American Studies

THE American Studies Program is an interdisciplinary program that enables students to engage the diversity of American culture from a variety of intellectual disciplines and perspectives. Through course offerings, colloquia, and research opportunities, program students and faculty engage the states of the nation in a post–9/11 era, examining anew the formation of social, legal, cultural, and economic identities within the borders of the United States. Compelling matters of class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, environmentalism, technology, the arts, region, and religion take their proper and vital place in the curriculum of study. As much of the United States becomes a bilingual nation, the program identifies itself within the larger geographic and geopolitical parameters of the Americas, including Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. American Studies, in addition, addresses itself to important distinctions within the concept of globalization, ranging from transnational corporate activities to those of nongovernmental organizations committed to such projects as public health, philanthropy, and nutrition. The American Studies Program particularly encourages and provides opportunities for on- and off-campus research, internships, study abroad, and individualized and group projects under the guidance of participating faculty in the humanities, arts, and social sciences.

The program is directed by Teresa Goddu, associate professor of English and chair of the College Committee on American Studies.

Program of Concentration in American Studies

Major in American Studies

The interdisciplinary major in American Studies consists of 33 hours of course work, distributed as follows:

1. Core Requirements                6 hours
2. International Requirement       0-3 hours
3. Distribution Requirements       18 hours
4. Electives                       6-9 hours

Note: No course may be counted twice in calculating the 33 hours. No more than 6 hours at the 100 level can count toward the interdisciplinary major. Students seeking a second major may count a maximum of 6 hours of course work toward meeting requirements in both majors.

1. Core Requirements (6 hours)

Core Courses:
   American Studies 294, The American Studies Workshop (3 hours)
   American Studies 297, Senior Project (3 hours)

2. International Requirement: (0-3 hours)

One of the following:
   A) a semester abroad in a Vanderbilt-approved study abroad program
   B) American Studies 202, “Global Perspectives on the U.S.” (3 hours)
   C) ONE of the following:
      English, 271 - Caribbean Literature
3. Distribution Requirements  (18 hours)
   6 hours from at least two different departments or programs in each of the following three areas.

   A. Humanities: Classical Studies, Communication Studies, English, History of Art, Music,
      Philosophy, Religious Studies, Spanish and Portuguese, Theatre.
   B. Social Sciences: Anthropology, Economics, History, Political Science, Sociology.
   C. Interdisciplinary Programs: African-American and Diaspora Studies, American Studies, Earth
      and Environmental Sciences, Film Studies, Jewish Studies, Latin American and Iberian Studies,
      Medicine, Health and Society, Women’s and Gender Studies.
   Note: See below for a list of approved courses in each of these areas.

4. Electives  (6-9 hours)
   Two or three courses taken from the approved list of courses. Students should choose these
   courses in consultation with their advisor to form a study of concentration.

Minor in American Studies

The interdisciplinary minor in American Studies consists of 18 hours of course work, distributed as follows:
1. Core Requirements  3 hours
2. International Requirement  0-3 hours
2. Distribution Requirements  9 hours
3. Electives  3-6 hours

Note: No course may be counted twice in calculating the 18 hours. No more than
6 hours at the 100 level can count toward the interdisciplinary minor. Students seeking
a minor may count a maximum of 3 hours of course work toward meeting
requirements in both their major and minor.
1. Core Requirements (6 hours)
Core Course:
   American Studies 294, The American Studies Workshop (3 hours)

2. International Requirement: (0-3 hours)
One of the following:
   A) a semester abroad in a Vanderbilt-approved study abroad program
   B) American Studies 202, “Global Perspectives on the U.S.” (3 hours)
   C) ONE of the following:
      English, 271 - Caribbean Literature
      Religious Studies, 251 – Islamic Mysticism
      Anthropology, 231 – Colonial Encounters in the Americas
      Art History, 245 - Art of Pre-Columbian America
      History, 160 – Colonial Latin America
      History, 161 – Modern Latin America
      History, 258 - Rise of the Iberian Atlantic Empires 1492-1700
      History, 259 - Decline of the Iberian Atlantic Empires 1700-1820
      History, 260 – Caribbean History
      History, 262 – Modern Mexico
      History, 265 – History of Central America
      History, 266 – Reform and Revolution in Latin America
      Political Science, 217 – Latin American Politics
      Political Science, 219 – Politics of Mexico
      Political Science, 228 – International Politics of Latin America
      Sociology, 277 – Contemporary Latin America
      Sociology, 279 – Contemporary Mexican Society
      East Asian Studies, 240 – Current Japan-U.S. Relations
      Latin American and Iberian Studies, 201 – Introduction to Latin American
      Latin American and Iberian Studies, 235 – Gender, Ethnicity, and Language in
       The Americas
      Latin American and Iberian Studies, 294a – Special Topics in Latin American
       Studies

3. Distribution Requirements (9 hours)
3 hours in each of the following three areas.
A. Humanities: Classical Studies, Communication Studies, English, History of Art, Music,
   Philosophy, Religious Studies, Spanish and Portuguese, Theatre
B. Social Sciences: Anthropology, Economics, History, Political Science, Sociology, Psychology.
C. Interdisciplinary Programs: African-American and Diaspora Studies, American Studies, Earth
   and Environmental Sciences, Film Studies, Jewish Studies, Latin American and Iberian Studies,
   Medicine, Health and Society, Women’s and Gender Studies.
Note: See below for a list of approved courses in each of these areas.

