

AMERICAN STUDIES MAJOR

Interdisciplinary Major

The American Studies major is designed for the unusually independent student who will take on the responsibility of helping to determine the structure of her major and who seeks the freedom to participate actively in the selection of their curriculum. American Studies explores US culture from cross-disciplinary perspectives to help students develop a rich understanding of the American experience. For instance, students might explore racial, ethnic, gender, LGBTQ, or class identities—all central themes in current American Studies—in many different fields: history courses on slavery or the Civil Rights Movement; literature courses on the Harlem Renaissance, Irish and Irish-American literature, Jewish American literature, and European colonial through twenty-first century American literature; cultural studies courses on popular culture, gender, race, class, sexuality, and generation; music courses on jazz and American music; art courses on American painting, the history of US photography, and US museology; a summer-session archaeology field school conducting excavations on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

Student Opportunities

American Studies students benefit from the American Studies Program's close relationship with the Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience. The Center, located in the historic eighteenth-century Custom House on the Chester River in downtown Chestertown, supports student research, hosts special events, sponsors many internships, and provides significant funding for undergraduate research, including Explore America internships for summer research in American Studies.

AMS SCE Senior Capstone Experience 2 Credits

Offered every Spring semester. Graduating American Studies majors will complete an independent research project under the guidance of a American Studies faculty member of their choosing.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

AMS 194 Special topics 4 Credits

View Available Sections for titles and descriptions of Special Topics offered this semester.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

AMS 209 Introduction to American Culture I 4 Credits

Taught in the fall semester, the course is concerned with the establishment of American Literature as a school subject. Texts that have achieved the status of classics of American Literature, such as Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Thoreau's *Walden*, and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, are read in the context of the history and politics of their achieving this status. Texts traditionally excluded from the canon of American literature, in particular early Hispano- and Franco-American texts, are considered in the context of their relative marginality to the project of establishing American Literature in the American academy. Other-than-written materials, such as modern cinematic representations of the period of exploration and colonization of North America, as well as British colonial portraits and history paintings, are studied for how they reflect on claims for the cultural independence of early North America. Other-than-North-American materials, such as late medieval and early Renaissance Flemish and French still lifes, as well as the works of nineteenth-century European romantic poets and prose writers, are sampled for how they reflect on claims for the exceptional character of North American culture.

Cross-listed as: AMS 209/ENG 209

Term(s) Offered: Fall, All Years

AMS 210 Introduction to American Culture II 4 Credits

Taught in the spring semester, the course is concerned with the establishment of American Studies as a curriculum in post-World War II American colleges and universities. Readings include a variety of written texts, including those not traditionally considered literary, as well as a variety of other-than-written materials, including popular cultural ones, in accordance with the original commitment of American Studies to curricular innovation. Introductions to the modern phenomena of race, gender, sexual orientation, generation, and class in the U.S. culture are included. A comparatist perspective on the influence of American culture internationally and a review of the international American Studies movement in foreign universities is also introduced.

Cross-listed as: ENG 210/AMS 210

Term(s) Offered: Spring, All Years

AMS 213 African Am Literature & Culture I 4 Credits

This course is a survey of African American literature produced from the late 1700s to the present. It is designed to introduce students to the key writers, texts, themes, conventions, and tropes that have shaped the African American literary tradition. Authors studied may include Frederick Douglass, Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Ellison, Gwendolyn Brooks, Toni Morrison and Walter Mosley. Counts for American Studies major, Black Studies minor, Communication and Media Studies major, and Humanities distribution.

Cross-listed as: ENG 213/AMS 213

Term(s) Offered: Spring, All Years

AMS 214 African Am Lit & Culture II 4 Credits

This course surveys African American authors from the Harlem Renaissance to the present. It is designed to expose students to the writers, texts, themes, and literary conventions that have shaped the African American literary canon since the Harlem Renaissance. Authors studied in this course include Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Gwendolyn Brooks, James Baldwin, and Toni Morrison. Counts for American Studies major, Black Studies minor, Communication and Media Studies major, and Humanities distribution.

Cross-listed as: ENG 214/AMS 214

Term(s) Offered: Spring, All Years

AMS 222 Body, Nature and Nation in American Art 4 Credits

Although this art history course sketches in the art of the early colonies, its main body begins at the period of the American Revolution. Lectures and discussion explore the changing significance of the visual arts in American life and culture through the 1930s. Field trips to museums in Washington. This course is cross listed under American Studies.

