

American Studies, MA

Learning Outcomes

Students must demonstrate:

- comprehension of the history, values, and methods of interdisciplinary scholarship in the field of American studies;
- knowledge of the multiple forums that exist for the communication, implementation, and praxis of American studies scholarship in social and institutional contexts where diversity, equity, and inclusion are guiding values;
- proficiency in advanced research and scholarly writing skills in the field of American studies;
- ability to articulate one's own intellectual commitments and professional goals within and in relationship to the field;
- hands-on participation in university certificate programs, community-based projects and internships, or digital humanities projects, training in college teaching pedagogy where consistent with their individual development plan; and
- critical thinking, writing, and speaking skills that are central to being an effective teaching assistant in university or college courses numbered in the 1000 range, and creation of a teaching portfolio.

Requirements

The Master of Arts program in American studies requires a minimum of 36 s.h. of graduate credit. Students must maintain a program grade-point average of at least 3.00. The degree generally is offered without thesis; students must petition the director of graduate studies for permission to pursue the thesis option.

Each MA student designs an interdisciplinary field of concentration in consultation with the student's American studies advisor.

The MA with a major in American studies requires the following work.

Course #	Title	Hours
AMST:5000	Interdisciplinary Research in American Cultures (taken twice in consecutive years)	6
	Two graduate seminars in American studies	6
	Five courses in the interdisciplinary field of concentration	15
	Electives	9
	MA portfolio	
Total Hours		36

Each student must complete a portfolio or thesis. The portfolio includes a research paper, faculty evaluations for all courses taken during the student's first full year of graduate study, and a self-evaluation essay.

The research paper is a graduate seminar paper that demonstrates a student's skills as a research scholar and writer and represents the student's strongest work. The paper should be 25-30 pages, including a bibliography.

The self-evaluation essay summarizes the American studies methods and materials that have shaped the student's interdisciplinary work in the field and states how the master's degree work in American studies has contributed to, challenged, or complicated the student's goals and ambitions beyond the degree.

Students assemble the MA portfolio under the guidance of their advisors and should submit it no later than Dec. 1 of their third semester in residency. The portfolio is evaluated on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory (S/U) basis by a three-person American studies faculty committee. Students whose portfolio receives a U may resubmit the portfolio during their fourth semester of residency.

For students who wish to continue their education with doctoral study, the MA portfolio serves as the application for admission to the PhD program in American studies. The department informs applicants whether they have been accepted into the PhD program by the end of the fall semester in which they submit their MA portfolio; admission is contingent upon successful completion of the MA during a student's fourth semester of residency.

Thesis Option

As an alternative to the portfolio, students may complete a master's thesis. Students planning to write a thesis should inform their advisor as early as possible, and at least one or two semesters in advance of graduation. A thesis involves interdisciplinary research and analysis, and represents an original contribution to knowledge. In most cases, the thesis is a 50-75 page manuscript. However, students may propose alternatives to the traditional form, provided they have the dissertation committee's approval and complete a memorandum of understanding with the director of graduate studies in American studies.

The thesis will be assessed by a committee composed of a student's advisor and two other faculty members. The thesis is distributed to the committee at least two weeks ahead of an oral defense.

Admission

Applicants must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College; see the Manual of Rules and Regulations on the Graduate College website.

Career Advancement

American studies students' career goals are as varied as the topics they study. Graduates are well prepared for careers in a wide range of areas, such as business, education, arts and museum administration, government, journalism, or social services.

The program also provides a good foundation for graduate studies in the humanities, the social sciences, theology, and business as well as for professional studies in law or medicine.

Academic Plans

Sample Plan of Study

Sample plans represent one way to complete a program of study. Actual course selection and sequence will vary and should be discussed with an academic advisor. For additional sample plans, see MyUI.

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Course	Title	Hours
Academic Career		
Any Semester		
36 s.h. must be graduate level coursework; graduate transfer credits allowed upon approval. More information is included in the General Catalog and on department website. ^a		
Hours		0
First Year		
Fall		
AMST:5000	Interdisciplinary Research in American Cultures ^b	3
	Interdisciplinary Field of Concentration course ^c	3
	Interdisciplinary Field of Concentration course ^c	3
Hours		9
Spring		
	American Studies seminar course ^d	3
	Interdisciplinary Field of Concentration course ^c	3
	Elective course ^e	3
Hours		9
Second Year		
Fall		
AMST:5000	Interdisciplinary Research in American Cultures ^b	3
	American Studies seminar course ^d	3
	Interdisciplinary Field of Concentration course ^c	3
Hours		9
Spring		
	Interdisciplinary Field of Concentration course ^c	3
	Elective course ^e	3
	Elective course ^e	3
	Final Exam ^f	
Hours		9
Total Hours		36

a Students must complete specific requirements in the University of Iowa Graduate College after program admission. Refer to the Graduate College website and the Manual of Rules and Regulations for more information.

b Take twice in consecutive years.

c Each student designs an interdisciplinary field of concentration which consists of at least five courses (15 s.h.). Work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate graduate coursework.

d Work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate graduate seminars.

e Work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate graduate elective coursework.

f Completion of an MA portfolio, which includes a research paper, faculty evaluations for all courses taken during the student's first full year of graduate study, and a self-evaluation essay.