

# Department of American Studies

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American Studies at the University of Kansas is an interdisciplinary department whose faculty and students think critically about community, identity, and social justice in American culture, politics, and society. We study the multiple and contested meanings of “American” both nationally and transnationally, in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, class, region, age, and sexuality. To prepare students to engage a diverse and globalized society, we must learn from and about communities who have been too often marginalized in society and in the academy.

Such an inclusive definition of “American” requires an equally capacious understanding of scholarship. Recognizing the critical impact of difference and power on the formation of traditional scholastic disciplines, American Studies embraces research methods that combine, cross, and stretch conventional academic boundaries. We encourage scholars to advance civic discourse at the local, national, and global levels. Through rigorous analysis of historical and current events, encompassing official institutions, social and religious movements, popular and media culture, and other areas, we illuminate the complex formations of American community and identity, both within and beyond US borders.

American Studies produces undergraduate and graduate students who are global citizens and understand the meanings of America and its populations, its cultural and social history and diversities, and its dynamic place among other nation-states. Our undergraduate majors and minors develop practical and intellectual skills that support their careers in a range of public sector and private sector areas such as public humanities, advocacy and non-profit organizations, marketing and human resources, education, mediation, social services, and the law. Our graduate students go on to varied and successful careers as university faculty members and administrators, as well as staff members and directors of non-profit organizations such as museums and historical societies.

## Undergraduate Programs

American studies offers an interdisciplinary undergraduate program in which faculty and students think critically about the many institutional and cultural meanings of America, popular culture, society, and identity. Through studying topics such as film, jazz, literature, visual culture, gender, race, and religion, American studies investigates America in the present and the past, beyond both disciplinary and national boundaries. Given our recognition of the critical impact of difference and power in American life, we insist that a student's program consider the profound impact of diversity on society and address differential power structures in American life and social relations. Motivated advanced students have the opportunity to work independently on research and service projects.

## Graduate Programs

American studies is an interdisciplinary program offering graduate work on society and culture in the United States — past, present, and in global context. It accommodates a variety of individual academic objectives. All students are asked to define 3 concentrations — such as historical periods, conceptual problems, or topical subjects — and to draw on appropriate university resources relating to those areas. Students must demonstrate coherence in their graduate work and be able to show relationships between their concentrations and the wider sociocultural

system. To accomplish this, students must develop knowledge (including historical perspective) in the humanities and social sciences.

For a current list of participating faculty members, please visit the department's website (<http://americanstudies.ku.edu/faculty/>).

Students who are interested in enrolling in graduate-level coursework in the Department of American Studies without formal admission to a graduate program at KU are encouraged to apply for graduate non-degree seeking student status. See the department's admission webpage (<https://americanstudies.ku.edu/admission/>) for further details.

## Courses

### **AMS 100. Introduction to American Studies. 3 Credits. AE41 USC**

An introduction to the history and key concepts of American Studies. Students explore major changes in American culture through the critical reading and analysis of primary and secondary source material. Not open to students who have taken AMS 101.

### **AMS 101. Introduction to American Studies, Honors. 3 Credits. AE41 USC**

An introduction to the history and key concepts of American Studies. Students explore major changes in American culture through the critical reading and analysis of primary and secondary source material. Not open to students who have taken AMS 100. Prerequisite: Membership in the University Honors Program or permission of the instructor.

### **AMS 110. American Identities. 3 Credits. AE41 SBS**

An interdisciplinary introduction to individual and group identities over time. Students explore theories and methods relating to identity from various perspectives, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, age, religion, and region. Not open to students who have taken AMS 112.

### **AMS 112. American Identities, Honors. 3 Credits. AE41 SBS**

An interdisciplinary introduction to individual and group identities over time. Students explore theories and methods relating to identity from various perspectives, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, age, religion, and region. Not open to students who have taken AMS 110. Prerequisite: Membership in the University Honors Program or instructor permission.

### **AMS 171. Religion in American Society. 3 Credits. AE41 USC**

A broad introduction to religion in American culture. This class emphasizes the well-established religions with large followings (viz. Judaism, Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism). Some attention is also given to other religions active in America. Other topics covered include the relationship of church and state, religion in ethnic and racial minority groups, and women and religion. (Same as REL 171.)

### **AMS 177. First Year Seminar: \_\_\_\_\_. 3 Credits. GE11 GLBC**

A limited-enrollment, seminar course for first-time freshmen, addressing current issues in American Studies. Course is designed to meet the critical thinking learning outcome of the KU Core. First-Year Seminar topics are coordinated and approved by the Office of Academic Programs and Experiential Learning. Prerequisite: Open to Freshmen only (less than 30 hours).

