

Requirements: American Studies

Interdisciplinary

The American Studies Program provides a broad framework for the exploration of the people, places, societies and cultures of the United States and other regions of the world known as the Americas. It encourages students to explore issues of "American" identity and culture from both within and outside the American continents. As an interdisciplinary field, American studies accomplishes this by employing complementary theories, ideas and methodologies from multiple disciplines to create a comprehensive, holistic understanding of what "America" is as well as what it means to be "American." The program trains its students to see and analyze America through the lens of cultural artifacts and emphasizes exploration through fieldwork research experiences, collaborative community partnerships, public presentation and peer evaluation.

The American Studies Program, while providing flexibility and independence in course selection, nonetheless requires students to be intellectually curious, inventive and academically disciplined in the development and articulation of their topical or thematic focus as reflected in their six-course plan detailing the field of concentration within their major course of study.

The Kenyon College faculty voted to change from Kenyon units to semester hours. This change will go into effect for all students who start at the College in the fall of 2024. Both systems will be used throughout the course catalog with the Kenyon units being listed first.

Requirements for the Major

The major in American studies requires students to successfully complete 12 courses:

AMST 108 Introduction to American Studies

All majors take an introductory course in American studies. This course is normally taken during the first or second year at Kenyon. In lieu of the Introductory course, titled and numbered as such, majors may substitute a first-year seminar or another such course when approved by the chair of the program.

Four Diversification Courses

Two courses must be from history:

AMST 101D/HIST 101D: U.S. History, 1492–1865*

AMST 102D/HIST 102D: U.S. History, 1865 to Present*

HIST 120: Early Latin America*

HIST 121: Modern Latin America*
HIST 175: Early Black History*
HIST 176: Contemporary Black History*
HIST 205: Hard Times: The Great Depression*
HIST 208: U.S. Women's History*
HIST 209: History of North American Indians*
HIST 215: Reel or Real, History and Film*
HIST 218: History of Mexico*
HIST 242: Americans in Africa*
HIST 275: World War II*
HIST 307: Great African American Migration: 1900–1970
HIST 310: The Civil War*
HIST 311: Immigrant Experience in the United States*
HIST 312: Blacks in the Age of Jim Crow*
HIST 313: Black Intellectuals*
HIST 314: U.S. Foreign Policy, 1898 to the Present*
HIST 321: The Mexican Revolution: Origins, Struggles and Significance *
HIST 322: Human Rights in Latin America*
HIST 323: Borderland History*
HIST 325: History of North American Capitalism*
HIST 360: Corn, Farming and the Roots of American Cultures*
HIST 373: Women of the Atlantic World*
HIST 375: American Indian Activism and Red Power*
HIST 380: Black History through Fiction and Film*
HIST 400: American Revolution*
HIST 407: Manhood/Masculinity in U.S. History*
HIST 411: The Civil Rights Era*
HIST 412: Race, Politics and Public Policy*
HIST 426: Fight For The Great Lakes, 1492–1815*

AP U.S. history credit may be used to satisfy one of the two courses and must be paired with a second American history course. Examples are marked by an asterisk.

Two courses must be from politics, culture and society; examples include:

AMST 200D/PSCI 200D: Liberal Democracy in America
AMST 209: American Visual Culture
AMST 227D/ARHS 227D: American Art to 1900
AMST 302D/MUSC 302D: The History of Jazz
AMST 314: The History of American College and University Architecture
AMST 330: Sankofa Project: Theory and Practice of Urban Education
AMST 331: Visions of "America" from Abroad
AMST 350: Religion in American Popular Culture
ARHS 229: Race and Modern Art

