Ethnic Studies

Ethnic Studies is an interdisciplinary, comparative concentration that examines the construction of race and ethnicity in social, cultural, historical, political, and economic contexts. Concentrators develop individual programs based on areas of focus in consultation with faculty advisors, drawing from courses in the humanities and social sciences. Typical areas of focus are social issues (such as inequality, education, or health), cultural production and the representation of racial groups, processes of racialization, the historical formation of transnational communities and of diaspora, and the history of particular ethnic or racial groups.

The Ethnic Studies concentration (https://www.brown.edu/academics/american-studies/ethnic-studies/) at Brown emphasizes the histories of diverse communities and peoples across the United States, including examining issues of diaspora, migration, social movements, and the political economies of social inequality and racial formation. Concentrators strive for intellectual fluency in a range of critical approaches to race and ethnicity across disciplines, and demonstrate this fluency through the composition or creation of a significant piece of original research or creative work.

Brown University established an Ethnic Studies concentration in 1996, originally within the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America (https://www.brown.edu/academics/race-ethnicity/) (CSREA). In the Fall of 2013, as part of changes to the CSREA and to better support students, Ethnic Studies joined a long established Brown department, American Studies (https://www.brown.edu/academics/american-studies/home/). Many American Studies faculty members (https://www.brown.edu/academics/american-studies/people/) work in the areas of ethnicity and have held joint appointments in Ethnic and American Studies while American Studies PhD students (https://www.brown.edu/academics/american-studies/graduate-students/) have done some of the most exciting Ethnic Studies research on campus.

As an academic field, Ethnic Studies is rooted in the protests of the 1960s and 1970s, out which emerged the very first Latino/a Studies, Asian American Studies, African American Studies, and Native American studies programs. Organized around straightforward political goals – the enrichment through diversification of the curriculum and the systematic, multi-disciplinary, and the often comparative study of racial and ethnic inequality – Ethnic Studies has become an important feature of major research universities.

Faculty, both core and affiliated, create and participate in groundbreaking Ethnic Studies scholarship. Areas of faculty research include borderlands history, Latino/a literary studies and visual culture, indigenous movements, migration and African American cultural studies as well as the intersecting fields of gender and sexuality, queer theory and critical race theory. Students can focus their study on specific populations (e.g. Latino/a, Asian Americans) and choose a thematic interest including such current examples as: "social issues affecting radicalized groups" (students have looked at health disparities or educational inequality); "the study of cultural production or cultural representations;" "the theory of a particular racial or ethnic group;" and "the study of comparative processes of racialization.”

Requirements for Students Who Declare Prior to Spring 2021

Total Credits 10

ETHN 1000 Introduction to American/Ethnic Studies 1
Any two courses from the ETHN 1200 "Topics in Ethnic Studies” or ETHN 1750 "Advanced Topics in Ethnic Studies” sequence, or similar electives in AMST, as approved by the advisor 2
Five classes that address the student's focus area and that prepare them for the capstone experience. At least two of these classes must bear an ETHN designation. 5

Total Credits 10

Requirements for Students Who Declare Spring 2021 and Beyond

The concentration requires 10 classes. More specifically, concentrators must take:

ETHN 1000 Introduction to American/Ethnic Studies 1
Any two courses from the ETHN 1200 "Topics in Ethnic Studies” or ETHN 1750 "Advanced Topics in Ethnic Studies” sequence, or similar electives in AMST, as approved by the advisor 2
Five classes that address the student's focus area and that prepare them for the capstone experience. At least two of these classes must bear an ETHN designation. 5

Courses taken toward the fulfillment of concentration requirements must be at or above the 1000 level. At the advisor's discretion, a student may count a single course below the 1000 level towards their requirements. This class must be taught by a core faculty member listed on the department's website and may be offered through another department.

Honors:

Admittance to the Ethnic Studies Honors Program requires:
1. A 3.5 GPA in concentration courses
2. A 3.0 overall GPA
3. The standard concentration (https://www.brown.edu/academics/american-studies/ethn-studies-requirements-prior-7117/)
4. AMST/ETHN 1800 the Honors Seminar in the sixth semester
5. An Honors Thesis Proposal and an application for the Ethnic Studies Honors Program (see below for link to application)
6. Two independent studies, taken in the 7th and 8th semester, with the Director of your honors thesis
7. A completed project, delivered the third week of April if student is a May graduate (the first Monday of December if the student is a May graduate).
   Students completing in December 2020 or May 2021 should refer to the department's site (https://www.brown.edu/academics/american-studies/senior-year-honors-schedule-ay-2020-2021/) for specific dates, adjusted due to the adjusted term schedule.
8. A recommendation for honors from both readers
   Students must define their honors project in a proposal by early May (in accordance with the due dates established in the honors seminar, AMST/ETHN 1800) or near the end of their sixth semester. The proposal is comprised of a five-page, double-spaced project description along with a bibliography of relevant sources. More details on the proposal can be found here (https://www.brown.edu/academics/american-studies/american-studies-honors-thesis-prospectus/).
   This proposal must be submitted for approval to the Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) along with the application for the Ethnic Studies Honors Program form on the same date that it is submitted in the honors seminar. The proposal should identify the problem, or question the student will focus on, and suggest approaches and possible hypotheses or outcomes. Students need to work with two professors — a director and a reader. At least one should be Ethnic Studies faculty. The proposal should name a confirmed director (who must sign your application form) and a likely second reader (who will need to confirm their participation at the beginning of your 7th semester). If a student wants to work with two professors, neither of whom is Ethnic Studies faculty, then they should have a third reader who will read the final draft or consult on the final project and approve it for honors in the field. Students deciding not to do an honors thesis after completing the Honors Seminar will receive credit for the course and still be able to count it as a seminar in the concentration.
   Concentrators studying abroad during the second semester of the junior year, when the Honors Seminar is offered, may waive the Honors Seminar with permission of the DUS prior to the beginning of the senior year. Such a waiver of the Honors Seminar will be predicated on the submission of a detailed plan for the honors project approved by a faculty director with a confirmed second reader submitted to the DUS in the first two weeks of the senior year.
   An updated thesis proposal, confirming a second thesis reader, will be due for all thesis writers within the first two weeks of the senior year. In their seventh and eight semesters, students seeking honors will enroll in an independent study class (ETHN 1910) with their director during which they will follow through on the plan devised in the spring of their junior year. Students and thesis directors should plan on at least a monthly meeting to discuss the research, writing and revision of sections of the thesis. In addition to meeting with their director, students should also plan to meet their second reader during this time. Guidelines for thesis directors and readers can be found here (https://www.brown.edu/academics/american-studies/american-studies-honors-thesis-directors-and-readers/).
   In their eighth semester, the deadline for a finished full draft of their project is the third Friday in April (for May graduates) or the first Monday in December (for December graduates). Students should turn in a pdf of a completed (proofread, formatted, fully written) draft to their readers by that day. Of course, students will turn chapters to the director and reader before that, according to their recommendations, but the third Friday of April (or first Monday in December) is the absolute deadline to turn in a pdf of the final draft.
   A signed and bound copy of the thesis is due to the department one week after submission of the pdf where it will be available for one year and then sent to the Hay Library.

All official readers must recommend the project for honors, indicated by their signature on your cover sheet and the director's written report.
When written as formal research papers, honors theses are generally between 50-100 pages. When there is a creative or public component, students should work closely with their faculty team to determine the appropriate length of the written accompaniment.
Students will make a public presentation of their work to the Ethnic Studies faculty during the first week of May for May graduates and mid December for December graduates.