To: Holly McCammon, Associate Dean for Graduate Study  
From: Teresa Goddu, Director of American Studies  
RE: Graduate Certificate in American Studies (Revised)  
Date: April 20, 2007

The American Studies program seeks to institute a graduate certificate program in American Studies beginning during the academic year 2007-08. The graduate certificate is part of our larger efforts to support interdisciplinary graduate study at Vanderbilt. In addition to the certificate, the program supports a finishing year dissertation fellowship at the Humanities Center and will, beginning next year, sponsor a spring conference organized and run by graduate students in conjunction with a faculty advisor. The Program in American Studies is convinced that a graduate certificate in American Studies would be an attractive addition to the graduate curriculum. Students from a variety of disciplines would be drawn to a program that offers interdisciplinary methodological perspectives on the US. A certificate in American Studies also offers our students an advantage on the job market. There is clearly interest from the graduate students in a certificate. This year, the program sent out an email asking graduate students if they would like to affiliate with our program (much like our affiliated faculty list); 42 graduate students from fields as diverse as English, French, History, Philosophy, Physics and Astronomy, Psychology, Religion, and Sociology responded.

In sum, the American Studies Program seeks to strengthen its presence at the graduate level. We have developed our certificate in relation to the other certificate programs currently offered by interdisciplinary programs at Vanderbilt (Latin American Studies, Women’s and Gender Studies, Jewish Studies, African American and Diaspora Studies).

**Graduate Certificate in American Studies**  
Program in American Studies

The Program in American Studies offers an interdisciplinary approach to the histories, literatures, music, visual cultures, social formations and politics of the U.S. Compelling matters of class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, environmentalism, technology, the arts, region, religion, and the built environment, take their proper and vital place in the curriculum of study as well as the U.S.’s place within globalization.

The certificate in American Studies has been designed to complement students’ disciplinary training, expose them to interdisciplinary trends in the academy, and broaden their career possibilities. The American Studies certificate provides graduate students with training across an array of American Studies disciplines as well as training in interdisciplinary methodology (the utilization and integration of two or more methodological perspectives). 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. 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 a one-page rationale for their course of study to the American Studies Graduate Committee for approval. Courses taken at Vanderbilt University prior to admission to the program may be counted toward the certificate requirements with the approval of the Director. The awarding of a Certificate requires an overall GPA of 3.3, satisfactory performance of B+ or better in AMER 300, completion of all distributional requirements, and successful completion of the Graduate Certificate paper.

The certificate in American Studies consists of 15 credit hours of course work distributed as follows:

1. American Studies 300 (3 credit hour). Major approaches. Introduction to interdisciplinary American Studies: major debates, research methods, theoretical terms and directions. (Please see attached for an example.)

   Students must receive a B+ or better in this course in order to move ahead in the program. Since the certificate is for those students who want to go above and beyond their disciplinary training we would like a higher bar than the “B” average the Graduate School requires. Requiring a B+ also brings us in line with the other certificate programs already approved at Vanderbilt.

   We are happy to have a mixture of students in this course—both those enrolled in the certificate program and those simply interested in the course topic or those who wish to have some exposure to interdisciplinary methodology.

2. Four additional graduate-level American Studies courses appropriate to the student’s program of study. Courses must be approved by the Graduate Committee for credit and should include at least three courses outside the student’s home discipline. The students’ total course work must include courses from at least three different departments. One course may be satisfied through an independent study with a faculty member affiliated with the American Studies program, with the approval of the Director of American Studies. (See the attached list for current graduate courses offered in American Studies).

3. A paper (30pp.) submitted to the Graduate Committee for evaluation. The paper must demonstrate the application of an American studies methodology to research, teaching, or fieldwork. It should be a synthesis of interdisciplinary American Studies work in the context of the student’s primary field. The paper must either be original or constitute a substantial expansion or elaboration upon previous work. Students must submit a proposal for the final paper, including the name of their faculty advisor, by the beginning of the semester in which they expect to receive the certificate. All proposals must be approved by the Graduate Committee in American Studies. The final paper will be
evaluated by the faculty advisor as well as the Graduate Committee in American Studies. The Graduate Committee will assess it on a pass/fail basis.

Related Activities

- The American Studies program is currently working with the Center for Teaching to develop a teaching certificate with an interdisciplinary focus. This will give students interested in studying theories of teaching and learning related to interdisciplinarity a way to develop and implement interdisciplinary methodologies within their own pedagogy. We also plan to have on-going workshops related to interdisciplinary pedagogy.

- The American Studies Program sponsors a finishing year dissertation fellowship in conjunction with the Robert Penn Warren Center. In the future, we hope this fellowship will be awarded to someone who has completed our certificate program.

- The American Studies Program will sponsor a yearly graduate run conference on topics proposed by students. Students will also choose the speakers in coordination with sponsoring faculty and will be full participants at the conference.

- The American Studies Program will provide funding for two graduate students to attend the “Futures of American Studies Institute” at Dartmouth each summer. This is a one-week workshop that will expose graduate students to new directions in the field and also enable them to present and get feedback on their own work within a seminar setting.

- The American Studies Program will also begin a faculty/graduate workshop in 07-08 where working drafts of group members will be discussed.

