friday, April 03, 2015 12:35 PM
To: Carpenter, Laura M; Kreyling, Michael P; Harrington, Joel F; Saggi, Kamal; Wuerth, Julian; Donato, Katharine; Lewis, David Eric
Subject: Request for confirmation: Courses in your dept/program that can count towards AMER graduate certificate

Dear colleagues,

The Graduate School has adopted new uniform rules for graduate certificate programs, and all such existing programs must now apply for reauthorization.

As Director of Program in American Studies, I am preparing the request to have its existing certificate program reauthorized under the new requirements.

I am writing today to ask for your confirmation that the courses in your department that are currently eligible toward the AMER grad certificate continue to be eligible. The question is whether or not we can continue with the status quo with respect to the eligible courses in your dept/program. There is no request for change.

Please reply with "yes" or "no" to this e-mail. It would be ideal to have your response on or before Monday, April 6.

For your review, I've pasted the list of the relevant courses below. I have listed them under the "old" course numbers simply because we have not yet translated them into the new ones within any of our internal materials, but they will be listed under the new numbers on all documents moving forward. (We are still in the process of updating the undergraduate courses that count for our major and minor and have not gotten to the graduate courses yet.) If this causes any concern or otherwise interferes with your ability to respond to this request, please let me know.
Re: Request for confirmation: Courses in your dept/program that can count towards AMER program

Carpenter, Laura M

Sent: Friday, April 03, 2015 2:52 PM
To: Beasley, Vanessa B

Dear Vanessa,

We in Women's and Gender Studies are delighted to have our courses "Gender and Sexuality: Feminist Approaches" and "Gender and Pedagogy" among the eligible courses for students pursuing the graduate certificate in American Studies. We look forward to continuing the ongoing productive relationship between our programs.

All best,
Laura

*****
Laura M. Carpenter
Associate Professor of Sociology
Interim Director, Women's and Gender Studies
Dear Dean Beasley,

I am happy to confirm that the American Studies certificate has the support of History.

JFH
RE: Request for confirmation: Courses in your dept/program that can count towards AMER

Kreyling, Michael P

Sent: Friday, April 03, 2015 2:07 PM
To: Beasley, Vanessa B

Vanessa: English is pleased to support the recertification of AMER for graduate credit in the English PhD program. Michael Kreyling

Michael Kreyling
Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of English
Vanderbilt University
Nashville, TN 37235
615-322-2541
615-343-8028 (FAX)
YES

-----Original Message-----
From: Beasley, Vanessa B
Sent: Friday, April 03, 2015 10:35 AM
To: Carpenter, Laura M; Kreyling, Michael P; Harrington, Joel F; Saggi, Kamal; Donato, Katharine; Lewis, David Eric
Subject: Request for confirmation: Courses in your dept/program that can count towards AMER graduate certificate

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With much appreciation,

Vanessa B. Beasley
Associate Professor, Communication Studies
Director, Program in American Studies
132 Buttrick Hall
Vanderbilt University
Mailing Address:
VU Station B, Box 350125
2301 Vanderbilt Place
Nashville, TN 37235-0125

615-343-8724 (voice)
615-343-1444 (fax)

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ECONOMICS: 329a-329b, Labor Economics.
Yes.

-----Original Message-----
From: Beasley, Vanessa B
Sent: Friday, April 03, 2015 12:35 PM
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With much appreciation,

Vanessa B. Beasley
Associate Professor, Communication Studies
Director, Program in American Studies
132 Buttrick Hall
Vanderbilt University
Mailing Address:
VU Station B, Box 350125
2301 Vanderbilt Place
Nashville, TN 37235-0125
615-343-8724 (voice)
615-343-1444 (fax)
Hi Vanessa,

Sorry for the delay in replying. We're happy with this list, except for the first one, 8050: Readings in Philosophy, which is the course/number we use for grad-level independent study courses (which we typically limit enrollment to those in our PhD Program). We're happy to support this. --Rob

PHILOSOPHY: 8050, Readings in Philosophy (when an American Topic is offered); 9010, History of Philosophy (when an American Topic is offered); 9020, Topics in Philosophy (when an American Topic is offered); 9000, Figures in Philosophy (when an American Topic is offered); 8054, Nineteenth-Century Philosophy (when an American Topic is offered)

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Dr. Robert Talisse
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www.roberttalisse.com