

Brandeis University American Studies Program

American Studies Major: Learning Goals/Outcomes

American Studies takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of American culture, identities, beliefs, thoughts, values and traditions in national and global contexts. Incorporating a broad range of subjects and methodologies from a variety of disciplines, our curriculum seeks to provide students with an educated awareness of the ways in which the United States frames the lives, aspirations, and thinking of its own citizens and of peoples around the world.

Students can take courses in history, literature, film, women's studies, popular culture, electronic and digital media, race and immigration, ethnic studies, legal scholarship, journalism, politics, and the environment. A series of Main Currents courses on broad themes in American culture serve as gateways to a curriculum that examines the construction of American ideas and identities across time periods, fields and disciplines, genres and media. Requirements include a two-semester sequence which examines the history of American culture from the nation's founding to the present, a Main Currents course, and six electives chosen from within the Program and courses cross-listed with other departments and programs.

Knowledge: Students completing the major in American Studies will be able to:

** Know and understand foundational texts of American culture and history from the colonial period to the present*

**View America as a distinct culture composed of diverse peoples, experiences, traditions and values*

**Understand the historical roots of contemporary issues, programs, movements, policies*

**Situate American culture within a global context*

Core Skills: The American Studies major emphasizes core skills in analysis, critical thinking, research, and communication. Based on the critical understandings above, American Studies majors will be prepared to:

**Critically analyze and interpret a spectrum of American texts (e.g., classic works of literature and art; historical, legal, and religious writings; Hollywood cinema; art and material culture).*

**Examine American identities and institutions from a variety of interdisciplinary frameworks (e.g., women's and gender studies, race and ethnic studies, popular culture studies, religious studies)*

**Cultivate an expertise in the theories and methods of American studies*

**Develop and express well-formulated ideas in writing and oral presentation*

**Locate, analyze, and assess a variety of primary and secondary sources using appropriate research methodologies and frameworks*

Social Justice:

The American Studies curriculum prepares students for lives of civic engagement, providing the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to public debate, scholarship, and policy initiatives related to social justice in the modern world. The curriculum fosters an open climate for consideration of a full range of ideological, political, social, cultural, and religious perspectives about the United States in the world.

We take pride in our long tradition of faculty involvement in social and political life, modeling ways in which scholarship and activism can be combined to improve the common good. American Studies faculty developed the idea for Brandeis' Transitional Year Program, which served as a template for many other college programs, and have been involved in many public service enterprises at the local, national, and global levels. Numerous American Studies courses, particularly those taught by the directors of the Environmental Studies Program, the Legal Studies Program, and the Journalism Program, incorporate experiential learning components, which directly connect learning to issues of social justice.

Upon Graduation:

American Studies graduates go on to careers in a variety of fields, including journalism and communication; law and politics; government and public policy, film, television and the entertainment industry; advertising, public relations, business and marketing. Majors often enter academic scholarship in a variety of fields, including but not limited to American Studies.