

Requirements: American Studies

Interdisciplinary

American studies provides a broad framework for the exploration of the people, places, society and culture of the United States. The field accomplishes this by appropriating ideas and methodologies from one discipline and applying them to another, and by transcending established boundaries among disciplines to create a new structure that combines traditional values and new visions. The program incorporates fieldwork research experiences, collaborative exploration, public presentation and peer evaluation.

American studies is a selective major requiring intellectual independence that includes developing a six-course plan detailing the trajectory of your course of study in the major.

Requirements for the Major

The major in American studies consists of six (6) units:

AMST 108 Introduction to American Studies – half (0.5) unit

This course is normally taken during the first or second year at Kenyon

Two (2) units of diversification courses

One (1) unit must be from history:

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

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

One (1) unit must be from politics, culture and society:

AMST 109 American Art and Culture, 1900–1945

AMST 200D/PSCI 200D Liberal Democracy in America

AMST 227D/ARHS 227D American Art to 1865

AMST 302D/MUSC 302D The History of Jazz

AMST 314 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

ENGL 270 American Fiction

ENGL 280 American Literary Modernism

HIST 175 Early Black History

HIST 176 Contemporary African American History

HIST 208 Women in American History

HIST 209 History of North American Indians

HIST 360 Corn, Farming and the Roots of American Cultures

HIST 375 American Indian Activism and Red Power

HIST 380 Black History through Fiction and Film

HIST 411 The Civil Rights Era

HIST 426 Culture Clash in North America, 1492–1812

PSCI 301 The American Presidency
RLST 230 Religion and Society in America (U.S.)
RLST 332 African American Religions
SOCY 229 Social Movements
SOCY 244 Race, Ethnicity and American Law
SOCY 255 Woman, Crime and Law

It is recommended that students choose a half (0.5) unit from a group of courses listed in the Latino/a Studies Concentration. See [Latino/a Studies](#).

Three (3) units of elective study

Six courses from a single area, discipline or set of disciplines that form a coherent program in American studies. Examples of such areas would be:

- 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

Many other areas of focus are possible including a track in education studies. 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 director of the American Studies Program. At least one (1) unit must be at the 300 or 400 level.

The Senior Seminar (0.5 unit)

A one-semester seminar usually taken during the spring of the senior year. The senior seminar will typically entail 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, identifying and then developing, through original research and creative presentation, a major theme that the student has identified as central to his or her work in American studies. By the final Friday in September, majors in American studies will present their plans for the Senior Capstone to their advisors and to the program director.

The capstone itself will have three parts:

- a presentation (visual, oral, electronic) to the College public, including selected majors and faculty in American studies
- a 10-page written analysis, explanation and documentation of the work presented

- an oral response to the audience following the presentation

The Senior Capstone will be presented no later than the last Friday in April of the spring semester.

Honors

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 (AMST 497Y–498Y). The program will result in an honors project that may take a variety of forms but shall include 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 become eligible for admission to the Honors Program during the second semester of their third year.

To enter the Honors Program, students must be nominated by an American studies faculty member. Following 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 director of the American Studies Program for approval by April 1.

Requirements for the Concentration

The American Studies Concentration encompasses three (3) units of work, consisting of three components:

- Half (0.5) unit introductory course, AMST 108
- Two (2) units in curricular options
- Half (0.5) unit senior seminar

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

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 director of American studies before enrolling in classes.

Cross-Listed Courses

The following course is cross-listed in the art history department offerings and can satisfy the fine arts requirement when it is taught by a member of the art history faculty:

AMST 109 American Art and Culture, 1900–1945.

Courses in American Studies

AMST 101D United States History, 1100-1965
Credit 0.5

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. This course is the same as HIST 101D. No prerequisite.

AMST 102D United States History, 1865-Present
Credit: 0.5

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. This course is the same as HIST 102D. No prerequisite.

Instructor: Coulibaly

AMST 108 Introduction to American Studies
Credit: 0.5

This course introduces students to the principles of American studies through the exploration of American history and culture through an examination of the 1900's. We will explore the nature of American society in that critical period through the study of the race relations, women and gender, music and youth culture. Guest lectures, films and student presentations complement the course and students will be asked to engage actively in its development. Open only to first-year and sophomore students. Juniors need permission of instructor. No prerequisite. Offered every year.

Instructor: Gourrier

AMST 109 American Art and Culture, 1900-1945
Credit: 0.5

This course will focus upon the visual culture of the United States in the first half of the 20th century. Employing an American studies interdisciplinary model, we will look at visual imagery within a broad cultural context — in relationship to film, literature, history and politics. In so doing, we will explore such questions as: What constitutes an American identity in the first half of the 20th century? How does the notion of cultural nationalism help construct such identities? What are the points of intersection between European and American modernism and modernity? How does race impact modern American expression? Finally, what is the relationship between art, politics and social activism during these years? This course is cross-listed in the Department of Art and Art History and counts as an intermediate course in the Art History major. Open only to first-year and sophomore students. Offered every other year. No prerequisite.

Instructor: Porter

AMST 110 August Wilson and Black Pittsburgh
Credit: 0.5

The great African American playwright August Wilson set his cycle of plays in Pittsburgh's once-dynamic neighborhood, the Hill. Students will read a series of Wilson's plays, including Joe Turner's "Come and Gone," "The Piano Lesson," and "Fences," and locate them in time and place in African American history. This course is for first-year students with AP or KAP credit in American history or American studies and a critical aspect of the course will be a three-day fieldwork experience in the Hill district of Pittsburgh. Permission of instructor required. No prerequisite.

