AMERICAN STUDIES, B.A. (CAPITAL)

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: Harrisburg

Program Description

This interdisciplinary major is designed to provide students with an integrated and critical knowledge of American culture, drawing on courses in American Studies and in the traditional disciplines and culminating in two senior seminars. A number of interests may be pursued within the major, including popular culture, art, technology, business, law, archives, museology, and conservation. The major helps prepare students for careers in business, teaching, government, and a number of other areas, and for enrollment in law and other professional programs.

What is American Studies?

American Studies examines the country's history in a way that emphasizes culture – literature, art & architecture, film, folklore, music, and media. While discovering America's past, students learn to think critically – to analyze and evaluate information; to write and speak clearly and expressively; and to conduct research.

You Might Like This Program If…

- You enjoy pop culture and wonder what social and historical forces helped shape it.
- You like making connections between history, society, economics, literature, film, and art.
- You want to understand the American experience beyond just what is relayed in a history text.
- You want to explore the experiences of women, minorities, and different ethnic and religious groups.
- You want to pursue a career in education, law, government, museums, cultural agencies, archives, public policy, or communications.

Entrance to Major

For entrance into the major, the following must be met:

1. At the end of the sophomore year, any student in good standing may gain entrance into the major without having completed specific courses.
2. Any student seeking entrance during the fifth semester will be granted entrance at the discretion of the American Studies Committee and/or Director following evaluation of the student's record.
3. Any student seeking entrance during or after the sixth semester will be expected to have completed at least 12 credits, which may be counted toward the major in American Studies.

Degree Requirements

For the Bachelor of Arts degree in American Studies, a minimum of 123 credits is required:

Requirement	Credits
General Education	45
Electives	21
Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements	24
Requirements for the Major	33

3 of the 24 credits for Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements are included in the Requirements for the Major, General Education, or Electives and 0-12 credits are included in Electives if world language proficiency is demonstrated by examination.

Requirements for the Major

A grade of C or better is required for all courses in the major. To graduate, a student enrolled in the major must earn at least a C grade in each course designated by the major as a C-required course, as specified by Senate Policy 82-44 (https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/).

Code	Title	Credits
Prescribed Courses		
Prescribed Courses: Require a grade of C or better		
AMST 491W	American Studies Perspectives	6
Additional Courses		
Additional Courses: Require a grade of C or better		
AMST 100	Introduction to American Studies	3
or AMST 100Y	Introduction to American Studies	
Supporting Courses and Related Areas		
Supporting Courses and Related Areas: Require a grade of C or better		
Select 9 credits in each of two of the following areas and 6 credits in one other of the areas (include 12 credits at the 400 level distributed in at least two of the areas):		24
American literature		
American history		
American art, philosophy, and religion (humanities)		
American social sciences		

General Education

Connecting career and curiosity, the General Education curriculum provides the opportunity for students to acquire transferable skills necessary to be successful in the future and to thrive while living in interconnected contexts. General Education aids students in developing intellectual curiosity, a strengthened ability to think, and a deeper sense of aesthetic appreciation. These are requirements for all baccalaureate students and are often partially incorporated into the requirements of a program. For additional information, see the General Education Requirements (https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/baccalaureate-degree-general-education-program/) section of the Bulletin and consult your academic adviser.

The keystone symbol appears next to the title of any course that is designated as a General Education course. Program requirements may also satisfy General Education requirements and vary for each program.

Foundations (grade of C or better is required and Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- **Quantification (GQ):** 6 credits
- **Writing and Speaking (GWS):** 9 credits

Breadth in the Knowledge Domains (Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)
- **Arts (GA):** 3 credits
- **Health and Wellness (GHW):** 3 credits
- **Humanities (GH):** 3 credits
- **Social and Behavioral Sciences (GS):** 3 credits
- **Natural Sciences (GN):** 3 credits

Integrative Studies
- **Inter-Domain Courses (Inter-Domain):** 6 credits

Exploration
- **GN,** may be completed with Inter-Domain courses: 3 credits
- **GA, GH, GN, GS, Inter-Domain courses.** This may include 3 credits of World Language course work beyond the 12th credit level or the requirements for the student's degree program, whichever is higher**:** 6 credits

University Degree Requirements

First Year Engagement
All students enrolled in a college or the Division of Undergraduate Studies at University Park, and the World Campus are required to take 1 to 3 credits of the First-Year Seminar, as specified by their college First-Year Engagement Plan.

Other Penn State colleges and campuses may require the First-Year Seminar; colleges and campuses that do not require a First-Year Seminar provide students with a first-year engagement experience.

First-year baccalaureate students entering Penn State should consult their academic adviser for these requirements.