### **AMS 260. Introduction to Chicana/Latina Studies. 3 Credits. AE41 USC**

An introduction to the Latino/a population (Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban-Americans, Dominican-Americans, and Central and South Americans) in the US. Students discuss how US and Latin American societies have shaped Latino incorporation into the United States. We also discuss contemporary political, cultural and social issues that pertain to Latinos/as in the US.

**AMS 306. The Black Experience in the U.S. Since Emancipation. 3 Credits.**

An interdisciplinary study of the history and culture of Black people in America from Reconstruction to the present. Topics covered include an analysis of Reconstruction, Black leaders, organizations and movements, the Harlem Renaissance, migration, and race relations. Demographic variables covered include socio-economic class, education, political persuasion, and influence by avant-garde cultural changes. (Same as AAAS 306 and HIST 359.)

**AMS 312. American Culture, 1877 to the Present. 3 Credits.**

An examination of the major historical shifts, trends, and conflicts that have shaped the multicultural nature of life in the United States from 1877 to the present. In addition to tracing developments in literature, architecture, drama, music, and the visual arts, this course will investigate patterns and changes in the popular, domestic, and material culture of everyday life in America. (Same as HIST 312.)

**AMS 316. Ministers and Magicians: Black Religions from Slavery to the Present. 3 Credits. AE41 USC**

This course examines the history and diversity of African American religious expression from slavery until the present, emphasizing both mainstream and alternative faiths. It covers the religious world views of enslaved Africans, and examines faiths inside and outside of Christianity. Topics may include: independent black churches, magical practices, the Holiness and Pentecostal movements, black Islam, religious freemasonry, and esoteric faiths. The class emphasizes the influence of gender, class, race, migration, and urbanization on black religion. (Same as AAAS 316 and HIST 316.)

**AMS 320. Grounding U.S. Latinx Histories: Human Mobility and Migration. 3 Credits.**

Examines the politics of immigrant, citizenship and space through official, intellectual and popular responses to the growth of Latino/a populations in the U.S. and to international migration to and from Mexico and Central America. Topics include consideration of how responses to immigration articulate racialized and culturally specific (including linguistic and religious) concepts of the nation, and how questions of citizenship and residency dovetail with issues of community "voice", public space, and diverse notions of "security".

**AMS 321. American Gun Culture. 3 Credits.**

This course explores the complicated role guns play in the US from sociological and cultural perspectives, using a scholarly approach. In doing so, this course will investigate the prevalence and distribution of guns, lawful possession and use of firearms, gun crime and injuries, and take a special look at women's place in gun culture. Through discussion, oral presentations, and writing assignments, we will consider the social impact of widespread gun ownership. We will also learn more about the average law-abiding gun owner and American culture.

**AMS 323. Sex in History. 3 Credits.**

This course offers a survey of the history of human sexuality in the Western world; the second half of the semester emphasizes the American experience. Topics for consideration may include: masturbation, pornography, sex work, homosexuality, bisexuality, "perversions" (paraphilias), sex and marriage, racialized sexualities, sexual violence, trans\* identities and experiences, sexuality and national identities, and colonized sexualities. The course demonstrates the various ways in which sex, specifically the social and political meanings attributed to physical acts, changes over time and shapes human experiences and interactions far beyond the bedroom. (Same as HUM 332, HIST 332 and WGSS 311.)

**AMS 324. Being Deviant in America. 3 Credits. AE41 USC**

In this course students will study traits, conditions, actions, and behaviors that violate social norms and elicit negative societal reactions. This includes the social, cultural, and individual factors that explain deviance; motivations behind deviant behavior; and efforts by society to control deviants. In short, you will undertake a sociological examination of those on the margins of society and societal efforts to "deal with" them. (Same as SOC 324.)

**AMS 325. Spanish for Heritage Learners. 3 Credits. FP**

A comprehensive review of the Spanish language for students whose personal or cultural ties to the language do not include extensive formal academic study, with an emphasis on the development of skills tied to cultural analysis and communication (written and oral) necessary for success in more advanced courses in Spanish. (Same as SPAN 325.) Prerequisite: SPAN 216, or SPAN 220, or appropriate placement test score as defined by the Department of Spanish & Portuguese, or consent of the Department of Spanish & Portuguese, or consent of instructor.

**AMS 330. American Society. 3 Credits. AE41 USC**

The social structure and organization of American society with special reference to long-term and recent social changes. Not open to students with credit for SOC 132. (Same as SOC 330.) Prerequisite: A principal course in sociology.