Instructor: Rutkoff

AMST 200D Liberal Democracy in America
Credit: 0.5

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 is the same as PSCI 200D. Prerequisite: sophomore standing or PSCI 101Y or permission of instructor. This course counts towards the Politics, Culture and Society requirement for the major. Offered every year.

AMST 227D American Art to 1900
Credit: 0.5

This course presents an overview of painting, sculpture and architecture from colonial times to 1900. It frames the development of American art and architecture within a broad sociohistorical context and addresses many of the issues pertinent to American studies.

The following questions, among others, will be addressed in the course: Does American culture have a single, identifiable character? How have Americans reconciled their uneasy relationship with European culture? How have American political values, such as freedom, liberty and democracy, informed the cultural expression of the 18th and 19th centuries? This course is the same as ARHS 227D. This counts as an intermediate-level course for the art history major and satisfies the modern art major requirement. Prerequisite: ARHS 111, AMST 109 or equivalent. Offered every other year.

Instructor: Porter

AMST 302D The History of Jazz

Credit: 0.5

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 investigate through a variety of sources the main jazz styles and musicians and their development and influence upon the jazz scene. Prerequisite: MUSC 101 or placement by exam. This course is the same as MUSC 302D. Offered every other year.

Instructor: Buehrer

AMST 314 The History of American College and University Architecture and Planning

Credit 0.5

College and university campuses, from picturesque Gothic and Georgian wonderlands to the starkly modern and utilitarian assemblages of more recent years, have long been a source of fascination for Americans. They play a large role in the romantic ideal of college life, they evoke images of privilege or openness, and they increasingly are seen as a sales tool by marketers. If we look beyond the most superficial aspects of campuses, though, their physical appearances can reveal a great deal about an institution's history, its goals and philosophy, even its relative place in the nation's higher-education hierarchy. This course will look at a variety of campuses and campus types — urban, suburban and rural; public and private; old and new — and end with a class project involving development of an ideal campus. Permission of instructor required. No prerequisite. Offered every spring semester.

Instructor: Stamp

AMST 330 Sankofa Project: Theory and Practice of Urban Education

Credit: 0.75

This course will introduce students to the major theoretical writings about education—Dewey, Kozol, Ravitch and Freire. We will inquire about the "global achievement gap" and "cultural literacy" and interview teachers from a broad range of educational backgrounds

— public, private, parochial, charter. The seminar will meet weekly, and students will engage during the week in Moodle discussions about issues raised in the reading. 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. Prerequisite: junior standing

Instructor: Rutkoff

AMST 331 Visions of America from Abroad
Credit: 0.5

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 our nation's status as a laboratory for political, social and artistic theories which otherwise may never have been attempted. More and more nations are looking at the U.S. with ambivalence. As recent history has shown, America is not just a European obsession. U.S. ties to Europe have weakened in the last few decades, and the U.S. now finds itself in a more multilateral geopolitical environment. The Sept. 11 attacks were a brutal awakening for many Americans to the hostility that exists in parts of the world, not only against U.S. foreign policy but against the identity of the American people. Is such hostility related to the European ambivalence toward America, or is it a new phenomenon, with separate historical and intellectual roots? This course will be conducted as a seminar. Each week, we will examine texts and films that center on a particular theme of European-American intellectual relations, the emerging complicated relationship between Islam and America, and the longstanding tension with Latin America. Among the texts of European writers included in the seminar are works by Alexis de Tocqueville, Jean Baudrillard, Simone de Beauvoir and Bernard-Henri Lévy. The texts of Middle Eastern writers include works by Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri and Sayyid Qutb; among the Latin American authors are Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. We also will view and discuss several films by directors such as Wim Wenders, Aki Kaurismäki, Jean-Luc Godard and Charlie Chaplin. This can count toward the major in French (modern languages or area studies) under certain conditions to be arranged with Professor Guiney. This also counts as an elective in political science. No prerequisite.

Instructor: DePasquale

AMST 350 Religion in American Popular Culture
Credit: 0.5

The relationship between religion and popular culture in America is multifaceted. It includes 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 and the celebration of religious emotions and the embrace of cultural expressions as forms of religious devotion. This course will explore all these facets of the relationship, 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 the reading of academic texts on the topic, viewing of videos and images, and listening to samples of music from several genres. Previous studies in American and/or religious studies will be beneficial. No prerequisite. Offered every other year.

Instructor: Edmonds

AMST 378D Topics in American Art
Credit 0.5

This course will explore 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 counts as an advanced course for the Art History major. This course is the same as ARHS 378D. Prerequisite: ARHS 111, 227D, AMST 109 or equivalent. Offered every other year.

Instructor: Dabakis

AMST 381 Senior Seminar in American Studies
Credit 0.5

The course will provide a setting for guided student advanced work in American studies. The participants 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.

AMST 493 Individual Study
Credit 0.5

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 may be taken only for 0.5 units of credit. Students must have the prior approval of the department chair in order to apply to enroll in an individual study. The student 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. The overall evaluation is a combination of student self-evaluation and faculty assessment of the student's performance, both of which will be reported to the department chair along with the final grade assigned in the course. Because students must enroll for individual studies by the end of the seventh class day of each semester, they should begin discussion of the proposed individual study preferably the semester before, so that there is time to devise the proposal and seek departmental approval before the registrar's deadline.

AMST 497 Senior Honors Project

Credit: 0.5

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 department chair required.

Instructor: Rutkoff

AMST 498Y Senior Honors Project

Credit 0.5

See the description for AMST 497Y.

Instructor: Rutkoff

Additional Courses that Meet the Requirements for this Concentration:

SPAN 380: Cultural Productions of the Borderlands