Requisites: Pre or co-req: Take ART 200 or ART 110

Term(s) Offered: Fall, Odd Years

AMS 275 Prisons, Punishment, and Social Control 4 Credits

In this course, we will examine both overt and covert forms of surveillance, control, and confinement in historical and contemporary contexts. We will consider less repressive forms of control, which are often invisible to us even as they powerfully shape and define our lives, as well as more repressive forms of state power. An anthropological lens helps us consider the many ways that prisons and punishment are deeply entrenched in U.S. culture, social life, and political-economy. We draw upon a variety of theoretical frameworks, including Foucault, Marxism, critical race theory, disability studies, and others, each of which offers a unique way to make sense of our course topics. Rather than approach the prison as a set of buildings and experiences over there (apart from un-incarcerated life), we ask how the same social processes that make prisons possible are woven into many aspects of our social, cultural, political, and economic experiences. We will pay particular attention to the intersections of race, class, and gender with prisons /social control throughout U.S. history. Finally, we explore the creative ways that people critique, resist, imagine, and organize for more liberatory futures.

Term(s) Offered: Other, Non Conforming

AMS 294 Special Topics 4 Credits

View Available Sections for titles and descriptions of Special Topics offered this semester.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

AMS 313 17th and 18th Century America 4 Credits

The social, economic, and political structure of Colonial America; the background and development of the American Revolution; and the interaction of social and political life during the Confederation, Constitutional, and Federalist periods.

Requisites: Pre or co-req: HIS 111 or two 200 level History courses

Term(s) Offered: Other, Non Conforming

AMS 322 The Arts in America 4 Credits

Although the course sketches in the art of the early colonies, its main body begins at the period of the American Revolution. Lectures and discussion explore the changing significance of the visual arts in American life and culture through the 1930s. Field trips to museums in Washington.

Requisites: Pre or co-req: ART 110

Term(s) Offered: Fall, Odd Years

AMS 345 The African American Novel 4 Credits

This course examines the origin and development of the African American novel. We will begin with the earliest novels and conclude with an analysis of contemporary novels by African American writers. We will examine novels from multiple genres and give careful attention to the intersection of race, gender, class and environment in representative novels of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries.

Cross-listed as: AMS 345/ENG 345

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, Non Conforming

AMS 347 American Environmental Writing 4 Credits

The study of writing from an environmental perspective is both an emerging field in literary criticism and a rich tradition in American literary history. What does it mean to be green from a literary point of view? This course explores that question in looking at classic and contemporary authors of American environmental writing, from Henry David Thoreau to Annie Dillard to recent examples of eco-criticism. Though the primary focus is on nonfiction prose, the traditional home of nature writing, the course also explores environmental perspectives in poetry, fiction, and film as well as cross-disciplinary connections with the natural sciences and social sciences.

Cross-listed as: ENG 347/AMS 347/ENV 347

Term(s) Offered: Fall, All Years

AMS 360 Lit. of Europn Colonies & US 4 Credits

Alvar Nunez Cabeza De Vaca, Pere Jogues, Rowlandson, Marrant, Wheatley, Bradstreet, Franklin, Jefferson, Brockden Brown, Poe.

Cross-listed as: ENG 360/AMS 360

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, Non Conforming

AMS 362 Literary Romanticism in the U.S. II 4 Credits

Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, Dickinson.

Term(s) Offered: Fall, All Years

AMS 363 Gilded Age & American Realism 4 Credits

This course examines key prose fiction of the Gilded Age of American literary history, and culture (roughly 1878 - 1901). Careful attention will be given to various treatments of Big Business, industrialization, urbanization, regionalism and social inequality in the work of Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, Kate Chopin, Frances E.W. Harper, Charles Chestnutt, and others.

Term(s) Offered: Spring, Odd Years

AMS 370 The Harlem Renaissance 4 Credits

This interdisciplinary course examines the literature and intellectual thought of the Harlem Renaissance, a period in African American history that covers, roughly, the 1920s and 1930s. This course will offer more than a cursory introduction to a cultural movement. Instead, students will study key figures and texts at length, including the works of Wallace Thurman, Langston Hughes, Alain Locke and Zora Neale Hurston. By the end of the course, students should be able to explain the different conceptualizations of the black aesthetic that were prevalent during this movement, and articulate how the confluence of race, class and gender have impacted literary productions of the period.

Cross-listed as: ENG 370/AMS 370/CMS 370

Term(s) Offered: Other, Non Conforming

AMS 371 Faulker & Modernism in U.S. 4 Credits

The course will concentrate on the novels of Faulkner as exemplifying modernism.