ARHS 231: Cold War Modern Art
ARHS 245: Contemporary Art and Society
ECON 343: Money and Financial Markets
ECON 347: Economics of the Public Sector
ECON 358: The Federal Reserve System
ECON 383: American Economic History
ENGL 273: Latino/Latina Literature and Film
ENGL 274: Hope and Hate: Reading Race and Reconstruction
ENGL 280: American Literary Modernism
ENGL 283: Unlearning Native America
ENGL 286: Transgressive Friendships in American Literature
ENGL 288: African-American Literature
ENGL 373: 19th-Century U.S. Women Writers
ENGL 375: U.S. Fiction in the 19th Century: Domestic Sensations
ENGL 378: Race in the 19th-Century Literary Imagination
ENGL 379: Environmental Regionalism: Literatures of the Mississippi River Valley
ENGL 380: Early American Literatures
ENGL 381: Another America: Narratives of the Hemisphere
ENGL 385: Contemporary American Poetry
ENGL 386: Toni Morrison
ENGL 390: Black Women Writers
FILM 253: American Film Comedy
FILM 254: The Western
FILM 256: African American Film
PSCI 300: Congress and Public Policymaking
PSCI 301: The American Presidency
PSCI 302: Public Opinion and Voting Behavior
PSCI 303: Campaigns and Elections
PSCI 310: Public Policy
PSCI 313: Making U.S. Foreign Policy
PSCI 315: Gender and Politics in the U.S.
PSCI 328: American Constitutional Law I
PSCI 329: American Constitutional Law II
PSCI 355: Immigration, Citizenship and National Identity
PSCI 441: Latin American Politics in Film and Fiction
PSCI 442: Contemporary Latin American Politics
PSYC 328: Latino Psychology
RLST 130: Religion and Society in America (U.S.)
RLST 135: African Spirituality in the Americas
RLST 242: African American Religions
RLST 295: Islam in North America
RLST 312: God's Money: Charity, Philanthropy and the Poor
SOCY 101: Powers, Energies and Peoples
SOCY 104: Identity in American Society

SOCY 106: Social Issues and Cultural Intersections
SOCY 107: Institutions and Inequalities
SOCY 226: Sociology of Law
SOCY 229: Social Movements
SOCY 236: Popular Culture: Window on Inequality
SOCY 238: Environmental Sociology
SOCY 240: Sociology of Crime and Deviance
SOCY 244: Race, Ethnicity and American Law
SOCY 255: Women, Crime and Law
SOCY 277: Sociology of Sexualities
SOCY 385: Du Boisian Sociology
SOCY 422: Topics in Social Stratification
SOCY 424: Vigilantism and the Law

American studies at Kenyon views America in its broadest sense. Thus, it is recommended that students choose one course from a group of courses that examine America beyond the confines of the United States. For example, see [Latino/a studies](#).

Six courses of elective study

Six courses from a single area, discipline or set of disciplines that form a coherent program in American studies. A [required major areas form \(PDF\)](#) must be completed and submitted to the Registrar's Office, indicating the courses for elective study. Examples of such areas:

- Writing and literature
- Race and ethnicity
- History and society
- Politics and economics
- African American studies
- Women's studies
- Law and society
- Landscape and the environment
- America in a global context
- Visual arts
- Sex, gender and sexualities
- Latin American studies
- Education studies

Many other areas of focus are possible. The American studies major highly recommends a course in advanced theory or methodology, feminist criticism, or intersection theory that could inform the student's major focus. The elective study program undertaken by the student requires approval of the chair of the American Studies Program. At least two courses must be at the 300 or 400 level.

As in many interdisciplinary programs that offer a relatively limited number of cognate courses each year, the majority of courses taken to satisfy the requirements are offered through one or more contributing majors and programs at the College. The division or department in which the courses are offered isn't important; whether the course counts depends solely upon whether there is sufficient content about "American" identity, culture or experience to justify its inclusion. Similarly, courses taken while studying off-campus must meet this threshold. There is no limit on the number of such courses that can be considered. The program encourages its students to study abroad and recommends that students take courses that explore and reflect upon America through international and global perspectives.

