

American Studies

CHAIR

Patrice McDermott
Associate Professor
Cultural history, multicultural studies, gender studies

PROFESSORS

Warren J. Belasco
19th-, 20th- and 21st-century American culture; mass culture; environmental studies

W. Edward Orser

20th- and 21st-century American culture, community studies, Baltimore region

ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS

Kendra Wallace
Multicultural studies, mixed-race heritage, educational anthropology

Jason Loviglio

Popular culture, communications and media, multicultural studies

LECTURERS

Kathy Bryan
Education and cultural transmission, childhood and family, intellectual history

Paula Nicole King

Media and film studies, material culture, culture theory

Courses in this program are listed under AMST.

The American Studies Program encourages and enables students to develop their understanding of the social structures and cultural values of the American experience in historical and contemporary perspective. Students are encouraged to examine their own backgrounds, assumptions and values as participants in American culture.

The program uses materials and methodologies from various disciplines. It also emphasizes learning through seminar experiences and independent projects.

Individual American studies courses focus on specialized topics presented as problems, issues or themes. The program does not “cover” American culture; such a task is virtually impossible. Rather, faculty lead students in seeking insight and perspective into patterns and relationships that are basic to understanding American life. Each course probes deeply into specialized issues while encouraging students to integrate insights and perceive connections.

The areas of emphasis enhance this process of cultural examination by asking students to propose a set of courses that examine specific areas of study, providing a unified perspective on one aspect of their native culture.

Career and Academic Paths

- ▶ Communications
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Law
- ▶ Public history and culture: museums and cultural institutions
- ▶ Public policy
- ▶ Public relations
- ▶ Social and public service
- ▶ Social work

Through the combination of the learning experiences American studies provides, students are prepared for many vocations, including teaching, public service, social service, law, ministry and communications, as well as for graduate school in numerous fields.

Many students in the program elect a field work experience either in education, social work or through American studies internships (AMST 404, or 405 and 406).

Specially designed dual program possibilities for students include a dual major with social work; a major/certificate program with education at the early-childhood, elementary and secondary social studies levels; and a major/certificate or minor program with women’s studies.

In each of these instances, courses in the American studies emphasis area are directly applicable or complementary to work in the second field.

Major Program

The American studies major leading to a B.A. degree consists of at least 36 credits distributed as follows:

A. Eighteen credits in

American studies core courses, including:

AMST 100
Ideas and Images in American Culture

OR

(a comparable course as approved by advisor)

AMST 290
Approaches in American Studies

AMST 391
Studies in American Culture

AMST 392
Studies in American Society

AMST 490
Senior Seminar

One additional 300- or 400-level course in American studies

B. Eighteen credits in one area of emphasis, consisting of courses that focus upon a particular dimension of American culture. Three courses must be taken from the set listed below for each emphasis area; an additional three courses

may be taken from the required list or from a set of recommended courses in American studies or related fields (available from the department).

Twelve of the 18 credits in the emphasis area must be at the 300-400 level.

1. Communications and Media

(includes courses in popular culture, media studies, broadcasting, film and print communication)

AMST 222
Introduction to Media Studies

AMST 320
Television in American Culture

AMST 322
American Society and Culture in Film

AMST 325
Studies in Popular Culture

AMST 374
Perspectives on the Future

AMST 420
Seminar in Mass Media

2. Community and Diversity

(includes courses in multicultural studies, women’s studies, community and urban studies, regional and environmental issues, foodways and folklore)

AMST 200
Multicultural America

AMST 303
Ethnography in America

AMST 310
Gender and Inequality in America

AMST 372
American Food

AMST 380
Community in America

AMST 410
Seminar in Community and Diversity

3. Culture and Policy

(includes courses in environmental studies, public culture, science and technology, politics and global studies)

AMST 270
American Culture and Science

AMST 352
American Culture in Global Perspective

AMST 372
American Food

AMST 374
Perspectives on the Future

AMST 388
American Environments

AMST 430
Seminar in Cultural Policy

4. Preprofessional Emphasis:**a. Early-Childhood Education**

(for students seeking education certification in this field)

Three courses from the following list and three additional courses.

AMST 200
Multicultural America

AMST 310
Gender and Inequality in America

AMST 380
Community in America

AMST 382
Perspectives on the Family

AMST 384
Perspectives on Childhood and Adolescence

AMST 452
Seminar in Education, Policy and Culture

b. Elementary Education

(for students seeking grades 1-8 certification with an emphasis in social studies)

Courses required for this emphasis:

Social Studies Courses
HIST 101 **AND** 102
GEOG 102

Non-U.S. History
World history **OR**
Non-Western History

American Institutions:
(one course from each of the following categories; one course substitutes for the 300-/400-level course requirement in the core):

Family/Childhood
AMST 382 **OR** 384

Multicultural Perspectives
AMST 200 **OR** 352

Community and Diversity
AMST 310 **OR** 380

c. Secondary Education

(social studies) (Maryland State Department of Education-approved certificate program, 42 credits)

Courses required for this emphasis:

Social Studies Courses
GEOG 102 **OR** 110
POLI 100
ECON 101 **OR** 102
HIST 101 **AND** 102

World Culture Courses
World history **OR** Non-Western history

Advanced emphasis on American Institutions (one course each from two of the following categories; one course substitutes for the 300-/400-level course requirement in the core):

Family
AMST 310 **OR** 382

Community
AMST 380 **OR** 480

Mass Media
AMST 320, 325 **OR** 420

d. Social Work

(for students seeking a double major with SOWK; SOWK 360 and 481 apply to the emphasis)

Three courses from the following list and one additional course.

