

AMERICAN STUDIES

Graduate Program Head	Jeffrey P. Beck
Program Code	AMSTD
Campus(es)	Harrisburg (Ph.D., M.A.)
Degrees Conferred	Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Master of Arts (M.A.) Integrated B.A. in American Studies and M.A. in American Studies
The Graduate Faculty	View (https://secure.gradsch.psu.edu/gpms/?searchType=fac&prog=AMSTD)

Master of Arts (M.A.)

The Master of Arts program in American Studies at Penn State Harrisburg offers an interdisciplinary approach to studying American society and culture. Through coursework and hands-on experiences, students gain valuable knowledge and analytical skills that prepare them for diverse roles in education, government, museums, cultural organizations, and communications.

With our flexible study options, including full- or part-time enrollment and evening courses, students can tailor their academic journey to suit their needs. Students also have the option to earn a certificate in heritage and museum practice or folklore and ethnography alongside their master's degree.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

The Ph.D. program in American Studies offers an interdisciplinary approach to studying American society and culture. Through coursework and hands-on experiences, students gain the knowledge and analytical skills needed for diverse careers both within and outside academia.

Our program offers a wide range of areas for coursework and research, including history, politics, cultural studies, literature, popular culture, folklore and ethnography, visual and material culture, regional and urban studies, and public history and museum studies. These areas intersect with important historical and contemporary issues such as race, gender and sexuality, ethnicity, and class, which are key components of our program.

Our faculty members are active researchers who support and encourage students to present their work at regional, national, and international venues. Located near renowned heritage sites and vibrant cities like Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., our program offers ample research opportunities, internships, and field trips.

Our graduate students become part of a rich interdisciplinary community of American scholars. Our program offers the benefits of small academic seminars, financial support, faculty mentorship, professionalization seminars, support for conference participation, and diverse research, internship, and employment opportunities.

We understand the needs of our students, and that's why we offer flexible scheduling, allowing many to pursue their degree while working full or part time. Most core graduate courses are held in the evening to accommodate busy schedules.

Admission Requirements

Applicants apply for admission to the program via the Graduate School application for admission (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate->

[admissions/how-to-apply/](https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/)). Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-300 Admissions Policies (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>).

Master of Arts (M.A.)

The M.A. degree program in American Studies accepts students from a wide array of disciplines—particularly art, history, English, sociology, and anthropology—but recommends educational preparation related to the interdisciplinary study of American culture. An applicant must hold either (1) a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited U.S. institution or (2) a tertiary (postsecondary) degree that is deemed comparable to a four-year bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited U.S. institution. This degree must be from an officially recognized degree-granting institution in the country in which it operates. All applicants must submit:

- a completed Graduate School online application form (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/prospective-students/how-to-apply/>) with the application fee
- official transcripts from all post-secondary institutions attended (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/prospective-students/how-to-apply/new-applicants/requirements-for-graduate-admission/>) (minimum of 2.75 junior/senior grade-point average on a 4.00 scale)
- two letters of recommendation from individuals who can attest to the student's ability to handle graduate study
- a statement of intent (approximately 500 to 1,000 words outlining their preparation for study, proposed fields of study, and career goals)
- and a sample of written work (seminar paper or equivalent research paper) as evidence of their American research and writing skills.

Students applying for scholarships and assistantships are requested to submit general examination scores of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) taken within five years previous to the date of application. The GRE is recommended, but not required, for admission. Applications for the M.A. are accepted on a rolling basis. To be considered for scholarships and graduate assistantships for full-time study beginning in the fall, the completed application and current GRE scores must be received by Feb. 15.

The language of instruction at Penn State is English. English proficiency test scores (TOEFL/IELTS) may be required for international applicants. See GCAC-305 Admission Requirements for International Students (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-300/gcac-305-admission-requirements-international-students/>) for more information.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

Applicants for the Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies must hold a master's degree in American Studies, or a related field emphasizing American cultural scholarship and public heritage work such as:

- History
- English
- Sociology
- Political Science
- Folklore
- Cultural Studies
- Performance Studies
- Ethnic Studies
- Gender Studies
- Communications

- Art History
- Museum and Library Studies
- Education
- Cultural Resource Management

Students are required to submit the following:

- a completed Graduate School online application (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/prospective-students/how-to-apply/>) with the application fee;
- official transcripts from all post-secondary institutions attended (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/prospective-students/how-to-apply/new-applicants/requirements-for-graduate-admission/>);
- three letters of reference attesting to both academic and professional capabilities. (At least two of these letters should be from academic sources, such as professors or academic advisers);
- a letter of 500 to 1000 words outlining significant scholarly and applied experience, career goals, commitment to American Studies as a field, and academic objectives;
- a recent personal curriculum vitae;
- a paper from a graduate course taken previously or publication demonstrating research and composition skills.

