

AMERICAN STUDIES MAJOR

Hemispheric Americas & Transnational American Studies	2
Concentration	4
Total Hours	14

MAJOR DESCRIPTION

Wesleyan's interdisciplinary Department of American Studies provides a broad grounding in the study of the United States in a hemispheric and global context. American Studies majors draw on the intellectual resources of a variety of disciplines—Anthropology, Art History, English, History, Religion, and Sociology, as well as interdisciplinary programs such as Latin American Studies, African American Studies, and Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Individually designed concentrations, which are the hallmark of the department, allow students to forge interdisciplinary approaches to particular issues that interest them, from visual culture and aesthetics to racial politics and gender systems.

Alongside its interdisciplinary emphasis, American Studies at Wesleyan stresses a comparative approach to the study of the United States. Such prominent features of U.S. cultural development as colonization, slavery, immigration, imperialism, capitalism, mass culture, gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, political culture, the importance of modern social and political identities, and state development are juxtaposed to similar processes and phenomena in a variety of nations in the Americas. By studying cultural phenomena across national boundaries, American Studies majors develop a rich understanding of the complex histories that have resulted from the conflict and confluence of European, Indigenous, African, and Asian cultures throughout the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific.

ADMISSION TO THE MAJOR

To major in American studies, students should submit a major declaration request through their WesPortal and present a completed application to the administrative assistant of American Studies. The AMST chair will review applications and approve accepted applications through the WesPortal system. Majors are expected to complete an Introduction to American Studies course (AMST174 to AMST179) before the end of their junior year. Transfer students should meet with the department chair to discuss which courses taken elsewhere can be offered as substitutes for Wesleyan courses.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

Majors in American studies must take 11 courses (12 for honor candidates). The department recommends that first-year students and sophomores considering the major enroll in a survey course. These courses offer an introduction and overview of important issues and questions in American studies and provide a solid foundation for advanced work in the major.

AMST MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

Code	Title	Hours
	Introduction to American Studies	1
Junior Core Courses		
AMST200	Colonialism and Its Consequences in the Americas	1
	Junior Colloquium	1
	Upper Level Electives	3
	Senior Requirement	1
	Pre-20th Century	1

JUNIOR CORE COURSES

Junior core courses constitute the foundational base for the major. AMST200 and one junior colloquium are required of every major. The colonialism course situates American studies in a hemispheric frame of reference and introduces a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to an intercultural analysis of the Americas. Junior colloquia explore in-depth a range of theoretical perspectives utilized in American studies, consider the history and changing shape of the multifaceted American studies enterprise, and engage students in research and analysis. Students may take more than one junior colloquium and count the second one as an elective.

CONCENTRATION AND ELECTIVES

In addition to junior core courses and the senior requirement, the major includes seven upper-level electives that focus on the cultures of the Americas. The heart of each major's course of study consists of a cluster of four courses among those electives that forms an area of concentration (these should be numbered AMST201 and above).

A concentration within American studies is an intellectually coherent plan of study (developed in consultation with an advisor) that explores in detail a specific aspect of the culture(s) and society of the United States. It may be built around a discipline (including history, literary criticism, government, or sociology), a field (such as cultural studies, ethnic studies, or queer studies), or a "problematic" (such as ecology and culture or politics and culture). As models and inspiration for prospective concentrators, we have developed descriptions of seven standing concentrations—queer studies, race and ethnicity, cultural studies, material culture, visual culture, historical studies, and literary studies—that we encourage majors to select or adapt. Majors may also devise their own concentrations. Among the latter in recent years have been concentrations in urban studies, disability studies, media studies, social justice, education, and environmental studies. In addition, to ensure chronological breadth, majors must include in their major at least one course that has a majority focus on American culture(s) in the period before 1900.

HEMISPHERIC AMERICAS AND TRANSNATIONAL AMERICAN STUDIES

Students are also asked to consolidate a hemispheric/transnational American studies focus by taking two courses that build on the comparative foundation supplied in AMST200. Hemispheric Americas and transnational American studies courses are identified on the AMST website (under "for majors"). Courses used to meet this requirement may also, as appropriate, be counted toward concentration, elective, or senior seminar requirements. A senior essay or thesis that utilizes a hemispheric or transnational American studies approach may count toward this requirement.

PRE-20TH CENTURY

Code	Title	Hours
AMST213	African American History, 1444-1877	1
AMST229	Hymnody in the United States Before the Civil War	
AMST231	Guns and Society	1
AMST232	American Architecture and Urbanism, 1770--1914	1

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

There is no language requirement for the Major in American Studies.

PRIZES

The Marni Goldstein White Award recognizes the best Honors Thesis written in American Studies each year.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

Ultimately, our goal for our majors is that they develop a critical, theoretically informed understanding of the United States as a political, social, and cultural formation that exists in and had its inception in a transnational context of settler colonialism, imperial expansion, and global capitalism. In addition, we want our majors to develop the skills in research and writing that will allow them to apply that understanding to concrete and particular issues and convey the results of their analysis effectively. Our majors learn about the interdisciplinary field of American studies in its most expansive and robust form, including emphases on indigeneity, race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, and class.

HONORS

Candidates for honors in American studies must complete and receive honors on a senior thesis. The American Studies Department requires students who want to write an honors thesis submit a completed application to the department. Consult the chair of the department for information about the application. See also the link to Honors (<http://www.wesleyan.edu/amst/Honors.html>) on the AMST website (<http://www.wesleyan.edu/amst/>) for more information about the honors process in American studies.

CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

Every American studies major must complete a capstone experience to fulfill the major. This capstone experience can be fulfilled in one of three ways. Theses in the American Studies Department include research projects on a range of topics with a variety of methods. A senior can undertake a two-term honors thesis in an honors thesis tutorial (AMST409 and AMST410) with a thesis advisor. This enables the major to stand as a candidate for honors in American studies. Second, a senior can enroll in a one-semester senior essay/project tutorial (AMST403 or AMST404) to undertake an essay or project (for instance, a play or screenplay). Third, a major may take an advanced 300-level seminar originating in or cross-listed with American studies, or, with the permission of the American studies faculty advisor, outside of American studies, for AMST capstone credit. Most majors who enroll in an advanced 300-level seminar are seniors, though some students take a capstone seminar earlier. A major can have more than one capstone experience. For instance, a major could take more than one advanced 300-level seminar and write an honors thesis or a senior essay or project.