AMST 200
Multicultural America

AMST 310
Gender and Inequality in America

AMST 355
Special Topics in Cultural Policy

AMST 380
Community in America

AMST 382
Perspectives on the Family

AMST 384
Perspectives on Childhood and Adolescence

AMST 410
Seminar in Community and Diversity

5. American Studies or a Related Field

Courses that focus primarily upon American culture or upon cross-cultural perspectives in one of the following single fields of study:

- ▶ American studies
- ▶ Africana studies
- ▶ American literature
- ▶ American history
- ▶ Anthropology
- ▶ Geography and environmental systems
- ▶ Political science
- ▶ Psychology
- ▶ Sociology
- ▶ Visual and performing arts
- ▶ Women's studies (may be fulfilled in conjunction with the WMST minor or certificate)

Additional guidelines for the major:

All courses applicable to the major must carry a grade of "C" or above.

A maximum of six credits may be applied to the American studies degree from the second field in dual programs.

The student should consult with a faculty advisor to select an emphasis and for approval of specific courses; the emphasis must be approved by the departmental faculty.

For all American studies majors, the department strongly recommends at least one course in both American history and American literature, as well as one course in either sociology, psychology or anthropology.

Minor Program

The minor in American studies is intended to provide a concentration of interdisciplinary courses in American culture studies to complement majors in other fields. It may prove particularly beneficial for students in related majors from the humanities/arts and social sciences, where the methods of interdisciplinary study and the focus upon American materials are directly applicable. For such students, it mirrors the American studies major, both in terms of the set of core course experiences and in the conception of the emphasis area (the first major substituting for the American studies major's emphasis area).

The American studies minor should be equally beneficial for students in majors outside the humanities/arts and social sciences, where the broad interdisciplinary intention of the courses could provide an excellent opportunity for focused study that integrates perspectives both from the humanities/arts and the social sciences. For such students, the American studies minor would afford depth and breadth in focused study outside the major.

The American studies minor consists of 18 credits. It mirrors the requirements for the major, but it does not require the senior research seminar. It includes the key core courses: AMST 100: Ideas and Images, AMST 290: Approaches in American Studies, AMST 391: Studies in American Culture and AMST 392: Studies in American Society. In addition, students would elect two American studies topics courses, at least one of them at the 300-400 level. As with the major, only courses in which a student receives a grade of "C" or higher may count toward the minor.

Certificate in Communications and Media Studies

This certificate is designed for students in any major who are interested in careers in communications and media.

It also is designed as an expanded course of study for American studies students who elect to complete the major with either a single or dual concentration in communications and media studies. In particular, the certificate will provide a strong foundation for students interested in fields related to broadcasting, advertising, popular culture, print media, public relations and media criticism. This 24-credit undergraduate certificate is composed of a three-part curricular structure, including required foundational AMST courses (12 credits), elective courses in one of three areas of specialization (nine credits) and a field-placement internship (three credits). All students must complete the required courses with a "C" or better and maintain a 3.0 or higher GPA in the certificate program. All required courses must be taken for a regular grade and cannot be taken on a pass/fail basis.

I. Foundational Courses (12 credits)

AMST 222
Introduction to
Media Studies

PLUS three additional courses from this list:

AMST 320
Television in
American Culture

AMST 321
Radio in American Culture

AMST 322
American Society
and Culture in Film

AMST 325
Studies in American
Popular Culture

AMST 374
Perspectives on the Future

AMST 420
Seminar in Mass Media

II. Elective Courses in Area of Specialization (9 credits)

Select three courses from the list of approved courses (available from the department) within one of the following areas of specialization:

- ▶ Popular culture studies
- ▶ Print media studies
- ▶ Film studies

III. Field Placement Internship – AMST 404 (3 credits)

Internships are designed to provide students with production experience in the areas of broadcasting, public relations, advertising, popular culture, print media, film studies, journalism and media criticism.

Honors Program

A departmental honors program offers qualified senior students the opportunity for in-depth study. Close discussion between faculty and students and student research projects characterize this program. Information and application forms are available in the department office.

Special Opportunities

Many students in the program elect a field work experience either in education, social work or through the American studies internships (AMST 404, or 405 and 406).

Students have taken advantage of the internship program to gain valuable work experience with organizations as diverse as the Smithsonian Institution, Planned Parenthood and WJZ-TV.

Student Organizations

American Studies Council of Majors

American studies students are welcome to join the American Studies Council of Majors. This departmental club hosts informal student-faculty gatherings on issues related to American culture.