

Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies

The Ph.D. is the terminal degree in American Studies. In the Ph.D. program, we seek to train, mentor, and place future academic and research leaders in American Studies and related fields, both inside and outside of the academy. We do this by providing advanced education in interdisciplinary research as well as by fostering an intellectual community of students and faculty within the program and across the wider University. We emphasize the development of independent programs of study while directing and enabling students' professionalization as scholars and teachers.

Admission to Graduate Studies

Admission Requirements

- All applicants must meet the requirements outlined in the Admission to Graduate Study (<https://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/admission-to-graduate-study/>) policy.
- Bachelor's degree: A copy of official transcripts showing proof of a bachelor's degree (and any post-bachelor's coursework or degrees) from a regionally accredited institution, or a foreign university with equivalent bachelor's degree requirements is required.
- English proficiency: Proof of English proficiency (<https://gradapply.ku.edu/english-requirements/>) for non-native or non-native-like English speakers is required. There are two bands of English proficiency, including Admission and Full proficiency. For applicants to online programs, Full proficiency is required.

Admission to the Ph.D. in American Studies

Eligibility criteria for admission to the Ph.D. program follow Graduate Studies' admission policy (<https://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/admission-to-graduate-study/>).

Application deadline: January 5 for fall admission. If January 5 falls on a weekend, the deadline will be the following business day.

The admissions process is rigorous and requires a competitive application to be successful. Preference may be granted to students who hold a master's degree in American Studies or a related field. A complete application must include:

- A completed application form and non-refundable application fee submitted online to Graduate Studies (<https://gradapply.ku.edu/apply/>).
- A copy or scan of official transcripts (<https://gradapply.ku.edu/apply/#section366>) from each college and post-secondary institution you have attended.
- A statement of academic objectives describing your intellectual development, previous academic training, and areas of academic interest. The statement of academic objectives should make it clear why the student is pursuing graduate study in American Studies, and what kind of work they hope to prepare for through a rigorous, interdisciplinary program. The most effective statements often identify an existing intellectual conversation or problem to which the student wishes to contribute, and at least one faculty member with whom they

may potentially work. The statement need not describe a developed research project, but ought to give a good idea of the kinds of questions, topics, and priorities that the student will pursue in building a research agenda. The quality of this statement is an especially important factor in the decisions of our admissions committee.

- A current résumé or curriculum vitae (C.V) summarizing your academic background and relevant work experience.
- Three letters of recommendation from individuals familiar with your academic abilities, potential, and preparation for graduate study (submitted via the recommendation section of the online application).
- A sample of your written academic work. This should be a research paper or article of no more than 35 pages that represents your best work to date. Students who have completed a thesis may submit the introduction.

Ph.D. Degree Requirements

Code	Title	Hours
Pre-Candidacy Coursework Requirements		
Core Courses		
AMS 801	Introduction to American Studies	3
AMS 802	Theorizing America	3
AMS 803	Research Methods in American Studies	3
AMS 804	Research Seminar	3
Graduate Seminars		
3 seminars numbered 700 or higher. These courses, selected in consultation with the student's faculty advisor according to the student's research and professional goals, may be AMS or non-AMS seminars and should inform the student's comprehensive exam fields. Directed readings and independent studies courses cannot fulfill this requirement.		9
Research Skills Course		
1 elective methods course, selected by the student and faculty advisor, to provide methodological support for the student's program of research. This may be an AMS or non-AMS methods course.		3
Total Hours		24

M.A. in American Studies

Ph.D. students who do not hold an M.A. will earn the M.A. in American Studies on the way to the Ph.D. The M.A. examination is optional for those who already hold an M.A.

Upon completion of all coursework requirements, the student presents to the M.A. examination committee a portfolio including a research article of publishable quality, research and teaching statements, and a reflection on the graduate experience to date. The committee assesses the portfolio and oral defense with a grade of Pass, Pass with Honors, or No Pass, by majority vote. This defense serves as the M.A. examination in American Studies.

Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship

The University requires that every doctoral student receive training in responsible scholarship and research skills pertinent to the doctoral level of research in their field(s). AMS 803 Research Methods in American Studies and the research skills elective course comprise the Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship requirements for the Ph.D. in American Studies.

Comprehensive Examination

Following the completion of required courses, the student enrolls in AMS 997 Examination Preparation to prepare for the comprehensive examination. In consultation with the faculty advisor, the student may also enroll in additional seminars or directed readings courses to prepare. The written examination consists of 3 essay questions representing each exam field. Committee members review the written examination answers and assess them with a grade of Pass, Revision, or No Pass.

With a passing grade on the written examination, the student may sit for the oral examination. The exam begins with a brief presentation by the student followed by committee questions related to the written portion of the exam or any part of their coursework leading up to the exam. The committee will assess the student's performance in the oral examination with a grade of Pass or No Pass.

Post Comprehensive Exam Enrollment

Upon the passing of the comprehensive examination, the student becomes a doctoral candidate and must enroll in accordance with the Office of Graduate Studies' Doctoral Candidacy policy (<https://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/doctoral-candidacy/>) beginning in the semester following the successful completion of the oral comprehensive exam. This enrollment includes, but is not limited to, at least 1 dissertation hour every semester until graduation.

Dissertation Prospectus

The student must submit to the faculty advisor a brief proposal of the dissertation project, laying out the research questions, conceptual framework, methodological approach, and proposed contributions to the field within one semester of a successful comprehensive exam. The prospectus must include a detailed plan of work for the research and projected dates on which the student will submit a complete draft and sit for the oral defense. All dissertation defense committee members must review and endorse the prospectus for the project to go forward.

Dissertation and Oral Defense

The dissertation must be an original work of research that advances the interdisciplinary field of American Studies and complies with the Office of Graduate Studies' Doctoral Dissertation policy (<https://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/doctoral-dissertation/>).

Upon completion of the dissertation research the student must defend the dissertation before their exam committee members in the "final oral examination," or dissertation defense. The final dissertation defense includes a public presentation of the dissertation research by the candidate and concludes with a period of questioning by the committee, faculty, and public in attendance. After posing questions to the student about the dissertation work, committee members deliberate and vote on a grade of Satisfactory, Honors, or Unsatisfactory.

Handbook and Graduate Policy

Further details can be found in the American Studies Graduate Student Handbook (<https://americanstudies.ku.edu/graduate-student-handbook/>). Students are also encouraged to review Graduate Studies' policies (<https://ogs.ku.edu/policies/>) related to doctoral programs for information about other requirements that may apply.

At the completion of this program, students will be able to:

- Critically apply theories, methodologies, and knowledge to address fundamental questions in primary area of study.

- Participate in an interdisciplinary scholarly community.
- Follow ethical guidelines for work in the discipline.
- Become effective teachers. The successful student will understand how to design learning experiences to maximize student learning and how to connect course design explicitly to desired outcomes. The student will develop a sense of teaching purpose informed by transformative pedagogies that problematize social reality and knowledge.
- Produce a valuable contribution to the field.