4. Electives (3-6 hours)
One to two courses taken from the approved list of courses. Students should choose this course
in consultation with their advisor to form a study of concentration.

Honors Program

The Honors Program in American Studies offers superior students a more intensive concentration within
their major field. The program requires:

1. A 3.25 cumulative grade point average.
2. A 3.5 cumulative grade point average in American Studies.
3. 6 hours in the fall and spring semesters of the senior year in AMER 298/299 devoted to a major research project leading to an honors thesis.
4. An Honors thesis to be completed by the spring of the senior year.
5. Successful completion of an oral examination focusing on the topic of the thesis.

Exceptional achievement on the thesis will earn high honors. Applications are accepted in March of the junior year. Additional information is available from the Director of American Studies.

General Advice for Majors and Minors:

We encourage students to enter the major through a number of avenues: a first year seminar, our introductory course to the major, AMER 100/100W, or an introductory course in a particular discipline or program. While we do not require a set path into the major, up to 6 hours of introductory courses can count toward the major.

Once having declared a major or minor, students should work closely with their advisor to develop a coherent plan of study. We encourage students to concentrate on a theme or topic of special interest, either by choosing courses with a topical coherence each semester or by choosing a single topic to focus their major around. We also highly encourage our majors to seek opportunities for study abroad or internship possibilities. Students should plan on taking the American Studies Workshop during their junior year and our capstone course, the Senior Project, during their senior year. Distributional requirements and electives should be decided in conjunction with the student’s advisor.

We also encourage our students to participate in American Studies programming that occurs outside of the classroom, such as visiting speakers and our Road Trip Series.

Please consult the American Studies website for detailed descriptions of courses.

Approved List of Courses

AFRICAN AMERICAN AND DIASPORA STUDIES: 101, Introduction to African American Studies; 110, Race Matters; 201, African American Family History; 202, Mystery, Murder, and Mayhem in the Black Detective Fiction; 215, Black issues in Education; 221, History and Myth: Black Women in the United States.

AMERICAN STUDIES: 100/100W, Introduction to American Studies; 115F, First Year Seminar; 202, Global Perspectives on the US; 240, Topics in American Studies; 280a–280b, Internship, Research, Reading, and Training; 289a–289b, Independent Readings and Research; 294, American Studies Workshop; 295, Undergraduate Seminar in American Studies; 297, Senior Project; 298, Senior Honors Research; 299, Senior Honors Thesis.


CLASSICAL STUDIES: 222, Classical Tradition in America.

COMMUNICATION STUDIES: 220, Rhetoric of the American Experience, 1640–1865; 221, Rhetoric of the American Experience, 1865 to the Present; 223, Values in Modern Communication; 224, Rhetoric of Social Movements; 228, Rhetoric and Public Memory; 241, Rhetoric of Mass Media; 242, Communication, Culture, and Consciousness.

EARTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES: 110, Geology of National Parks.


ENGLISH: 211, Representative American Writers; 212, Southern Literature; 232a–232b, Twentieth-Century American Novel; 260, Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers; 263, African American Literature; 265, Film and Modernism; 266, Nineteenth-Century American Literature; 267, Desire in America; 268a, America on Film: Art and Ideology; 268b, America on Film: Performance and Culture; 269, Special Topics in Film; 270, Reading Film; 272, Movements in Literature (when an American topic is offered); 273, Problems in Literature (when an American topic is offered); 275, Latino-American Literature; 277, Asian American Literature; 279, Ethnic American Literature; 286a–286b, Twentieth-Century Drama; 287, Special Topics in Investigative Writing in America; 288, Special Topics in English and American Literature (when an American topic is offered).
FILM STUDIES: 125, Introduction to Film Studies; 288, Special Topics in Film (when an American topic is offered); 290, Senior Seminar (when an American topic is offered)

