

American Studies, MA

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 is generally offered without a 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 for 3 s.h. each)	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.