Students applying for scholarships and assistantships are requested to submit general examination scores of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) taken within five years previous to the date of application. The GRE is recommended, but not required, for admission.

Admission is highly competitive and the best-qualified students will be admitted subject to space availability and compatibility of the student with the program's research mission. Successful applicants with an M.A. typically have a GPA of 3.5 or above (on a 4.0 scale) in their graduate work.

International applicants must hold the equivalent of an American master's degree. They must submit official or attested university records, with certified translations if the records are not in English. Notarized copies are not sufficient.

The language of instruction at Penn State is English. English proficiency test scores (TOEFL/IELTS) may be required for international applicants. See GCAC-305 Admission Requirements for International Students (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-300/gcac-305-admission-requirements-international-students/>) for more information.

Degree Requirements

Master of Arts (M.A.)

Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-600 Research Degree Policies. (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>)

The student is required to take a minimum of 30 (non-thesis) - 33 (thesis) credits in American Studies, including at least 18 credits in the 500 series.

Code	Title	Credits
Required Courses		
AMST 500	Theory and Methods ¹	3
AMST 591	Seminar in American Studies ²	3
Culminating Experience		

AMST 580	Projects in American Studies ³	1-6
or AMST 600	Thesis in American Studies	

¹ AMST 500 should be taken within the first two semesters of study.

² AMST 591 should be taken in the last two semesters of study.

³ Usually in the last semester of study, students are required to complete their program with a major paper by taking AMST 580 or thesis, in which case AMST 600 is taken. The choice of AMST 580 to fulfill graduation requirements is for an original scholarly master's paper or project. One to 6 credits in AMST 580 can be earned; the typical number of credits for the culminating project is 3. The choice of AMST 600 is for a thesis and is taken for 6 credits. The thesis must follow the Submission Requirements (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/current-students/etd/>) of the Office of Theses and Dissertations in the Graduate School.

Advanced undergraduate courses (400-level) that have not counted toward a student's undergraduate degree may be considered for transfer into the graduate student's requirement of 30 credits of American Studies with permission of the program, subject to restrictions outlined in GCAC-309 Transfer Credit (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-300/transfer-credit/>). At least 20 of the 30 credits must be earned at the Harrisburg location where the program is offered. Courses not having an American Studies designation but which are relevant to American Studies may be considered for inclusion in the student's requirement of 30 credits of American Studies with permission of the program.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-600 Research Degree Policies. (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>)

Over some twelve-month period during the interval between admission to the Ph.D. program and completion of the Ph.D. program, the student must spend at least two semesters (summer sessions are not included) as a registered full-time student (9 credits per semester) engaged in academic work at Penn State Harrisburg. A doctoral student is required to complete the program, including defense and acceptance of the doctoral dissertation, within eight years after successful completion of the qualifying examination.

Students progress through the following phases and take courses designated by their Ph.D. committee as part of their study for the Ph.D.

In the initial phase, the student must:

1. make up any deficiencies in graduate courses in American Studies noted in the letter of acceptance
2. complete with a grade of B or better the following courses: AMST 500, two sections of AMST 502 on different topics, and AMST 591
3. pass a qualifying examination

Admitted students who have met all course prerequisites begin the core courses with AMST 500. Students who have already taken AMST 500 within three years of admission may begin their program of study with AMST 502.

The qualifying examination is administered by a special committee appointed by the director of the doctoral program.

The comprehensive examination is taken after course work in subfields is completed. The written examination consists of three parts and is administered by the student's Ph.D. committee. One is in the area of Theory and Method and an additional two subfields of study from a list of five areas covered in the program. The five subfields of specialization are:

1. Public Heritage, Cultural Resource Management, and Museum Studies;
2. Folk and Popular Culture (material and visual culture, literature and media, language, performance, media, and music);
3. Interdisciplinary History and Politics (history of ideas, philosophy, and politics; biography and oral history; everyday life and socioeconomic studies; government, public policy, and diplomacy);
4. Society and Ethnography (race, ethnicity, class, gender, age; religion and belief; comparative culture and transnationalism);
5. Regional, Environmental, Urban, and Local Studies.

