

# explore majors with OAAS!

The Office for Academic Advising Support  
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## Major: American Studies, BA

**American Studies examines the breadth and diversity of the American experience. It is an interdisciplinary field that integrates the study of history, literature, geography, media, politics, popular culture, art, and religion in order to critically analyze American society, culture, institutions, and intellectual traditions.**

### *What skills do students develop in this program?*

American Studies students cultivate skills in critical thinking, clear writing, collaborative work, and public speaking. They are trained to apply methods and theories drawn from the humanities and social sciences to a range of sources (digital, historical, literary, material, oral, textual, visual) and to analyze events and viewpoints within their historical and cultural contexts.

### *What kind of student is a good fit for American Studies?*

Our students often describe themselves as wanting to "study everything": having a broad range of interests and intellectual curiosity regarding several different areas of study. They also enjoy making connections between and among these different areas - for example, examining the way a television show, a cultural product, reflects contemporary or historical ideas about "The American Dream," which may involve analysis of the way it represents work, consumption, marriage and the "nuclear family," urban and suburban life, race or gender relations, sexual identity, and behavior. They are also highly motivated, independent learners who want flexibility in their major classes to explore these interests, which is why we have fewer specific requirements than other majors.

### *Are there any popular classes in the program that you would suggest or recommended classes for a student who is just starting to explore the major?*

We have several Liberal Studies Program courses that are popular and serve as good introductions to American Studies subject areas and modes of analysis.

- AMS 205: Introduction to Popular Culture (SCBI)
- AMS 266: Mental Illness in U.S. History and Culture (HI)
- AMS 275: The History of Sex in America, Puritans to Victorians (HI)
- AMS 276: The History of Sex in America, Victorians to the Present (HI)
- AMS 277: LGBTQ+ U.S. History, World War II - Present (HI)

- AMS 285: History and U.S. Popular Media (HI)

***What are examples of internships and/or research opportunities that students in this major are currently working on or have access to as majors in this program?***

We do not have a specific internship requirement. Our program is very small, so students generally look for internships in adjacent programs, such as History and Political Science. Many of our students have, for example, done internships at the Chicago History Museum, which is most strongly affiliated with the History Department but open to all qualified students. Otherwise, we offer many independent studies for students who find their own internship or who would like to study a topic more in-depth with an instructor.

***What are students doing after graduation?***

Students who pursue American studies are well prepared for graduate work in the humanities as well as professional training in law or business, and most of our graduates go on to pursue post-graduate degrees (about one-third in law). Most common are careers in law, academia, library science, journalism, K-12 teaching, and public service. Our graduates are highly employable and employed.

***Other interesting facts about the American Studies major?***

Because we are a small program, many of our students are double majors and minors. They find that American Studies offers them the opportunity to focus on those aspects of American culture, both contemporary or historical, that most interest them and provides them with a variety of analytical tools to do such analyses. We have very strong student evaluations and our students report strong student satisfaction within the major/minor.