AMST 400 Senior Seminar in American Studies

This one-semester advanced seminar is taken during either fall or spring of the senior year. The "Senior Seminar" may be thematic or focus upon methodologies; it typically entails individual research and public presentation.

The Senior Capstone

The Senior Capstone in American studies may take several forms, but it must draw on the elective-study component of the major. Students must identify and then develop, through original research and creative presentation, a major theme central to their work in American studies. By the final Friday in September, majors in American studies present their plans for the Senior Capstone to their advisors and to the program chair.

AMST 401 (The Senior Colloquium in American Studies) is taught spring semester, and all senior majors are required to take it in the years when it is offered. In addition to promoting guided reflection on the students' journey through the major, the course is designed and intended to encourage students to workshop ideas and give feedback to one another on their final projects. This course is a 0.25-credit/no credit offering. The "Senior Seminar" and "Senior Colloquium" may be offered in alternating years; seniors must take the colloquium in lieu of the "Senior Seminar" in the years when only the colloquium is offered.

The capstone itself will have three parts:

- A presentation (visual, oral, electronic) to the College public, including majors and faculty in American studies along with a substantial annotated bibliography of sources discovered and utilized in constructing the presentation
- A 10-page written reflection paper that includes analysis, explanation and documentation of the work presented as well as its relationship to the student's American studies major
- An oral response to the audience's questions and comments following the presentation

The Senior Capstone is presented no later than the last Friday in April. Any student who does not successfully complete the capstone must submit a 20-page research paper and bibliography by the first day of exams.

Honors

AMST 497Y-498Y (Honors in American Studies) entails a two-semester, one-unit sequence of independent work integral to the elective-study program in the major, taken during the senior year. The program results in an honors project that may take a variety of forms but includes a written component, a public presentation or performance, and an oral interview with an external examiner. Students with an overall GPA of 3.33 and a GPA of 3.5 in the major by the end of the second semester of their third year become eligible to submit a proposal to pursue honors, but grade-point averages that meet these thresholds are not sufficient alone for admission to the Honors Program. For acceptance into the Honors Program, students must be nominated by an American studies faculty member. After the recommendation, a formal proposal containing a statement of intent, a tentative bibliography and a project outline must be sent to the project advisor and the chair of the American Studies Program for approval by April 1. The faculty teaching in the program will consider each application and decide whether to allow a student to pursue honors.

Requirements for the Concentration

The American Studies Concentration encompasses six courses of work, consisting of three components:

- One introductory course, AMST 108 Introduction to American Studies
- Four courses in curricular options
- Senior Seminar or Senior Colloquium

Students may choose among several pathways that fulfill the curricular options requirement. To obtain a list of specific courses that fall under these categories, students should consult the chair of the American Studies Program.

Public presentation on a research topic is a key element of the American Studies Program. Thus, senior concentrators are expected to participate in the oral presentation component of the Senior Seminar or Senior Colloquium. Courses required for a student's major cannot count toward completion of the American Studies concentration requirements.

Students who are considering the concentration should consult with the chair of American studies before enrolling in courses.

Courses in American Studies

United States History, 1100–1865

AMST 101D Credits: 0.5/4

This course is the same as HIST 101D. This course must be taken as HIST 101D to count toward the social science diversification requirement. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to United States history from the 12th century to the mid-19th century. Students will gain a more developed understanding of American history by examining the interactions among diverse cultures and people; the formation and use of power structures and institutions throughout the Colonial, Revolutionary and Antebellum eras; and the processes behind the "Americanization" of the North American continent. Central to this course is a comparison between two interpretations of American history: a Whiggish, or great American history, and the more conflict-centered Progressive interpretation. Not only will students gain a general knowledge of this time period, they also will understand the ways in which the past can be contextualized. Students are expected to understand both the factual basis of American history as well as the general interpretive frameworks underlying historical arguments. This counts toward the history requirement for the major. No prerequisite.

