COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY STATEMENT

AMERICAN STUDIES

Date: June 2005
Collection Development Librarian: David Killian

I. PURPOSE/PROGRAM SUPPORT

The Gelman Library supports the curricular and research needs of the American Studies Department, which offers undergraduate and graduate degrees through the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences.

At the undergraduate level, the Department offers the BA degree with a major in American Studies and the minor in American Studies. At the graduate level, the Department offers the MA and the PhD degrees, both in the field of American Studies. A dual degree Five-Year BA with a major in American Studies and the MA in the field of American Studies is also available. Special concentrations within the master’s degree program are museums and material culture, historic preservation, and folklife. A thesis is optional for the MA degree; a dissertation for the PhD degree.

American Studies offers a broad interdisciplinary approach to the study of American civilization, past and present. Coursework is available in a variety of subject areas, including cultural history and theory; urban culture, spatial organization and built environment; media history and visual culture; race, ethnicity, and nation; gender and women’s history; transnational American Studies; American religious beliefs; folklore; immigration; historical memory and public history; and material culture.

Common areas of research for faculty and students are cultural production, difference and diversity, material culture, and spatial organization. The discipline draws from various perspectives and methods of inquiry, including cultural studies, history, folklife, and literary analysis, as well as the study of art, architecture, and visual culture.

The Department is affiliated with GWU’s Center for the Study of Public History and Public Culture. The Department maintains close ties with the Smithsonian
Institution, the National Park Service, and other government agencies and museums, and uses staffs and resources of these organizations as a regular part of the curriculum and for internship opportunities.

There are, at any one time, about seventy undergraduate majors in the Department. There are currently twenty-two Master of Arts students and twenty-four doctoral students.

Eleven full-time faculty members teach in the Department. There are twenty-three collaborating faculty members from a number of Departments, including Anthropology, Art, English, History, Religion, and Women’s Studies.

II. AREA RESOURCES

A. Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC)

The collections of the member libraries of the Consortium are available for use by faculty and students. The resources may be accessed either on-site or through the Consortium Loan Service.

B. Other area resources

At the graduate level, courses are offered in affiliation with the Smithsonian Institution’s Program for Graduate Students in the History of American Studies and are taught at the National Museum of American History and at the National Portrait Gallery by members of their staffs.

Internships for American Studies students are available at the Smithsonian and other Washington-area museums and historical societies.

The collections of the Library of Congress and the National Archives are important resources for researchers in American Studies.

GWU students and faculty may enter the main libraries of area Chesapeake Information and Research Library Alliance (CIRLA) institutions, including Howard University, University of Maryland (College Park), and Johns Hopkins University. Graduate students and faculty have borrowing privileges at those libraries.

III. GENERAL COLLECTION GUIDELINES

A. Language

English is the primary language of the collection. Foreign language materials may be selectively acquired.
B. Period of Coverage

There are no specific chronological limitations, but interest generally ranges from the first period of European settlement to the present.

C. Dates of Publication

Current scholarship is emphasized; older materials are acquired more selectively.

D. Geographical

The United States is generally the area of interest for this collection. Materials on American Studies are published in foreign countries, as the subject is of international interest; such materials may be collected.

E. Treatment of Subject

Scholarly materials, both current and retrospective, are preferred. Popular materials are selectively acquired. Textbooks are collected only if they are at the upper-undergraduate or graduate level, and then they are acquired only selectively.

IV. DESCRIPTION OF MATERIALS AND FORMAT

Materials are collected in a number of formats, including: monographs, serials, microforms, videocassettes and DVDs, and electronic textual sources, such as electronic books and online article databases.

V. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Gelman Library Special Collections’ Washingtoniana Collection and Africana Research Center collection include primary and secondary source materials valuable for research in some aspects of American Studies. Video recordings available in Gelman Media Resources are used in American Studies classes.

VI. DUPLICATION/REFERRAL POLICY

In general, duplicate copies of a title are not purchased, the operating principle being to purchase more titles rather than extra copies of individual titles. However, if demand warrants, e.g., reserve readings duplicate copies are bought on a case by case basis. Additional copies of titles may be accepted as gifts.

VII. SELECTION METHODS
A. Selection of new materials generally occurs through 5 sources:

1. The approval plan through Blackwell’s Book Services is monitored on a regular basis to ensure the profile meets our needs. Any changes in the curriculum, as indicated through library impact statements, are examined against possible changes in the approval profile.

2. Firm orders are initiated by the collection development librarian. Firm order requests from faculty and students are reviewed and approved by the collection development librarian.

3. Standing orders, memberships and serial requests are initiated by the collection development librarian.

4. Gifts are accepted under the same guidelines as other acquisitions. They must fit the criteria spelled out in this collection development policy.

5. The Library participates in the Federal Depository Library Program; collection development librarians review documents available through the U.S.G.P.O. for access or inclusion in the collection.

B. Deselection

The deselection process can be initiated by Gelman staff, by faculty, or by the collection development librarian. Final decisions on deselection are made by the collection development librarian. Items are checked for general condition, availability of newer or replacement editions and the continuing value of the content.

VIII. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CLASSIFICATION

American Studies is interdisciplinary in nature, but the BL, BR, E, F1 - 975, GR, HQ, NA, NK, PN and PS sections of the Library of Congress Classification System covers most of the material used by the Department’s faculty and students.