

# AMERICAN STUDIES

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## American Studies Department:

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## The Study of American Studies

The Center for American Studies offers students the opportunity to explore the experiences and values of the people of the United States as embodied in their history, literature, politics, art, and other enduring forms of cultural expression. The Center views civic education as its primary mission, sponsoring seminars and public programs that enhance students' understanding of the fundamental ideas and vocabulary of public discourse in American culture, history, and politics. The Center is the institutional home of the American Studies program, which offers an interdisciplinary, seminar-based curriculum designed to be open and flexible while preparing students for a life of active citizenship.

## Student Advising

Each American Studies major or concentrator chooses an academic adviser who monitors their progress through graduation. Students work with advisors to develop programs tailored to their particular interests. Advisors approve Plan of Study forms and provide general guidance regarding the major and concentration. Each student is expected to meet with an advisor at least once a semester.

## Undergraduate Research and Senior Thesis

### Senior Research Project

The final requirement for the major in American Studies is completion of a senior essay, to be submitted in the spring of senior year.

Alternatively, students may fulfill this requirement by taking an additional seminar in which a major paper is required or by writing an independent essay under the supervision of a faculty member. Seniors who wish to do a senior research project are required to take the Senior Project Colloquium in the fall of their senior year.

## Department Honors and Prizes

### Department Honors

Students with a 3.6 minimum GPA in the major and an outstanding senior project are considered for honors. Normally, no more than 10% of graduating majors receive departmental honors in a given year.

## Academic Prizes

- Best Senior Thesis in American Studies
- Shenton Award; Outstanding Community Service

## Seminar Faculty

- Jeremy A. Dauber
- Lynne Breslin
- Ryan Carr
- Casey N. Blake
- Andrew Delbanco
- Hilary A. Hallett
- Michael Hindus
- Roger Lehecka
- Paul Levitz
- Mark Lilla
- Thai S. Jones
- John H. McWhorter
- Valerie Paley
- Robert Pollack
- Ross Posnock
- Cathleen Price
- Benjamin Rosenberg
- James Shapiro
- Maura Spiegel

## Affiliated Faculty

- Rachel Adams (English and Comparative Literature)
- Robert Amdur (Political Science)
- Courtney Bender (Religion)
- George A. Chauncey (History)
- Racquel Gates (Film and Media Studies)
- Farah Jasmine Griffin (English and Comparative Literature)
- Frank A. Guridy (History)
- Richard R. John (Journalism)
- Ira I. Katznelson (Political Science and History)
- Rebecca A. Kobrin (History)
- Michele M. Moody-Adams (Philosophy)
- Mae Ngai (Asian American Studies and History)
- Ross Posnock (English and Comparative Literature; American Studies)
- Shana L. Redmond (English and Comparative Literature)
- James Shapiro (English and Comparative Literature)
- Michael J. Witgen (History)

## Guidance for Undergraduate Students in the Department

### Program Planning for all Students

Students may choose American Studies as an undergraduate major or a concentration. A minimum of 9 courses is required to complete the major, and 7 courses to complete the concentration. Coursework for both

consists of a combination of required courses (see degree requirements below) and an individualized program of study.

Although students generally declare their major or concentration in the spring of their sophomore year, you may want to take electives early on in areas that interest you but that will later connect with the American Studies major.

## Undergraduate Programs of Study

### Major in American Studies

A minimum of nine courses is required to complete the major. Please note that as of 2025, Major requirements have changed. Please consult with the department if you have any questions.

#### One American Studies Core course:

AMST UN1010: Introduction to American Studies.

#### Two seminars in American Studies

**Four Additional Courses** from other departments, including one course in American history before 1865 and one America-focused course in CSER or AAADS.

#### Senior Research Project:

The final requirement for the major in American Studies is completion of a senior thesis, for which students enroll in the Senior Thesis seminar in the fall and the spring of their senior year. Alternatively, students may fulfill this requirement by taking both an additional course and an additional seminar requiring a major paper.

### Minor in American Studies

A minimum of five courses is required to complete the minor. Minors will be required to take the core introductory course required for Majors, one American Studies seminar, and three additional courses:

#### One American Studies Core course

Minors are required to take the core lecture course AMST UN1010 INTRO TO AMERICAN STUDIES

This course is an interdisciplinary exploration of the values and cultural expressions of the people of the United States from the Puritans to our own time. Students will examine a variety of works in literature, history, and cultural criticism, with an eye to understanding how Americans of different backgrounds, living at different times and in different locations, have understood and argued about the meaning and significance of American national identity. Lectures and readings will give particular attention to the sites—real and imagined—where Americans have identified the promise and perils of American life. Two lectures each week and a required weekly discussion section.

#### One seminar in American Studies

Chosen from among the 3000-level AMST seminars. Normally, eight or nine seminars are offered each semester.