**AMS 332. The United States in Global Context. 3 Credits. AE42 GLBC**

Examines the influence abroad of US culture, policies and practices and the impact of other countries on US culture, society, and politics. Among the topics that may be examined are race, ethnicity, colonialism, imperialism, migration, technology, communications and media, popular culture, language, health, domestic and transnational organizations, as well as economic, political, religious, military and educational institutions. (Same as SOC 332.)

**AMS 335. Latinx Music and Migrations: Space and Sonic Circuits. 3 Credits.**

In this course, we will analyze the production, dissemination and consumption of three of the most important forms of popular music—e.g. salsa, reggaetón, banda, and Chicano rock - listened and danced to by US Latinos since the beginning of the 20th century to the present. Through a variety of material we will seek to understand the histories of these musical forms, highlighting the intricate relationship between popular music, migration and the formation of social and cultural identities.

**AMS 340. Black Leadership. 3 Credits.**

The course focuses on the concept of leadership and on Black leadership in the United States. An in-depth analysis of selected case studies of Black leaders both historical and contemporary. Some attention will be given to the dispersion of Africans into the Americas and the leadership that emerged, conditioned both by environmental factors and the psychology engendered by the system of slavery. Selected successful Black leaders will be invited to visit the class from time to time. (Same as AAAS 330.)

**AMS 343. Topics in Latinx/Chicanx Studies: \_\_\_\_\_. 1-4 Credits.**

Study of selected aspects of Latinx/Chicanx society or culture or of the Latinx/Chicanx experience.

**AMS 344. Case Study in American Studies: \_\_\_\_\_. 3 Credits.**

This course examines in depth a specific American studies or theme.

**AMS 345. Cultural Studies. 3 Credits.**

Students gain awareness of major scholars and "schools" that have pursued critical, interdisciplinary research or cultural processes and products in the field of American Studies. Topics may include cultural materialism, semiotics, nationalism, ethnic/racial identity, gender and

sexuality, cultural politics, mass media, public spheres, social space and place, commodity consumption, music, and popular culture.

**AMS 360. Theory and Method. 3 Credits.**

An introduction through a topical theme to theories and methods currently used in American Studies. Prerequisite: AMS 100, AMS 110 and AMS 332 or their equivalent, or consent of instructor.

**AMS 365. Angry White Male Studies. 3 Credits.**

This course charts the rise of the "angry white male" in America and Britain since the 1950s, exploring the deeper sources of this emotional state while evaluating recent manifestations of male anger. Employing interdisciplinary perspectives this course examines how both dominant and subordinate masculinities are represented and experienced in cultures undergoing periods of rapid change connected to modernity as well as to rights-based movements of women, people of color, homosexuals and trans individuals. (Same as HIST 364, HUM 365 and WGSS 365.)

**AMS 436. Ethnicity in the United States: \_\_\_\_\_. 3 Credits. AE41**

An examination of the history, sociology, and culture of U.S. ethnic categories (e.g., American Indians, Latinos, Asian Americans, Jewish Americans, Irish Americans). The specific group studied varies from semester to semester. Course may be repeated for credit with different topics. (Same as SOC 436.)

**AMS 437. Global Ethnic and Racial Relations. 3 Credits. AE42**

This course uses written and visual materials to examine race, ethnicity, and nationalism around the world. Emphasis is on ways in which social forces, gender roles, sexual practices, cultural patterns, and political organization work together to construct and reinforce ethnic, racial, and national identities, boundaries, movements, and conflicts. Historical and contemporary comparisons are made between the U.S. and countries in Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe, the Pacific Islands, and the Middle East. (Same as AAAS 437 and SOC 437.)

**AMS 494. Topics in: \_\_\_\_\_. 1-4 Credits.**

Interdisciplinary study of selected aspects of American society or culture or of the American experience.

**AMS 496. Social Justice Perspectives and Experiences. 3 Credits.**

An experiential learning course in which students select and participate in public/civic engagement activities in a selected area undertaken in consultation with and under the direction of a faculty member. Students meet regularly to discuss and evaluate their field experiences and to collectively problem solve identified challenges to the justice work with which they are engaged. Students produce a final project on the experience that integrates the engagement experience and academic materials. Prerequisite: AMS 100 and AMS 110.

**AMS 510. History of American Women--Colonial Times to 1870. 3 Credits. AE41**

A survey of women's roles as housewives, mothers, consumers, workers, and citizens in pre-industrial, commercial, and early industrial America. (Same as HIST 530 and WGSS 510.)