Additional subfields of study within American Studies may be selected with the approval of the student's Ph.D. committee. An oral defense of the comprehensive examination is scheduled after the written examination, at which time it is customary for the candidate to present the dissertation proposal.

Although the exact number of courses required in each subfield may vary among students, typically four per subfield are required. Ph.D. committees meet with students at least once each academic year. Written and oral comprehensive examinations in the three areas are given at the end of the study period.

Under guidance from the Ph.D. committee, the candidate prepares a detailed research proposal that serves as the basis for the written dissertation covering an aspect of American Studies. The dissertation should represent a significant contribution to knowledge, show familiarity with the intellectual heritage of American Studies, be presented in a scholarly manner, reveal an ability on the part of the candidate to do independent research of high quality, and indicate considerable experience in using a variety of research techniques and forms of primary evidence. The contents and conclusions of the dissertation must be defended at the time of the final oral examination. The dissertation must be accepted by the Ph.D. committee, the head of the graduate program, and the Graduate School, and the student must pass the final oral examination (the dissertation defense).

Integrated Undergrad-Grad Programs

Integrated B.A. in American Studies and M.A. in American Studies

This Integrated Undergraduate/Graduate (IUG) degree program combines the B.A. in American Studies with the M.A. in American Studies offered at the following campuses:

Undergraduate Degree

- Abington
- Brandywine
- Harrisburg

Graduate Degree

- Harrisburg

The graduate portion of this IUG is currently offered as face-to-face residential instruction. While the undergraduate curriculum for this IUG

may be completed at multiple campuses, the ease and feasibility of completing the integrated program may be heavily dependent upon the location of the graduate instruction. Please discuss the feasibility of completing the IUG with a representative for the graduate program before beginning the application process.

Requirements listed here are in addition to requirements listed in GCAC-210 Integrated Undergraduate-Graduate (IUG) Degree Programs (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/gcac-210-integrated-undergraduate-graduate-degree-programs/>).

The American Studies program offers an integrated B.A./M.A. program that is designed to allow academically superior baccalaureate students enrolled in the American Studies major to obtain both the B.A. and the M.A. degrees in American Studies within five years of study. The first two years of undergraduate coursework typically include the University General Education requirements and lower-level courses. In the third year, students typically take upper-division coursework in American Studies and define areas of interest. The fourth year involves graduate-level American Studies coursework including required courses in AMST 500. The fifth and final year of the program typically consists of graduate coursework in American Studies including AMST 591 and identification of a research project that will culminate in the completion of a M.A. project (AMST 580) or thesis (AMST 600).

By encouraging greater depth and focus in the course of study beginning in the third undergraduate year, this program will help the student more clearly define his/her area of interest and expertise in the broad field of American Studies. As a result, long-range academic planning for exceptional students pursuing doctoral degrees or other professional goals after leaving Penn State will be greatly enhanced. For most students, the total time required to reach completion of the higher degree will be shortened by about a year. The student will have earlier contact with the rigors of graduate study and with Graduate Faculty. The resources of the Graduate School are accessible to students accepted into the IUG program. Students in their third and fourth year of study with IUG status benefit from their association with graduate students whose level of work parallel their own.

If for any reason a student admitted to the B.A./M.A. program is unable to complete the requirements for the Master of Arts degree program in American Studies, the student will be permitted to receive the B.A. degree assuming all degree requirements have been satisfactorily completed.

Admission Requirements

Applicants apply for admission to the program via the Graduate School application for admission (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-admissions/how-to-apply/>). Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-300 Admissions Policies (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>).

The number of openings in the integrated B.A./M.A. program is limited. Admission will be selective based on specific criteria and the unqualified recommendation of faculty. Applicants to the integrated program:

1. Must be enrolled in the American Studies B.A. program and meet the admission requirements of the American Studies M.A. program.
2. Must apply and be admitted to the Graduate School.
3. Must have completed entrance to their undergraduate major and have completed no less than 60 credits. Students must be admitted no later than the end of the second week of the semester preceding the semester of expected conferral of the undergraduate

degree. Transfer students must have completed at least 15 credits at Penn State to enroll in an IUG.

4. Must have completed at least one 400-level American Studies course (AMST prefix) with a grade of A.
5. Must submit transcript(s) of previous undergraduate work, recommendations from two faculty members, writing sample, and statement of goals.
6. Must have an overall GPA at or above 3.3 (on a 4.0 scale) in undergraduate coursework and a GPA at or above 3.5 in all coursework completed for the American Studies major.
7. Must present a plan of study approved by the student's adviser in the application process.