Cultures Requirement
6 credits are required and may satisfy other requirements

- United States Cultures: 3 credits
- International Cultures: 3 credits

Writing Across the Curriculum
3 credits required from the college of graduation and likely prescribed as part of major requirements.

Total Minimum Credits
A minimum of 120 degree credits must be earned for a baccalaureate degree. The requirements for some programs may exceed 120 credits. Students should consult with their college or department adviser for information on specific credit requirements.

Quality of Work
Candidates must complete the degree requirements for their major and earn at least a 2.00 grade-point average for all courses completed within their degree program.

Limitations on Source and Time for Credit Acquisition
The college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of course work in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned. Credit used toward degree programs may need to be earned from a particular source or within time constraints (see Senate Policy 83-80 (https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/)). For more information, check the Suggested Academic Plan for your intended program.

B.A. Degree Requirements

World Language (0-12 credits): Student must attain 12th credit level of proficiency in one world language in addition to English. This proficiency must be demonstrated by either examination or course work. See the Placement Policy for Penn State World Language Courses (https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/advising-planning-degree-program/course-placements/placement-policy-world-language-courses/).

B.A. Fields (9 credits): Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Arts, World Languages, Natural Sciences, Quantification (may not be taken in the area of the student's primary major; world language credits in this category must be in a second world language in addition to English or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the first language). Credits must be selected from the list of approved courses.

World Cultures (0-3 credits): Select 3 credits from approved list. Students may count courses in this category in order to meet other major, minor, elective, or General Education requirements, except for the University Cultural Diversity (US/IL) requirement.

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

Undergraduate degree available at the following campuses: Abington, Brandywine, Harrisburg

Graduate degree available at the following campuses: Harrisburg

Requirements for the Integrated B.A. in American Studies and M.A. in American Studies can be found in the Graduate Bulletin (https://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/majors/american-studies/#integratedundergradgradprogramstext).

Program Learning Objectives

- To advance the documentation and interpretation of the American experience, past and present, through research with a variety of evidence, including objects, still and moving images, practices and performances, and oral and written texts.
  - To examine multiple forms of evidence including objects, images, events, and texts to identify themes, ideas, patterns, scenes, and sources of American experience in a historical period, geographical and environmental area, or social and cultural group.
- To build on the intellectual legacy of American Studies as an interdisciplinary movement and emerging discipline with its own theories, methods, and applications.
  - To identify major movements and approaches in the study of the American experience and provide major scholarly bibliographic sources for those movements and approaches, and to discuss causes, consequences, contexts, and correlations of American practices and performances using American Studies methodology such as historical and geographical comparison, symbolic and systematic analysis, ethnography, and rhetorical and literary criticism.
- To prepare students for careers in American Studies by developing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and ethics that can be applied to work in schools, archives, museums, galleries, media organizations, and governmental, commercial, and cultural agencies.

- To effectively communicate American Studies perspectives in scholarly and public writing, exhibition, community programming, oral presentation, and media presentation.

Academic Advising

The objectives of the university's academic advising program are to help advisees identify and achieve their academic goals, to promote their intellectual discovery, and to encourage students to take advantage of both in-and out-of class educational opportunities in order that they become self-directed learners and decision makers.

Both advisers and advisees share responsibility for making the advising relationship succeed. By encouraging their advisees to become engaged in their education, to meet their educational goals, and to develop the habit of learning, advisers assume a significant educational role. The advisee's unit of enrollment will provide each advisee with a primary academic adviser, the information needed to plan the chosen program of study, and referrals to other specialized resources.

READ SENATE POLICY 32-00: ADVISING POLICY (https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/32-00-advising-policy/)

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Suggested Academic Plan

The suggested academic plan(s) listed on this page are the plan(s) that are in effect during the 2025-26 academic year. To access previous years' suggested academic plans, please visit the archive (https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/archive/) to view the appropriate Undergraduate Bulletin edition.

American Studies, B.A. at Harrisburg Campus

The course series listed below provides **only one** of the many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. This plan should be used in conjunction with your degree audit (accessible in LionPATH as either an **Academic Requirements** or **What If** report). Please consult with a Penn State academic adviser on a regular basis to develop and refine an academic plan that is appropriate for you.

First Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
ENGL 15, 15S, 30T, or ESL 15‡	3	World Language level 2	4
Quantification (GQ)	3	General Education Course	3
General Education Course	3	General Education Course	3
General Education Course (GHW)	1.5	General Education Course	3
World Language, level 1	4	General Education Course	3
	14.5		**16**

Second Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
World Language level 3	4	AMST 100 or 100Y*	3
Quantification (GQ)	3	ENGL 202B‡	3
CAS 100A or 100S‡	3	General Education Course	3
General Education Course	3	General Education Course	3
Elective	3	Bachelor of Arts Requirement Knowledge Domain	3
General Education Course (GHW)	1.5		
	17.5		**15**

Third Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
AMST Supporting Course*	3	AMST Supporting Course*	3
400-level AMST Supporting Course*	3	AMST Supporting Course*	3
General Education Course	3	400-level AMST Supporting Course*	3
Bachelor of Arts Requirement: World Cultures	3	Bachelor of Arts Requirement: Knowledge Domain	3
Bachelor of Arts Requirement: Knowledge Domain	3	Elective	3
	15		**15**

Fourth Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
AMST 491W*	3	AMST 491W*	3
400-level AMST Supporting Course*	3	400-level AMST Supporting Course*	3
AMST Supporting Course*	3	Elective	3
Elective	3	Elective	3
Elective	3	Elective	2-3
	15		**14-15**

Total Credits 122-123

* Course requires a grade of C or better for the major
‡ Course requires a grade of C or better for General Education
# Course is an Entrance to Major requirement
† Course satisfies General Education and degree requirement

[1] ENGL 202B
   ENGL 202B is recommended for American Studies majors.
[2] AMST 491W
   Should be taken as two separate offerings.

University Requirements and General Education Notes:

US and IL are abbreviations used to designate courses that satisfy Cultural Diversity Requirements (United States and International Cultures).

W, M, X, and Y are the suffixes at the end of a course number used to designate courses that satisfy University Writing Across the Curriculum requirement.

General Education includes Foundations (GWS and GQ), Knowledge Domains (GHW, GN, GA, GH, GS) and Integrative Studies (Inter-domain) requirements. N or Q (Honors) is the suffix at the end of a course number used to help identify an Inter-domain course, but the inter-domain attribute is used to fill audit requirements. Foundations courses (GWS and GQ) require a grade of 'C' or better.

Bachelor of Arts Requirements:

Bachelor of Arts students must take 9 credits in Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Fields (Humanities; Social and Behavioral Sciences; Arts; World Languages [2nd language or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the 1st]; Natural Sciences; Quantification). The B.A. Fields courses may not be taken in the area of the student's primary major. See your adviser and the Degree Requirements section (https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/) of this Bulletin.

Bachelor of Arts students must take 3 credits in World Cultures. See your adviser and the full list of courses approved as World Cultures courses (https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/course-lists/ba-world-cultures/).

Program Notes
A minimum of 123 credits are required for graduation.

Academic Advising Notes
- AM ST supporting courses are distributed among arts, history, humanities, literature, and social sciences courses containing at least 50% American content. Students take three courses each from two areas and two courses from a third.
- At least 12 of these credits are at the 400 level.
- ENGL 202B is recommended for American Studies majors.
- AM ST 491W is to be taken as two separate offerings.

Career Paths

The American Studies program benefits from Penn State Harrisburg's location in a capital region in close proximity to internationally known heritage sites such as the Gettysburg Battlefield, National Civil War Museum, and U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center. Harrisburg is also home to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, the State Archives, and the State Museum.

Careers

American Studies majors at Penn State Harrisburg have opportunities to gain a core set of skills in writing, presentation, exhibition, website development, digital documentation, fieldwork and ethnography, and records and cultural resource management in addition to contextual knowledge of American culture, society, arts, and history that can be applied to a number of occupations, particularly in heritage, communications, education, and government sectors. At Penn State Harrisburg, certificates (heritage and museum practice, folklore and ethnography), internships, assistantships, professional workshops, career services, alumni interaction, social media, and online job postings serve to enhance the marketability of majors at various levels.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT POTENTIAL CAREER OPTIONS FOR GRADUATES OF THE AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM (https://harrisburg.psu.edu/humanities/american-studies-ba/career-opportunities/)

Opportunities for Graduate Studies

The American Studies major at Penn State Harrisburg prepares students for a variety of professions and to participate in the world as critical thinkers, clear communicators, and global citizens, including Penn State's Master of Arts in American Studies and the Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies programs.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRADUATE STUDIES (https://harrisburg.psu.edu/humanities/american-studies-ba/)

Professional Resources

- American Studies Association (https://www.theasa.net)
- Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association (https://pcaaca.org)
- American Folklore Society (https://americanfolkloresociety.org/)
- Pennsylvania Historical Association (https://pa-history.org)
- Pennsylvania German Society (https://pgs.org/)
- Pennsylvania Heritage Society (https://www.paheritage.org/)
- Pennsylvania Federation of Museums and Historical Organizations (https://pamuseums.org)

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https://harrisburg.psu.edu/humanities/american-studies-ba (https://harrisburg.psu.edu/humanities/american-studies-ba/)

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bachelors-degrees/american-studies/)