**AMS 511. History of American Women--1870 to Present. 3 Credits. AE41**

A survey of women's history in the United States that will include radical and reform movements, the impact of war and depression, professionalization, immigration, women's work and the biographies of leading figures in women's history. (Same as HIST 531 and WGSS 511.)

**AMS 518. Capitalism and the Black Experience. 3 Credits.**

This is an upper level course designed to analyze the experiences that define the African American relationship to the American economy. The

course begins with the slave trade and ends in the present. It explores and explains how African American economic development intimately intertwined with the movement for freedom. Students will learn how African Americans addressed issues around slavery, housing, banking, capitalism/socialism, underground economy, and gentrification. This course is chronological in nature with thematic elements. Lectures will provide brief histories and conceptual framework for readings. This background will help students understand and explore how black identity, culture, and politics interact with economy. However, the bulk of the course will operate as a seminar. By the end of the course, students will be able to summarize African American past experiences with capitalism and its relevance to contemporary economic issues affecting African American people today. (Same as AAAS 518 and HIST 518.) Prerequisite: Any American Studies or History courses on American History.

**AMS 550. Research Seminar in: \_\_\_\_\_. 3 Credits. AE61**

A seminar exploring a specific American studies theme. A research paper or equivalent project is required. Prerequisite: AMS 332. Cannot be taken concurrently with AMS 551, AMS 552 or AMS 553.

**AMS 551. Research Project in American Studies. 3 Credits. AE61**

Independent research on a selected topic under the direction of a faculty member. Students write an original research paper or complete an equivalent project in another medium, grounded in primary as well as secondary sources. Prerequisite: Consent of instructor.

**AMS 552. Public Service in American Studies. 3 Credits. AE61**

Independent public service in a selected area undertaken in consultation with and under the direction of a faculty member. Students produce a final written project on the experience that integrates the public service experience and academic materials, or complete an equivalent project in another medium. Prerequisite: Consent of instructor required.

**AMS 553. Honors in American Studies. 3 Credits. AE61**

Honors equivalent of AMS 551. May be taken twice for credit. Three hours of AMS 553 may be substituted for a course in an appropriate category in the American Studies major. Prerequisite: Eligibility for departmental honors and consent of instructor.

**AMS 650. Jazz and American Culture. 3 Credits.**

This course considers cultural and social histories of jazz, from the 1920s through the present day, as sites for exploring ideological struggles over such fields as race, class, gender, sexuality, democracy, capitalism, freedom, community, Americanness, and globalization in the U.S. The course will explore such questions as the following: What music was called jazz at what times and places? What did it mean to whom? Who played it? Who wrote about it? Who listened to it? Who danced to it? Who policed it? Who produced it? Who used it to rebel? Who used it to survive? What did all of these practices mean to participants? The course will examine struggles over social meanings in the U.S. through a study of jazz performance, labor, representation, marketing, consumption, censorship, and historiography. Prerequisite: A course in American studies, American history, or consent of instructor. (Same as WGSS 652.)

**AMS 694. Directed Readings. 1-4 Credits.**

Consent of instructor is required.

**AMS 696. Studies in: \_\_\_\_\_. 3 Credits.**

Interdisciplinary study of different aspects of the American experience in different semesters.

**AMS 700. Introduction to Museum Exhibits. 3 Credits.**

Presentation of principles and practices of exhibit management, design, and production. Topics will include developing a master plan for museum exhibits; concept development; design, installation, and maintenance

of exhibits; design theory; design process; label writing and editing; selection of materials architectural requirements and building codes; cost estimating; publicity; security; and exhibit evaluation. Consideration will be given to exhibition problems in public and private museums in the areas of anthropology, art, history, natural history, and technology. (Same as BIOL 787, GEOL 781, HIST 723, and MUSE 703.) Prerequisite: Museum Studies student or consent of instructor.

**AMS 714. Conservation Principles and Practices. 3 Credits.**

This course will acquaint the future museum professional with problems in conserving all types of collections. Philosophical and ethical approaches will be discussed, as well as the changing practices regarding conservation techniques. Emphasis will be placed on detection and identification of causes of deterioration in objects made of organic and inorganic materials, and how these problems can be remedied. Storage and care of objects will also be considered. (Same as BIOL 700, GEOL 780, HIST 722 and MUSE 706.) Prerequisite: Museum Studies student or consent of instructor.

**AMS 730. Introduction to Collections Management and Utilization. 3 Credits.**

This course examines the roles collections play in fulfilling a museum's mission; the obligations ownership/preservation of collections materials create for a museum; and the policies, practices, and professional standards that museums are required to put in place. The course will cover utilization of collections for research, education, and public engagement; address how that utilization informs the need for and structure of collections policies, and introduce the basic practices of professional collections management. (Same as ANTH 798, BIOL 798, GEOL 785, HIST 725, and MUSE 704.) Prerequisite: Museum Studies student or consent of instructor.

