If critic Van Wyck Brooks was right to suggest American artists and their audiences need to claim a usable past, how are they to do so?

This course, a free standing continuation of U89 465 (Studies in American Cultural Identity: Beginnings to The Civil War), is designed for readers and students of American culture who wish to assemble a multidisciplinary “map” of American literary, visual, and musical art to help them locate authors, composers, other artists and culturally important figures in relation to key themes, decisive moments, and historical developments which have shaped and defined our national character.

We investigate issues of how the struggles for religious, racial, and gender rights, American violence, our polarities of innocence and experience, of individual and group welfare, individualism and conformity, and complex expressions of The American Dream and its dreamers influenced our acclaimed artists, as the flourishing of distinctly American art became an internationally acknowledged fact.

Our text will be The Norton Anthology of American Literature (Eighth Edition, 2012), from which we will read representative works of literary post-Romantic Realism, Naturalism, and early Modernism forming key points on the “map”: Lincoln, Whitman, Twain, Dickinson, Crane, Bierce, James, Wharton, Chopin, Gilman, Du Bois, Adams, Frost, Eliot, Cummings, Faulkner, Fitzgerald, O’Neill, and others.

We will examine the visual art of Church, Moran, Whistler, Homer, Eakins, Cassatt, Saint-Gaudens, Bellows; the photography of Brady, Steiglitz, and Steichen; the architecture of Sullivan and Wright. We will listen to the music of Gottschalk, Joplin, Sousa, Ives, the turn of the Century vaudeville stage, early jazz, blues, Berlin, Gershwin, and Ellington. Throughout, we will consider how the social and political developments of the time helped form and shape multidisciplinary expressions of nationalist American art.

A collaborative reading journal and individually defined final reading project will allow students to make comparisons and observations as their knowledge of American cultural traditions deepens. The course fulfills the Humanities or Arts distribution requirement for the AMCS M.A. program.

Register online: ucollege.wustl.edu/registration
For more information, call: (314) 935-6700