

# American Studies

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The concentration in American Studies seeks to understand American society and cultures as emerging from historical and contemporary processes at work in local, national, and global contexts. Concentrators study four broad themes: social structure and the practices of identity, space and place, production and consumption of culture, and science, technology, and everyday life. The concentration is predicated on the ideal of scholarly engagement with the public, so students take junior seminars that engage some aspect of the public humanities such as public policy, memorialization, community studies or civic engagement. Study abroad is supported and encouraged.

Interested students may contact the director of undergraduate studies.

A concentrator in American Studies will be able to:

- Analyze texts, contexts, and data from multiple disciplinary and historical perspectives
- Synthesize research as verbal, visual and/or digital presentations
- Explore the theory and/or practice of the engagement of scholarship with a broader public
- Understand how American society and cultures have been and are being shaped by global flows of people, goods and ideas
- Experiment with new media as critical tools for scholarship

Concentrators have gone on to a vast variety of careers, including law, public humanities, politics, public service, academics, business, creative arts, and medicine.

## Requirements for the American Studies Concentration

In consultation with the Concentration Advisor, each concentrator develops an individualized program of study of **10 courses** (or 12 courses for those completing an Honors Thesis). Three of these courses must be linked to an **individual focus** formulated by the student when the concentration is declared. The focus is the flexible core of the concentration: each student builds a coherent and dynamic interdisciplinary cluster of related courses that develops their compelling interest in some aspect of American experience.

### Required concentration courses & capstone portfolio:

- **One gateway course** from the AMST 0600 "Questions" series.
- **Four seminars above the 1000-level, including a Senior Seminar.**
  - The Senior Seminar is any AMST 1900-series course taken during the senior year. Students may take as many AMST 1900 courses as they wish; however, for the course to count as the Senior Seminar it must be taken during the senior year.
  - The three other seminars may be listed in American Studies or Ethnic Studies, or in another department if linked to the student's focus area (requires concentration advisor approval; a maximum of 3 courses outside of AMST/ETHN can count toward the concentration).
- **Five additional elective courses, four of which must be above the 1000-level.** These may be seminars or lecture courses listed in American Studies or Ethnic Studies, or in another department if linked to the student's focus area (requires concentration advisor approval; a maximum of 3 courses outside of AMST/ETHN can count toward the concentration).
- **Senior Capstone ePortfolio (ungraded, detailed below).**
- **Honors Thesis (optional):** Concentrators hoping to pursue honors should take the Honors Seminar, AMST 1800, in the spring of their junior year. AMST 1800 counts as one of the four required 1000-level seminars listed above. Students pursuing honors are also required to take two independent study courses (AMST 1970) in their senior year in order to complete the honors thesis. These independent study courses raise the total number of required concentration courses to 12.

## WHAT we study

American Studies at Brown is concerned with four broad themes:

- Social Structures and the Practices of Identity
- Space and Place
- Production and Consumption of Culture
- Science, Technology, and Everyday Life

## HOW we study

American Studies at Brown emphasizes four intersecting approaches that are critical tools for understanding these themes:

- Cultural and Social Analysis
- Global/International Contextualization
- New Media Understandings
- Publicly Engaged Scholarship

**Courses in the AMST 0600 "Questions" series** introduce students to American Studies by showing how a shared set of core questions can guide the investigation of myriad topics in this interdisciplinary field. Each course in the series engages with at least 3 of the following questions:

1. How does [subject] shed light on issues of identity, place, and power in the United States?
2. How does [subject] reveal contestations over citizenship, culture, and belonging in American society?
3. How does [subject] help us understand histories and practices of social change in the United States?
4. How does [subject] illuminate the international, transnational, or imperial relations that have shaped American politics and cultural practices?