Cost to the University

- The administration of the Certificate in American Studies comes at zero cost to the university. American Studies will draw upon existing affiliated faculty. Several departments have already expressed strong support to faculty who wish to teach American Studies 300.

Benefits to the University

- Contributes to the interdisciplinary and graduate initiatives articulated in the university’s strategic plan.
• Complements the university’s trans-institutional initiatives (namely, the Center for the Americas, The Center for the Study of Religion and Culture, the Center for Nashville Studies, the Center for Ethics).

• Aids Vanderbilt’s recruitment and retention of faculty members with an interest in and commitment to American Studies and with training others to continue the field.

• Provides graduate teaching opportunities for Affiliated Faculty in departments that don’t have graduate programs (such as Communication Studies).

• Contributes to the recruitment and retention of graduate students engaged in interdisciplinary research. Enables Vanderbilt to compete more effectively with top-rank graduate institutions.

Benefits to Students

• Gives students a competitive edge for the continuing robust career outlook for specialists in American Studies as well as in the search for postdoctoral fellowships in the humanities and social sciences.

• Offers access to the interdisciplinary depth of faculty expertise in American Studies.

• Offers interdisciplinary training in a growing area of scholarly interest.

• Critically deepens disciplinary expertise by providing students with a crucial perspective on the ways their own discipline configures and approaches American culture, and so makes them more self-reflective in their work in that discipline.

Benefits to Faculty

• Promotes the pursuit of new and innovative strategies and concepts for interdisciplinary classroom teaching and research on American Studies.

• Allows American Studies affiliated faculty to work closely with their Americanist colleagues in other departments as well as with graduate students outside their own discipline.

• Promotes and enhances efforts to build a diverse interdisciplinary scholarly community.
American Studies
300. Graduate Workshop in American Studies

Economics
329a–329b. Labor Economics

English
320. Studies in American Literature
321. Studies in Southern Literature
325. Seminar in British and American Literature (when an American Topic is offered)
337a. Introduction to Literary Theory (when an American Topic is offered)
337b. Special Topics in Literary Theory (when an American Topic is offered)
350. Special Problems in English and American Literature (when an American Topic is offered)
355. Special Topics in English and American Literature (when an American Topic is offered)

History
371a. Studies in Early American History to 1783
373a. Studies in United States History, 1861–1900
374a–374b. Studies in Recent American History
375. Seminar in Recent American History
378a. Studies in History of the South
380a. Studies in American Diplomatic History
381. Topics in American History
384a. Studies in American Social History
384b. Seminar in American Social History
385a–385b. Studies in the Intellectual History of the United States

Philosophy
350. Readings in Philosophy. Selected major philosophical works or a selected bibliography about a major philosophical problem. Appropriate reports and examination (when an American Topic is offered)
351. History of Philosophy (when an American Topic is offered)
352. Topics in Philosophy (when an American Topic is offered)
353. Figures in Philosophy (when an American Topic is offered)
363. Modern Philosophy (when an American Topic is offered)
364. Nineteenth-Century Philosophy (when an American Topic is offered)
365. Twentieth-Century Philosophy (when an American Topic is offered)

Political Science
330. Studies in American Politics
331. Party Politics.
332. Political Parties and Electoral Behavior
333. Political Culture, Opinion, and Behavior
336. The Judicial Process
339. Research in American Politics
370. Topics in Political Science (when an American Topic is offered)

**Sociology**
301. Classical Sociological Theory and Major Theorists
302. Contemporary Theory
331. Survey Seminar on Inequalities and Movements
333. Survey Seminar on Cultural Sociology
335. Survey Seminar on Deviant Behavior and Social Control
339. Survey Seminar on Political Sociology
343. Survey Seminar on Social Psychology
345. Survey Seminar on Social Stratification
361. Special Topic Seminars on Social Phenomena at the Macro Level
363. Special Topic Seminars on Institutions and Organizations
367. Special Topic Seminars on Norms, Power, and Related Normative Phenomena
368. Special Topic Seminars on Social Processes and Social Change

**Spanish and Portuguese**
354. The Politics of Identity in Latino U.S. Literature

**Women and Gender Studies**
301. Gender and Sexuality: Feminist Approaches
302. Gender and Pedagogy
Graduate Workshop in American Studies: Democracy in Action

There is a lot of talk in academia about the importance of “public intellectualism.” Such calls often materialize as books written for a general audience. But these books often do not connect with that public—and are not valued by our academic colleagues, to boot. It’s admirable that humanities and social sciences academics are looking to use their learning and knowledge to have an impact on the world “beyond the ivory tower,” especially in these days of what many political scientists are describing as the “downsizing of democracy.” But how do we go about making such connections between our intellectual work, and our work as citizens? What are the skills we need to cultivate in order to convey our knowledge?

This course is designed for graduate students who are committed to using what they learn about democracy to make a difference in their communities. This course will introduce you to democracy theory, and to the cultural knowledge and strategies you need to make an impact in our increasingly diverse communities and workplaces. The intellectual basis of the course will come in studying models of and theories about democracy and citizenship. Professor Dana Nelson [Spring 08]