Term(s) Offered: Other, Non Conforming

AMS 374 North American Indians 4 Credits

Although pre-Columbian North America did not see the rising and falling of states that unified people through a single language or economy, it is extraordinarily rich in histories. The archaeology of North America aims to understand the diversity of histories lived by peoples from the Atlantic to Alaska, from the Plains to the Bayou, from nomadic hunting and gathering groups to large-scale horticulturalists. We will explore the human experience on the continent north of Mexico from the first footsteps on the continent to the impact of European contact to the relationship between archaeologists and American Indians today. By the end of this course, you will have an understanding of the history of archaeology in North America and the diverse prehistoric Native American cultures. You will have a good handle on the issues faced by and methods utilized in reconstructing past settlement patterns, subsistence strategies, religious practices and social and political organization.

Term(s) Offered: Fall, Odd Years

AMS 377 2PACalypse Now! 4 Credits

There's something about Heart Of Darkness -- neither the most readable nor the most teachable of books, even of Conrad's books. And there's something about Conrad, too, a native Pole for whom English was a third language, a third language that he evidently spoke so poorly that when conversing with his American literary friend Henry James they both reverted to what was for both of them a second language: French. The course tries to explore what it is that has attracted so many white male Anglophone intellectuals -- and prompted the condemnation of one African writer, the mockery of one black rapper, and perhaps, the rivalry of a prominent, brown, novelist -- over the more than hundred years now since the original publication of Heart of Darkness in 1899 in England in Blackwood's Magazine. Class texts include Conrad's novella, Coppola's Apocalypse Now, Tupac's TUPAcocalypse Now, Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! (which contains a prominent allusion to Heart of Darkness), Chinua Achebe's essays, V.S. Naipul's A Bend in the River, a sampling of the blizzard of journalistic quotations of the novel's title and of its most famous, four-word, speech, plus some theorizings of race and gender that might shed light on why the book has managed to appeal so strongly to a relatively homogenous cohort of readers and adaptors.

Cross-listed as: ENG 377/AMS 377

Term(s) Offered: Fall, Non Conforming

AMS 394 Special Topics 4 Credits

View Available Sections for titles and descriptions of Special Topics offered this semester.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

AMS 397 Independent Study 4 Credits

An agreement between a sponsoring faculty and a student letting the student study a topic of interest not offered at WC. 45 hours are required per credit.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

AMS 400 The American Studies Seminar 4 Credits

This course, required for the major, is offered every Fall semester. The course will include a review of American Studies' institutional background, in particular the nativist origins of American Studies at Yale and the more genteel nationalist consolidations established by the post-war Harvard American Civilization Program. Specific topics and readings will vary yearly but will always be chosen from among 1.) those that helped establish the cross-disciplinary foundations of American Studies; 2.) several texts, both literary and social-scientific, that have become iconic in the discipline; and 3.) texts critical of the chauvinist tendencies inherent in the origins of the discipline. Students in the seminar will be encouraged to develop independent research projects that can mature into Senior Capstone Experiences. American Studies majors will take the American Studies Seminar in the first semester of their senior years to give them a running start into the Senior Capstone Experience (AMS SCE) that they will complete in the spring semester. Because the curriculum for the course will change yearly, American Studies majors may take AMS twice, and because the focus of the course will be on how to develop and execute research papers, it should be of interest to students facing a senior thesis SCE in other humanities and social science majors as well. The course will either be taught by the Director of American Studies or be team-taught by the Chair of American Studies and another American Studies faculty member.

Term(s) Offered: Other, All Years

AMS 414 Comparative Cultural Encounters 4 Credits

This seminar examines interactions among native, European, and African peoples during the initial centuries of North American colonization. Situating the American colonies within a broader Atlantic World and offering a comparative approach, the course investigates processes of cultural conflict, exchange, adaption, and transformation. One year in introductory sequence in history required.

Requisites: Pre or co-req: HIS 111 or two 200 level History courses

Term(s) Offered: Other, Non Conforming

AMS 470 Toni Morrison 4 Credits

In this seminar, students will study the works of Toni Morrison, the first African American and the second American woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. Students will examine important motifs, tropes and themes of Morrison's novels (*The Bluest Eye*, *Beloved* and *Jazz*, to name a few), along with some of her notable critical essays. By the conclusion of this course, students should be well versed in Morrison's writings and have a basic understanding of contemporary critical practices used to interpret her work.