United States History, 1865–Present

AMST 102D Credits: 0.5/4

This course is the same as HIST 102D. This course must be taken as HIST 102D to count toward the social science diversification requirement. This course is a thematic survey of the United States from the end of the Civil War to the present. Students will examine the transformation of the United States from a rural, largely Protestant society into a powerful and culturally diverse urban/industrial nation. Topics will include constitutional developments, the formation of a national economy, urbanization and immigration. The course also will discuss political changes, the secularization of public culture, the formation of the welfare state, World War I, World War II, the Cold War, and the Vietnam War as well as suburbanization, the civil rights movement, women's and gay rights, and the late 20th-century conservative politics movement and religious revival. This counts toward the history requirement for the major. No prerequisite.

America and The '60s: An Introduction to American Studies

AMST 108 Credits: 0.5/4

This course introduces students to the principles of American studies through the exploration of American history and culture during the long 1960s. We explore a range of thematic topics that may include, but are not limited to, civil rights, women's liberation and the counterculture. Guest lectures, films and student presentations complement the course and students are asked to engage actively in its development. Open only to first-year and sophomore students. This interdisciplinary course does not count toward the completion of any diversification requirement. No prerequisite. Offered every year.

Liberal Democracy in America

AMST 200D Credits: 0.5/4

This course is the same as PSCI 200D. This course must be taken as PSCI 200D to count toward the social science diversification requirement. The course explores the guiding principles, major institutions and national politics of the American political system. The Founders' view of liberal democracy and of the three branches of our government (presented in the "Federalist Papers") will provide the basis for consideration of the modern Supreme Court, presidency, bureaucracy, Congress, news media and political parties and elections. The course concludes with Tocqueville's broad overview of American democracy and its efforts to reconcile liberty and equality. The themes of the course will be illustrated by references to current political issues, events and personalities. This course counts toward the politics, culture and society requirement for the major. Sophomore standing. Concurrent enrollment in PSCI 102Y is required. Offered every year.

American Visual Culture

AMST 209 Credits: 0.5/4

This course examines visual culture in the United States from the late nineteenth century to the present day. We will analyze a variety of cultural artifacts, including fine art, film, commercial design, advertising, and popular culture. Major topics considered include the relationship between high and low culture, the role of mass media in American society, and the persistence of folk traditions in everyday life. We will also address how museums and public monuments and memorials define national identity. Other major issues include the evolving representation of race, class, gender, and war. Finally, we will examine American visual culture in an international context. This course is cross-listed in Art History and counts toward an intermediate course in the art history major. This counts toward the culture and society requirement for the major. No prerequisite.

Soul Culture

AMST 221 Credits: 0.5/4

What is the meaning of soul? Is it more than just a musical genre? Is it a black thing? Is it American? Students in this course examine the expressive forms of soul: in music, film, fashion, religion, literature and food. Soul's popularity is certainly linked to the Black Power era, but it also has its own temporalization — a "post-soul" era. Key to our exploration, then, is a historical grounding in American race, class and gender politics during the latter half of the 20th century. While much of our focus is on the United States, the global circuits of soul also figure prominently in our study. Listening and feeling are key to meaning-making in this course, and prompt discussions around (dis)ability. The course builds on approaches from "Introduction to American Studies": the circuit of culture, artifactual analysis and close reading of cultural texts.

This counts toward the politics, culture and society requirement for the major. Prerequisite: AMST 108. This interdisciplinary course does not count toward the completion of any diversification requirement.

American Art to 1900

AMST 227D Credits: 0.5/4

This course is the same as ARHS 227D. This course must be taken as ARHS 227D to count toward the fine arts diversification requirement. This course addresses art produced in North America between colonialization and 1900. Students will examine the development of art within a broad social context by exploring the relationship between visual culture and race, gender and class. Specific topics will include genre and landscape painting, prints and photography, and the influence of European art academies. We will also address the relationship between art and slavery, war and industrialization. This counts toward the politics, culture and society requirement for the American studies major. Prerequisite: ARHS 111 or AMST 108.