**AMS 731. Museum Management. 3 Credits.**

Lecture, discussion, and laboratory exercises on the nature of museums as organizations; accounting, budget cycles, personnel management, and related topics will be presented using, as appropriate, case studies and a simulated museum organization model. (Same as BIOL 785, GEOL 783, HIST 728, and MUSE 701.) Prerequisite: Museum Studies student or consent of instructor.

**AMS 737. Music in America. 3 Credits.**

A survey of historical developments from the Pilgrims to the present. (Same as MUSC 759.) Prerequisite: One course in the field of music history and literature or consent of instructor.

**AMS 767. Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Gerontology and Aging. 3 Credits.**

A seminar coordinated by the Gerontology Program. The seminar explores essential areas of gerontology for researchers and practitioners, providing a multidisciplinary (biology, health services, behavioral and social sciences, human services) perspective on aging. The seminar surveys contemporary basic and applied research, service programs, and policy and management issues in gerontology. (Same as ABSC 787, PSYC 787, and SOC 767.)

**AMS 797. Introduction to Museum Public Education. 3 Credits.**

Consideration of the goals of an institution's public education services, developing programs, identifying potential audiences, developing audiences, and funding. Workshops and demonstrations are designed for students to gain practical experience working with various programs and developing model programs. (Same as BIOL 784, GEOL 784, HIST 721, and MUSE 705.) Prerequisite: Museum Studies student or consent of instructor.

**AMS 799. Museum Internship. 1-6 Credits.**

Provides directed, practical experience in research, collection, care, and management, public education, and exhibits with emphasis to suit the particular requirements of each student. Graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. (Same as ANTH 799, GEOL 723, and MUSE 799.)

**AMS 801. Introduction to American Studies. 3 Credits.**

An introduction to the field of American Studies through an examination of some of the classic and innovative works, issues, debates, and controversies in the history and the literature of American Studies.

**AMS 802. Theorizing America. 3 Credits.**

Drawing from a broad range of perspectives (e.g., cultural theory, social theory, literary theory, etc.), this course will introduce students to current theoretical debates in American studies and the concepts that inform them.

**AMS 803. Research Methods in American Studies. 3 Credits.**

An introduction to the range of interdisciplinary research methods in American studies. Emphasis will be placed on an examination of the assumptions, logics, and procedures involved in various approaches to understanding American society and culture.

**AMS 804. Research Seminar. 3 Credits.**

An intensive application of theoretical and methodological issues to the development of specific substantive research problems. Students will be expected to design and implement a study that will be critically assessed in the seminar.

**AMS 805. American Pluralism: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in American Life. 3 Credits.**

Analysis of the dynamics of intercultural and intergroup relations in America with special emphasis on the examination of major conceptual perspectives that have characterized the study of race, ethnicity, and religion in American life.

**AMS 808. Studies in: \_\_\_\_\_. 3 Credits.**

Interdisciplinary study of different aspects of the American experiences in different semesters.

**AMS 835. Colloquium in the History of Gender. 3 Credits.**

This colloquium will cover theoretical and topical readings on the history of manhood, womanhood, and gender systems. (Same as HIST 895 and WGSS 835.)

**AMS 896. Examination Preparation. 1-6 Credits.**

Directed and independent study in preparation for the M.A. examination. May be repeated.

**AMS 899. Thesis. 1-6 Credits.**

Investigation of a topic for master's thesis. Total enrollment in this course may not exceed six hours of credit. Graded on a satisfactory progress/limited progress/no progress basis.

**AMS 900. Teaching Seminar. 1-6 Credits.**

This seminar is designed to assist students in the preparation, presentation, and evaluation of teaching in American Studies. Graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis.

**AMS 996. Examination Preparation. 1-9 Credits.**

Directed and independent study in preparation for the doctoral comprehensive examinations. May be repeated.

**AMS 997. Directed Readings. 1-4 Credits.**

Directed reading in an area of American culture in which there is no appropriate course in the offerings of the American Studies program or of the cooperating departments, but in which there is a member of the graduate faculty competent and willing to direct a program of study.

**AMS 998. Seminar in: \_\_\_\_\_. 3 Credits.**

Topics vary from semester to semester. Graduate students are consulted in selecting topics.

**AMS 999. Dissertation. 1-12 Credits.**

Dissertation Credit. Graded on a satisfactory progress/limited progress/no progress basis.