Cross-listed as: ENG 470/AMS 470

Term(s) Offered: Fall, Non Conforming

AMS 490 American Studies Internship 4 Credits

A learning contract is developed prior to enrollment in an internship. Evaluation of student performance is completed by the faculty mentor based on the fulfillment of the contract terms and written evaluation by the internship site supervisor. Students must work at least 45 hours for each internship credit and be enrolled in the course prior to beginning work. Graded A-F or Pass/Fail.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

AMS 494 Special Topics 4 Credits

View Available Sections for titles and descriptions of Special Topics offered this semester.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

American Studies Major Requirements

The major in American Studies requires completing twelve courses. Four of these are lower-level (200-level) semester courses in two introductory sequences, one in American Culture and one in U.S. History.

Code	Title	Credits	Notes
American Culture: Select one of the following sequences		8	
Option 1			
AMS/ENG 209	Introduction to American Culture I		
AMS/ENG 210	Introduction to American Culture II		
Option 2			
AMS/ENG 209	Introduction to American Culture I		
AMS/ENG 214	African Am Lit & Culture II		
Option 3			
AMS/ENG 213	African Am Literature & Culture I		
AMS/ENG 210	Introduction to American Culture II		
Required Courses		12	
HIS 201 & HIS 202	History of the United States to 1865 and History of the United States Since 1865		
AMS 400	The American Studies Seminar		
Select 6 courses from American Studies in the Humanities or American Studies Electives		24	
ANT 137	Culture & Environments of the Chesapeake		
ANT 296	Archaeological Field School		
ANT 474	Hist Preservation & Cultural Resc Mgt		
ECN 312	Public Finance		
EDU 251	Principles of Education		
EDU 354	Children's & Young Adult Literature		
ENG 341	Native American Literature		
ENG 343	American Short Story		
ENG 345	The African American Novel		
ENG 347	American Environmental Writing		

ENG 360	Lit. of Eur Colonies of N Am & Early US	_____
ENG 361	Literary Romanticism in U.S. I	_____
ENG 362	Literary Romanticism in the U.S. II	_____
ENG 363	Gilded Age & American Realism	_____
ENG 370	The Harlem Renaissance	_____
ENG 371	Faulkner & Modernism in U.S.	_____
ENG 377	2PACalypse Now!	_____
ENG 470	Toni Morrison	_____
ENV 109	Intro to Geographic Information Systems	_____
ENV 490	Environmental Studies Internship	_____
HIS 313	17th and 18th Century America	_____
HIS 315	The Early Republic	_____
HIS 319	African - American History	_____
HIS 334	The American Civil War	_____
HIS 335	Reconstruction and the Gilded Age	_____
HIS 336	Progressivism and the Twenties	_____
HIS 342	Victorian America	_____
HIS 343	History of American Women	_____
HIS 414	Comparative Cultural Encounters	_____
HIS 494	Special Topics	_____
MUS 206	Jazz History	_____
POL 313	Campaigns and Elections	_____
POL 312	The American Presidency	_____
POL 311	Congress & Political Polarization	_____
POL 317	State and Local Politics	_____
POL 320	Law and Society	_____
POL 321	Women and Politics	_____
POL 323	Constitutional Law	_____
POL 324	American Political Thought	_____
POL 334	Media and Politics	_____
POL 380	American Foreign Policy	_____
POL 317	State and Local Politics	_____
THE 306	American Musical Theater	_____
Senior Capstone Experience (AMS SCE)		2-4
Total Credits		46-48

Richard De Prospro, Director
Adam Goodheart
Heather Harvey
Meghan Grosse
Sean R. Meehan
Kenneth Miller
Patrick Nugent
Joseph Prud'homme
Kenneth Schweitzer
Aileen Tsui
Carol Wilson

Major

- American Studies Major (p. 1)
- Art Major, Art History Concentration (<https://catalog.washcoll.edu/catalog/departments-programs/art-art-history/art-history-concentration/>)
- English Major (<https://catalog.washcoll.edu/catalog/departments-programs/english/english-major/>)

- History Major (<https://catalog.washcoll.edu/catalog/departments-programs/history/history-major/>)
- Music Major (<https://catalog.washcoll.edu/catalog/departments-programs/music/music-major/>)

Minor

- Art Minor (<https://catalog.washcoll.edu/catalog/departments-programs/art-art-history/art-minor/>)
- English Minor (<https://catalog.washcoll.edu/catalog/departments-programs/english/english-minor/>)
- History Minor (<https://catalog.washcoll.edu/catalog/departments-programs/history/history-minor/>)
- Music Minor (<https://catalog.washcoll.edu/catalog/departments-programs/music/music-minor/>)