

AMERICAN STUDIES, B.A. (UNIVERSITY COLLEGE)

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: Brandywine

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/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/#82-44>).

Code	Title	Credits
Prescribed Courses		
<i>Prescribed Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
AMST 491W	American Studies Perspectives	6
Additional Courses		
<i>Additional Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
AMST 100	Introduction to American Studies	3
	or AMST 100Y Introduction to American Studies	
Supporting Courses and Related Areas		
<i>Supporting Courses and Related Areas: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
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/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/#83-80>)). 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.

Program Learning Objectives

- Gain knowledge of American culture and politics, past and present, including multiple representations of national identity.
- Employ and inter-relate disciplines of history, literature, philosophy, social sciences, humanities, and the arts, within both individual courses and the major as a whole.
- Draw upon the social and historical resources of students' immediate worlds, in their homes and in the Delaware Valley.
- Gain awareness of difference and commonality of race, class, and gender.
- Position United States experience within the wider hemisphere and world.
- Develop skills of critical observation, research, analysis, and writing.
- Bridge the gap between academic and larger worlds by and through community engagement, internships, and job-market preparedness.
- Students should have improved writing skills and greater awareness of American history, politics and culture. They should also have a better understanding of research skills connected to American Studies and related areas.

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/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/32-00-advising-policy/>)

Brandywine

David Macauley, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Philosophy, Associate Professor, Environmental Studies
 Main Building, 212 C
 25 Yearsley Mill Road
 Media, PA 19063
 610-892-1424
 dmm53@psu.edu

Abington

David Ruth

Program Chair, American Studies
 1600 Woodland Road
 Abington, PA 19001
 215-881-7640
 dxr35@psu.edu

Harrisburg

Anthony Buccitelli, Ph.D.

Program Chair
 Olmsted Building, W356
 Middletown, PA 17057
 717-948-6727
 abb20@psu.edu

Suggested Academic Plan

The suggested academic plan(s) listed on this page are the plan(s) that are in effect during the 2024-25 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 Brandywine 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
American Focused Course 1-199 level*	3 American Focused Course 1-299 level*	3
AMST 100*	3 CAS 100, CAS 100A, CAS 100B, or CAS 100C†	3
ENGL 15, 30H, or ESL 15‡	3 General Education Course	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course	3
	General Education Course (GHW)	1.5
	15	16.5

Second Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
World Language level 1	4-6 American Focused Course 1-299 level*	3

General Education Course	3 World Language level 2	4-6
General Education Course	3 ENGL 202A or 202B‡	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course	3
General Education Course (GHW)	1.5	
	14.5-16.5	13-15
Third Year		
Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
American Focused Course 400 level*	3 American Focused Course 400 level or Major Related Internship*	3
American Focused Course 1-299 level*	3 American Focused Course 400 level*	3
World Language level 3 or General Education Course	3-4 BA Fields Course	3
General Education Course	3 BA Fields Course	3
Elective	3 Elective	3
	15-16	15
Fourth Year		
Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
AMST 491W* ¹	3 AMST 491W* ¹	3
American Focused Course 400 level or Major Related Internship*	3 BA World Cultures Course	3
BA Fields Course	3 Elective	3
Elective	3 Elective	3
Elective	3 Elective	3
	15	15

Total Credits 119-124

- * 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

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.

¹ AMST 491W, the capstone course of the major, is taken twice with different topics; it also satisfies Penn State's Writing Across the Curriculum (W) requirement. Offered every semester, it may ordinarily be taken from the junior year on depending on student's choice of topics.

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>)

Contact

Brandywine

Main Building, 212 C
25 Yearsley Mill Road
Media, PA 19063
610-892-1424
dmm53@psu.edu

<https://www.brandywine.psu.edu/academics/bachelors-degrees/american-studies> (<https://www.brandywine.psu.edu/academics/bachelors-degrees/american-studies/>)

Abington

DIVISION OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES
1600 Woodland Road
Abington, PA 19001
215-881-7640
dxr35@psu.edu

<https://www.abington.psu.edu/academics/majors-at-abington/american-studies> (<https://www.abington.psu.edu/academics/majors-at-abington/american-studies/>)

Harrisburg

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES
Olmsted Building, W356
Middletown, PA 17057
717-948-6596
dzs640@psu.edu

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