Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies

The Ph.D. is the terminal degree in American Studies. In the Ph.D. program, we seek to educate, mentor, and place scholars who will make innovative contributions to American Studies and related fields, both inside and outside of the academy. We do this by providing advanced training and practice in interdisciplinary research as well as by fostering an intellectual community of students and faculty within the department and across the wider University. We emphasize the development of independent programs of study while directing and enabling students’ professionalization as researchers and teachers.

Admission to Graduate Studies

An applicant seeking to pursue graduate study in the College may be admitted as either a degree-seeking or non-degree seeking student. Policies and procedures of Graduate Studies govern the process of Graduate admission. These may be found in the Graduate Studies (http://catalog.ku.edu/graduate-studies/) section of the online catalog.

Please consult the Departments & Programs (http://catalog.ku.edu/liberal-arts-sciences/) section of the online catalog for information regarding program-specific admissions criteria and requirements. Special admissions requirements pertain to Interdisciplinary Studies degrees, which may be found in the Graduate Studies section of the online catalog.

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/). To be considered for admission, a student must hold a bachelor’s degree. Preference may be granted to students who hold a master’s degree in American Studies or a related field.

Admission is based primarily on the applicant’s statement of academic objectives, record of prior studies at the undergraduate or graduate level, and references from persons familiar with the applicant’s work. Evidence of preparation for graduate study may include substantial work in American Studies or related fields, such as American history, literature, art, media, sociology, anthropology, political science, journalism, or interdisciplinary studies.

A full list of the required application materials can be found on the American Studies website (https://americanstudies.ku.edu/admission/).

Non-native speakers of English must meet Graduate Studies’ English proficiency requirements (https://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/english-proficiency-international-students/).

Ph.D. Degree Requirements

The Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies requires the completion of 8 courses (24 credit hours), the comprehensive examination, enrollment in dissertation hours, and the dissertation. In consultation with the faculty advisor, the student develops a plan of work that will provide expertise in three concentration fields of study. The comprehensive examination certifies the student’s preparation in the concentration fields and readiness to conduct research at a professional level. Ph.D. students may choose to earn the M.A. in American Studies while pursuing the doctorate, upon completion of their course requirements and the defense of a publishable article. The Ph.D. program culminates in the completion and defense of the dissertation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMS 801</td>
<td>Introduction to American Studies (offered every fall)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMS 802</td>
<td>Theorizing America (offered every fall)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMS 803</td>
<td>Research Methods in American Studies (offered every spring)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMS 804</td>
<td>Research Seminar (offered every fall)</td>
<td>3</td>
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Graduate Seminars

3 seminars numbered 700 or higher. These courses, selected in consultation with the student’s faculty advisor, may be AMS or non-AMS seminars.

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. Along with AMS 803, this course fulfills the Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship requirement (RS2). This may be an AMS or non-AMS methods course.

M.A. in American Studies (optional). Upon completion of all coursework requirements, the student may choose to present a publishable article manuscript and defend it to a committee. The committee assesses the manuscript and oral defense with a grade of Pass, Pass with Honors, or No Pass, by majority vote. This defense serves as an exam for the M.A. in American Studies.

Transition from the M.A. Program. Students admitted to the M.A. in American Studies at KU must petition the Department if they wish to continue for the Ph.D. This requires an internal application process, including the submission of a research statement and letter of support from a KU American Studies faculty member. All admissions to the Ph.D. program are at the discretion of the Graduate Committee.

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. When the advisor deems the student prepared, the student may apply to the Department to take the comprehensive examination, which is in two parts. The student must first sit for a time-limited, open-materials written examination which consists of 3 questions representing each exam field. Committee members review the written examination answers and assess them with a grade of Pass, Revision, or No Pass. A vote of Pass by at least 3 committee members qualifies the student to complete the oral portion of the examination. A vote of Revision by at least 3 members requires the student to complete a revision process. A majority vote of No Pass, after the written examination or the revision, will require the student to sit for a new examination in the following semesters. Students who receive a grade of No Pass on two consecutive written examinations must discontinue from the program.

With a passing grade on the written examination, the student may sit for the oral examination before the examination committee. 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 course work 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. A grade of Pass must be supported by at least 4 members of the committee. The committee may also vote to grant Honors, reflecting a student’s outstanding performance on both the written and oral examinations. If 4 committee members do not vote for a grade of Pass, the student may sit for a second oral examination after a period of at least 90 days, and after completing any additional reading or other preparation recommended by the committee. Students receiving a grade of No Pass after the second oral examination must discontinue from the program. A grade of Pass certifies the student as a doctoral candidate in the Department for a period of up to 5 years.

**Dissertation.** The dissertation must be an original work of research that advances the interdisciplinary field of American Studies. The student must submit a brief prospectus of the dissertation project, including a detailed plan of work. All members of the dissertation committee must endorse the prospectus in order for the project to go forward.

Upon completion of the dissertation research the student must defend the dissertation before all committee members in the “final oral examination,” or dissertation defense. After posing questions to the student about the dissertation work, committee members deliberate and vote on a grade of Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. A grade of Satisfactory requires a majority vote, and may be contingent on the completion of specific revisions by a designated due date. The committee may also recommend that a student earning a satisfactory grade be considered for Honors by the Department. Honors are conferred at graduation by the Department, reflecting outstanding work in all aspects of the doctoral program.

**Handbook.** Further details about meeting the degree requirements can be found in the Department’s Graduate 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.