Recent offerings include:

The Supreme Court in American History  
Shakespeare in America  
American Jewish Literature  
Freedom and Citizenship in the United States  
Douglass and Lincoln  
Gender History and American Film  
American Cultural Criticism

#### Immigrant New York

The Problem of Class in American Literature and Culture  
A Tale of Two Cities: New York, San Francisco, and Urban Identity  
Tocqueville: The American Mind  
Race, Poverty, and American Criminal Justice  
Equity in Higher Education  
Museums, Memory, and American Public Culture  
Hollywood's Cinema of the 1970s  
Languages of America  
The Graphic Novel (AMST UN 3933)  
Journalism and Democracy: The 2024 Election (AMST UN3937)

#### Additional Courses

In addition to the introductory course and one American Studies seminar, every Minor is required to take three additional courses on American history, culture, or politics. As with our Majors, these courses can be drawn from a wide range of departments. All courses must be approved by the student's American Studies advisor. A representative list includes:

AFAS UN1001, Introduction to African American Studies  
CSER UN3940, Comparative Study of Constitutional Challenges  
ENGL UN2826, American Modernism  
ENGL BC3180, American Literature, 1800-1870  
ENGL BC3183, American Literature Since 1945  
ENGL UN3241, African American Literature: The Essay  
ENGL UN3351, The Family in Film and Memoir  
ENGL UN3832, New York Intellectuals  
HIST UN1488, Indigenous History of North America  
HIST UN1512, The Battle for North America  
HIST UN2432, U.S. Era of Civil War and Reconstruction  
HIST UN2523, Health Inequality: Modern U.S.  
HIST UN2533, U.S. Lesbian and Gay History  
HIST UN2535, History of the City of New York  
HIST UN2540, History of the South  
HIST UN2565, American History at the Movies  
HIST UN2587, Sports and Society in the Americas  
HIST UN2679, The Atlantic Slave Trade  
HIST UN3501, Indians and Empires in North America  
HIST GU4518, Columbia University and Slavery  
HIST GU4933, American Radicalism in the Archives  
POLS UN1201, Introduction to American Politics  
POLS UN3100, Justice  
POLS UN3213, American Urban Politics  
POLS UN3222, The American Congress  
POLS UN3255, Race and the U.S. Carceral System  
POLS UN3290, Voting and American Politics  
RELI UN1612, Religion and the History of Hip Hop  
RELI GU4217, American Religions in Extremis  
SOC UN3265, The Sociology of Work and Gender

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## For students who entered Columbia in or before the 2023-24 academic year

### Concentration in American Studies

A minimum of 7 courses is required to complete the concentration. Please consult with the department if there are any questions.

#### Two American Studies Core courses.

The following are ordinarily required:

AMST UN1010	INTRO TO AMERICAN STUDIES
HIST UN2478	US INTELLECTUAL HIST 1865-PRES
or AMST UN3930	Topics in American Studies

Please note, the AMST UN3930 section MUST be Freedom and Citizenship in the U.S. to count towards the core course requirement

#### Additional Courses

Select five additional courses drawn from at least two departments, one of which must be in History, and one of which must deal with the period before 1900.

#### AMST UN3920 SENIOR PROJECT COLLOQUIUM. 1.00 point.

Required for American studies students who intend to do a senior research project

This course is for American studies majors planning to complete senior projects in the spring. The course is designed to help students clarify their research agenda, sharpen their questions, and locate their primary and secondary sources. Through class discussions and a workshop peer review process, each member of the course will enter spring semester with a completed bibliography that will provide an excellent foundation for the work of actually writing the senior essay. The colloquium will meet every other week and is required for everyone planning to do a senior research project. Application due June 15. See American Studies website

Spring 2026: AMST UN3920

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
AMST 3920	001/16895	W 12:10pm - 2:00pm 317 Hamilton Hall	Jeremy Dauber	1.00	0/15

#### AMST UN3930 Topics in American Studies. 4 points.

Please refer to the Center for American Studies website for course descriptions for each section. [americanstudies.columbia.edu](http://americanstudies.columbia.edu)

Fall 2026: AMST UN3930

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
AMST 3930	001/12231	Th 2:10pm - 4:00pm Room TBA	Casey Blake	4	0/18
AMST 3930	002/12232	M 6:10pm - 8:00pm Room TBA	Benjamin Rosenberg	4	0/18

#### AMST UN3935 The Native Northeast. 4.00 points.

This course provides an interdisciplinary perspective on Native peoples of present-day New York and New England and their interactions with colonial empires (French, Spanish, British, US). Most of the reading will be by Native authors. In order to provide a firm historical foundation for understanding the dynamics of Indigenous and colonial history our emphasis will be on the period between European settlement and the nineteenth century. Coverage will not be exhaustive; there are too many Native nations in this region for that to be possible. Our focus rather will be on major turning points in Native history which have become flashpoints for controversy among scholars and in the broader public sphere: the relationship between Native nations and Pilgrims, King Philip's War, the so-called Indian Great Awakening, and others. The course will cover topics in literary and religious history, politics, law, and anthropology, and should appeal to students in any of those fields, while providing an introduction to the history and methods of Indigenous Studies

#### AMST UN3941 Democracy and De-Democratization, Theory and Practice: The American Case. 4.00 points.

The concepts of democratic backsliding, regime cycles (between oligarchy and populism, democracy and dictatorship), hybrid regimes and reverse waves, were devised with regard to newly democratized and/or insufficiently institutionalized democratic regimes. Yet today even long consolidated, wealthy western democracies seem to be at risk. This course will focus on the case of the United States. While domestic and external threats to American constitutional democracy are not new, there is widespread concern today that both liberal constitutionalism and American democracy are at grave risk. Our inquiry will involve an in-depth study of the political theory and American politics literature on the relevant concepts and dynamics. In the first part of the course, we will discuss the basic concepts and theories regarding democracy, oligarchy, constitutionalism and regime cycles developed in classical and early modern political thought. The second part of the course will focus on the U.S., the oldest constitutional representative democracy and typically deemed the exemplar of a successfully consolidated democratic regime. We analyze the processes, dynamics, reversals and limits to democratization in the US focusing on key tipping points from the founding to the present. Our focus will be on four sets of factors and modes of explanation for the relevant shifts: constitutional, political, socio-cultural, and economic. We conclude with analysis of the contemporary conjuncture and current threats to American constitutional democracy