The History of Jazz

AMST 302D Credits: 0.5/4

This course is the same as MUSC 302D. This course must be taken as MUSC 302D to count toward the fine arts diversification requirement. The most fascinating thing about jazz is its vitality. Jazz remains today what it has been since its inception: an art form of intense personal expression in the context of collaborative improvisation. This course is a social and stylistic investigation of the history of jazz, from its African American origins up to the present. Progressing chronologically, students will use a variety of sources to investigate the development and influence of the main jazz styles and musicians upon the jazz scene. Prerequisite: MUSC 101 or placement by exam. Offered every other year.

Race, Education, and Student Rebellion

AMST 321 Credits: 0.5/4

Why is education often at the center of struggles for racial justice? Do students of color on college and high school campuses face political obstacles today that are comparable to those of the 1960s? What does it mean when political leaders and public intellectuals say, "education is the civil rights issue of our generation?" In this seminar, we will examine the interplay of race and education in student protest traditions in the U.S. Students can expect to interrogate representations and expressions of youth culture, sites of student rebellion, and systems of power in educational institutions. Specific topics of study will include Critical Race Theory, civil rights and black power, anti-war protests, sexual assault on college campuses and issues of access to higher education for undocumented students. As a topic of inquiry in American studies, students in this seminar will engage "in provocative thinking about the contradictions of

U.S. ideals and lived realities” through interdisciplinary measures. No prerequisite. Offered every other year.

Sankofa Project: Theory and Practice of Urban Education

AMST 330 **Credits: 0.75/6**

This course introduces students to the major theoretical writings about education—Dewey, Kozol, Ravitch and Freire. We inquire about the "global achievement gap" and "cultural literacy" and interview teachers from a broad range of educational backgrounds — public, private, parochial and charter. The seminar meets weekly and students engage during the week in Moodle discussions about issues raised in the readings. Students also will have a participant-observer experience in a public high school, with an introductory day in early January break and a week-long residency the second week of spring break. Credits given only for attending all components of the course. Permission of instructor required. Junior standing. This interdisciplinary course does not count toward the completion of any diversification requirement.

Visions of "America" from Abroad

AMST 331 **Credits: 0.5/4**

America is the great, ongoing experiment of modernity, a nation thoroughly structured by all that is considered new in the Western world: liberal democracy, science, technology, industry and capitalism. The colonization of America by Europe led to the status of the United States as a laboratory for political, social and artistic theories which otherwise may never have been attempted. At the same time, the rest of the world has often looked at the United States from a critical, even adversarial perspective. As recent history has shown, America is not just a European obsession, but increasingly finds itself today in a multilateral geopolitical environment. The Sept. 11 attacks were a brutal awakening for many Americans to the hostility that exists in parts of the world against U.S. foreign policy, and against the identity of American citizens. Is such hostility related to the European ambivalence toward America, or is it an entirely new phenomenon, with separate historical and intellectual roots? What new insights do the critiques from non-European regions contribute to an understanding of America's relationship to the rest of the world? Each week, we will examine texts that center on a particular theme of European-American intellectual relations, the emerging and complex relationship between Islam and America, the longstanding tension with Latin America, and critiques of American-style modernity from Japan. Among the European texts studied are works by Bartolomé de las Casas, Alexis de Tocqueville, Friedrich Nietzsche, Simone de Beauvoir, and Jean Baudrillard. Middle Eastern authors include Osama bin Laden, Jalal Al-i Ahmad, and Sayyid Qutb. Among the Latin American authors are Fidel Castro, Eduardo Galeano, and Che Guevara. From Japan, they include Keiji Nishitani and Shunya Yoshimi. We also will view and discuss several films by directors such as Godfrey Reggio and Adam Curtis. This counts toward the major in French (track II or track III) when pre-arranged with Professor Guiney. This counts toward an elective for

the political science major. No prerequisite. This interdisciplinary course does not count toward the completion of any diversification requirement.