Degree Requirements

Students must sequence their courses so all undergraduate degree requirements are fulfilled before taking courses to count solely towards the graduate degree. Students are expected to complete the undergraduate degree requirements within the typical time to degree for the undergraduate major. In the semester in which the undergraduate degree requirements will be completed, IUG students must apply to graduate, and the undergraduate degree should be conferred at the next appropriate Commencement.

Up to 12 credits may be double-counted towards the degree requirements for both the graduate and undergraduate degrees; a minimum of 50% of the double-counted courses must be at the 500 or 800 level. Independent study courses and credits associated with the culminating experience for the graduate degree cannot be double-counted.

Code	Title	Credits
Courses Eligible to Double Count for Both Degrees		
AMST 491W	American Studies Perspectives (two seminars on different topics taken during the student's fourth (senior) year)	6
AMST 500	Theory and Methods (taken during the student's fourth (senior) year)	3
AMST 591	Seminar in American Studies (taken during the student's fifth year)	3

With the approval of the student's adviser, students may take American Studies courses from the 100 to 400 levels at Penn State campuses other than Harrisburg, but 500-level courses must be taken at the Harrisburg campus.

Minor

A graduate minor is available in any approved graduate major or dual-title program. The default requirements for a graduate minor are stated in Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-600 Research Degree Policies (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>) and GCAC-700 Professional Degree Policies (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>), depending on the type of degree the student is pursuing:

- GCAC-611 Minor - Research Doctorate (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-611-minor-research-doctorate/>)
- GCAC-641 Minor - Research Master's (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-641-minor-research-masters/>)

- GCAC-709 Minor - Professional Doctorate (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-700/gcac-709-professional-doctoral-minor/>)
- GCAC-741 Minor - Professional Master's (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-700/gcac-741-masters-minor-professional/>)

Student Aid

Graduate assistantships available to students in this program and other forms of student aid are described in the Tuition & Funding (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-funding/>) section of The Graduate School's website. Students on graduate assistantships must adhere to the course load limits (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gsad/gsad-900/gsad-901-graduate-assistants/>) set by The Graduate School.

Courses

Graduate courses carry numbers from 500 to 699 and 800 to 899. Advanced undergraduate courses numbered between 400 and 499 may be used to meet some graduate degree requirements when taken by graduate students. Courses below the 400 level may not. A graduate student may register for or audit these courses in order to make up deficiencies or to fill in gaps in previous education but not to meet requirements for an advanced degree.

American Studies (AMST) Course List (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/university-course-descriptions/graduate/amst/>)

Learning Outcomes

Master of Arts (M.A.)

1. Graduates will demonstrate knowledge of the history, society, culture, and arts of the United States by conducting research in accordance with the highest ethical and professional standards and, with a variety of evidence, including objects, still and moving images, practices and performances, and oral and written texts.
2. Graduates will demonstrate knowledge of American Studies historiography by identifying major movements and approaches in the study of the American experience and providing major scholarly bibliographic and cultural sources for those movements and approaches.
3. Graduates will apply presentational and communicative skills used in American Studies scholarship, including oral presentation, writing, and exhibition, to produce material that can be used in educational institutions, heritage and museum organizations, and governmental and cultural agencies.
4. Graduates will demonstrate analytical skills such as symbolic analysis, cross-cultural comparison, and ethnographic fieldwork, to interpret meaning in historical, social, cultural, and artistic trends and movements in the United States.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

1. Graduates will demonstrate knowledge of the history, society, culture, and arts of the United States by conducting research in accordance with the highest ethical and professional standards and, with a variety of evidence, including objects, still and moving images, practices and performances, and oral and written texts.
2. Graduates will demonstrate knowledge of American Studies historiography by identifying major movements and approaches in the study of the American experience and providing major scholarly

bibliographic and cultural sources for those movements and approaches.

3. Graduates will apply presentational and communicative skills used in American Studies scholarship, including oral presentation, writing, and exhibition, to produce material that can be used in educational institutions, heritage and museum organizations, and governmental and cultural agencies.
4. Graduates will demonstrate analytical skills such as symbolic analysis, cross-cultural comparison, and ethnographic fieldwork, to interpret meaning in historical, social, cultural, and artistic trends and movements in the United States.

Contact

Campus	Harrisburg
Graduate Program Head	Jeffrey P Beck
Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or Professor-in-Charge (PIC)	Anthony Bak Buccitelli
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Program Website	View (https://harrisburg.psu.edu/humanities/american-studies/master-arts-american-studies/)