HISTORY: 168, American Indian History since 1850; 169, American Indian History before 1850; 170, History of the United States to 1865; 171, History of the United States since 1865; 172, Slavery in the Americas, 1492–1822; 173, The First New Nation; 176, The United States in the 1960s; 177, The U.S. and the Cold War; 201, Twentieth Century African American Religious History; 204, History of Medicine, 1750 to Present; 205, Historical Perspectives on Women, Health, and Sexuality; 263, History of Gender and Women in Colonial America; 267, The Frontier in Early America: War and Cultural Interaction; 268, The English Atlantic World, 1500–1688; 269, Cultural History of the First British Empire, 1707–1783; 272, The U.S. in the Era of the Civil War; 273, Civil Rights Movement; 275, Recent America: The United States since 1945; 276, The Old South; 277, The New South; 278, History of Appalachia; 279, African American History to Reconstruction; 280, African American History since Reconstruction; 281, The U.S. and the Vietnam War; 282, The U.S. and the World; 283, The U.S. as a World Power; 285, American Social History since 1865; 286, Gender, Sexuality, and Race in Early American Culture, 1600–1865; 287, Gender, Sexuality, and Race in American Culture, 1865 to the Present; 288, History of American Thought from the Puritans to the Civil War; 289, History of American Thought since 1865; 291, History of American Enterprise; 294, Selected Topics in History (when an American topic is offered); 295, Undergraduate Seminar in History (when an American topic is offered).

HISTORY OF ART: 240, American Art to 1865; 241, American Art 1865 to 1945; 242 – Art Since 1945; 245, Art of Pre-Columbian America; 255, Native North American Art.

JEWISH STUDIES: 155, American Jewish Life; 194, Selected Themes (when an American topic is offered)

LATIN AMERICAN AND IBERIAN STUDIES: 260, Latin America, Latinos, and the United States

MEDICINE, HEALTH, AND SOCIETY: 201, Fundamental Issues in Medicine, Health and Society; 290, Special Topics (when an American Topic is offered)


PHILOSOPHY: 222, American Philosophy; 234, Philosophy of Education.


RELIGIOUS STUDIES: 107, Introduction to African American Religious Traditions; 110W, Introduction to Southern Religion and Culture; 114, Introduction to African American Philosophies of Religion; 145, Interfaith Dialogue and African American Culture; 204, Protestant Conservatism and the Culture Wars; 205, The Black Church in America; 217, The History of Religion in the United States; 219, Martin Luther King and the Social Roles of Religion

SOCIOLoGY: 104, Men and Women in American Society; 204, Self, Society, and Social Change; 222, Policing in Society; 224, Women and the Law; 230, The Family; 231, Criminology; 232, Delinquency and Juvenile Justice; 233, Deviant Behavior and Social Control; 234, Prison Life; 235, Contemporary American Society; 237, Society and Medicine; 240, Law and Society; 241, Art in Society; 242, The Urban Community; 244, Politics, State, and Society; 245, Music in Society; 246, Sociology of Religion; 248, Popular Culture Dynamics; 249, American Social Movements; 250, Gender in American Society; 251, Women and Public Policy in America; 254, Schools and Society; 255, Racial and Ethnic Minorities; 257, Gender, Sexuality, and the Body; 258, The South in American Culture; 264, Social Dynamics of Mental Health; 267, Seminar on Gender and Violence; 269, Ethnic American University Journeys; 294, Seminar in Selected Topics (when an American topic is offered).

SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE: 243, Latino Immigration Experience; 244, Afro-Hispanic Literature

THEATRE: 204, Development of the American Theatre; 205, American Musical Theatre; 271, American Film Forms

WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES: 212, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies; 240, Women's Health; 243, Sociologies of Men and Masculinity; 244, Feminist Approaches to Clinical Practice; 259, Reading and Writing Lives; 265, Cultural Politics of Reproduction; 268, Gender, Race, Justice, and the Environment; 269, Feminist Science and Technology Studies; 271, Feminist Legal Theory; 295, Selected Topics (when an American topic is offered).


240. Topics in American Studies. Topics of special interest on American culture or society, as announced in the Schedule of Courses. May be taken three times for credit when topics vary. [3] (Not currently offered)

280a–280b. Internship, Research, Reading, and Training. Under faculty supervision, students intern in public or private organizations, conduct background research and reading, and submit a research paper at the end of the semester during which the internship training is complete. Background reading and research will be completed in 280a concurrently with the completion of internship training, 280b; a minimum of 3 hours of 280a must be completed, independent of hours taken in 280b. 280a: Internship, research, and reading. FALL, SPRING, SUMMER. [Variable credit: 1–6]. 280b: offered on a pass/fail basis only and must be taken concurrently with 280a. FALL, SPRING, SUMMER. [Variable credit: 1–6] Staff.

289a–289b. Independent Readings and Research. Independent readings and/or research on approved topics relating to American society and culture. [Variable credit: 1–3 each semester, not to exceed a total of 6 in 289a–289b combined] Staff.


295. Undergraduate Seminar in American Studies. Advanced reading, research, and writing in a particular area of American Studies. May be taken no more than two times, and not twice from the same professor. Limited to juniors and seniors with preference given to American Studies majors. [3] (Not currently offered)


298. Senior Honors Research. Acquisition, reading, and analysis of primary source research material. Open only to senior honors students. FALL. [3] Goddu.