Religion in American Popular Culture

AMST 350 **Credits: 0.5/4**

The relationship between religion and popular culture in America is multifaceted. Religious themes in popular culture, popular cultural portrayals of American religions, the use of popular cultural forms as vehicles for the expression of religious values, the celebration of religious emotions and the embrace of cultural expressions as forms of religious devotion all contribute to this relationship. This course will explore these facets, looking at a cross-section of Hollywood films, television shows and music videos, various subgenres of popular music, sports, news media and cyberculture. Our study will be guided by academic texts, videos, images and samples of music from several genres. Previous studies in American and/or religious studies is recommended. No prerequisite. Offered every other year. This interdisciplinary course does not count toward the completion of any diversification requirement.

Topics in American Art

AMST 378D **Credits: 0.5/4**

This course is the same as ARHS 378D. This course must be taken as ARHS 378D to count toward the fine arts diversification requirement. This course explores specific problems in American art and architecture. Topics include Modernism and the Great Depression, World War II and Abstract Expressionism and the relationship between art and politics broadly speaking. When possible, students will utilize regional museum collections. Assignments will include seminar reports, class discussion and a research paper. This course can be repeated up to two times for credit, so long as they cover different topics. Prerequisite: ARHS 111, 227D, AMST 109 or equivalent.

Senior Seminar in American Studies

AMST 400 **Credits: 0.5/4**

The course will provide a setting for advanced guided student work in American studies. Students will work collaboratively to assist one another in the development of individual research projects that represent the synthesis of the six courses they have crafted for the major in American studies. The course is required of all American studies senior majors and concentrators. Permission of instructor required. No prerequisite. Offered every other year in rotation with Senior Colloquium.

Senior Colloquium in American Studies

AMST 401 Credits: 0.25/2

This credit/no credit colloquium will serve as a capstone, so-called professional seminar (“pro sem”), in which the students will engage in a guided reflection about the field of American studies, focusing upon both content (i.e. American culture and experience) and distinctive approaches to investigating those things considered “American.” During the first half of the semester, students will invite scholars in the field and alumni to visit class to discuss how the field has shaped their professional careers and perspectives. Class sessions will be directed at student final research projects. The major portion of the semester will involve the formal public presentations of their research projects as well as critiques of presentations given by classmates. The colloquium will count toward the units of elective study. Offered as a final collaborative learning experience for American studies majors. Permission of instructor is required. Offered in rotation with the Senior Seminar.

Individual Study

AMST 493 Credits: 0.25-0.5/2-4

Individual study is an exceptional opportunity available to junior or senior majors who find that the ordinary course offerings at Kenyon do not meet their needs for the major. Individual study will ordinarily be taken for 0.5 units of credit. Students must have the approval of the department chair in order to apply to enroll in an individual study. Students must present a detailed reading list and syllabus, including a schedule of assignments/projects and due dates, to the American studies faculty member with whom they choose to work. The faculty member who agrees to supervise and direct the individual study will confirm the syllabus and schedule in writing to the director of the program. The student project must culminate in a public presentation.

Senior Honors Project

AMST 497Y Credits: 0.5/4

The Honors Program in American studies entails a two-semester sequence of independent work integral to the elective-study program in the major, taken during the senior year. Students enrolled in this course will be automatically added to AMST 498Y for the spring semester. Permission of instructor and department chair required. This interdisciplinary course does not count toward the completion of any diversification requirement.

Senior Honors Project

AMST 498Y Credits: 0.5/4

The Honors Program in American studies entails a two-semester sequence of independent work integral to the elective-study program in the major, taken during the senior year. Permission of instructor and department chair required. This interdisciplinary course does not count toward the completion of any diversification requirement.

Concentration

Courses that meet the requirement for this concentration:

PSCI 354 Latinos in American Democracy