

American Studies

The American Studies Program offers a major and minor. Students in American Studies investigate the diverse experiences, values, and cultural traditions that have made the United States what it is today. In other words, we explore what makes American tick. Courses pursue questions that have intrigued and challenged Americans and that have attracted worldwide attention: what are the origins of American social practices, values, thoughts, creative expressions, popular culture, political commitments, cultural understanding, and perceptions of themselves and each other? Why has the United States pursued its domestic and international paths? How is this country distinctive and what traits does it share with other parts of the world? What brings Americans together and what pulls them apart? How are American lives shaped by race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, ability, region, religion, and ideology?

Students use perspectives from many fields, including history, literature, sociology, anthropology, psychology, politics, religion, the arts, business, and the natural sciences to gain a comprehensive understanding of the varieties of American experiences and their relation to our increasingly complex and interconnected world. Study in this program complements the work of many other academic disciplines and gives students a deep understanding of American culture and history that they can apply to their post-college lives. The program has a long history, originating with the establishment of the Charles E. Merrill Department of American Studies in 1955, one of the first American Studies departments in the country. As an interdisciplinary program, American Studies at Stetson carries on this tradition of inquiry.

More information can be found online at <https://www.stetson.edu/artsci/american-studies/>.

Learning Outcomes

Student learning outcomes describe what students know, understand and are able to do as a result of completing a degree program. The learning outcomes for this program are:

1. Identify and analyze key ideas and patterns of social life in American culture past and present, especially in the last five centuries
2. Use the concepts, methods, and contexts of many disciplines alongside the interdisciplinary insights of American studies itself to understand American culture
3. Understand the diversity of peoples, ideologies, and cultural practices and texts that have shaped American culture
4. Use their knowledge of the American past to analyze the contemporary United States
5. Develop critical thinking abilities and strong oral and written communication skills

Minors

Minor in American Studies - 5 units

Code	Title	Units
One AMST unit at the 100 or 200 level		1
AMST 301B	American Cultural Traditions (Can be used as an H course)	1

One other unit with AMST-prefix or AMST-Attribution; see Interdisciplinary Areas in Class Search. ¹

Minor Focus Area of two units related to a common theme chosen by the student from at least two academic areas. Can include non-AMST-Prefix courses, and must be approved by the program director. ¹

Total Units 5

¹ Of the 1 other AMST unit and the 2 Focus Area units, at least one should be at the 300-level or above.

Advising Course Plan

Advising Course Plans

American Studies Major (<https://catalog.stetson.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/american-studies/american-studies-plan/>)

Plans for Transfer Students and Students Changing Their Major

American Studies Major

- 3 Year Plan (<https://catalog.stetson.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/american-studies/american-studies-3yr-plan/>)
- 2 Year Plan (<https://catalog.stetson.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/american-studies/american-studies-2yr-plan/>)

Courses

AMST 101B. American Cultural Identities. 1 Unit.

This course is an introduction to the interdisciplinary American Studies Program. It provides first steps into key components of the Program: thinking across and making use of diverse disciplines, and area study of the places and cultures that would become the US. In short, this course offers a 'user's guide' for citizenship and for future work in the United States.

AMST 151A. American Popular Culture. 1 Unit.

This course studies different popular culture forms and practices, such as television, music, film, advertising, and holiday rituals, with the goal of understanding how popular culture expresses the cultural, social, and political issues of its time period. Students learn different critical approaches and questions for studying each type of text and consider how these forms function aesthetically, emotionally, and culturally to make meaning in their times.

AMST 154V. Introduction to American Environmental Issues. 1 Unit.

This course focuses on Stetson's Environmental Responsibility Value. This course will introduce students to environmental history and contemporary political debates on the environment. The class emphasizes the history of the landscape, the rise of ecological thinking, the relation of environmental issues to different disciplines and to diverse ideological orientations, and the challenges of implementing environmental goals. In short, the course wrestles with two questions: How did the United States arrive at its contemporary environmental situation, and what are the best next steps?.

AMST 185. Independent Study. 0.5 or 1 Units.

Opportunities for students to propose topics of inquiry based on compelling interest and faculty expertise. Student read, research, and write based on an approved plan and with regular meetings with the faculty member.

AMST 190. Special Topics in American Studies. 0.5 or 1 Units.

May be repeated for credit. Courses offered on particular topics in American Studies, depending on faculty and student interest.

AMST 255H. American Consumer Culture. 1 Unit.

This course studies American consumer culture from the nineteenth century to the present, taking an interdisciplinary approach to understanding how consumerism has shaped American culture, society, and institutions past and present. Students will integrate a historical understanding of American consumer practices and ideology with analysis of contemporary consumer artifacts, spaces, and experiences. Cross-listed as HIST 255H.

AMST 256B. The 1950's and 1960's. 1 Unit.

This course studies American cultural history during this period of intense transformation, including political and social movements, representative leaders, and everyday life. The hotly debated issues of these years, especially the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, and Women's roles in society, establishes precedents and camps of ideological commitment that still shape the politics and cultural of the twenty-first century. Cross-listed as HIST 256B.

AMST 285. Independent Study. 0.5 or 1 Units.

Opportunities for students to propose topics of inquiry based on compelling interest and faculty expertise. Student read, research, and write based on an approved plan and with regular meetings with the faculty member.

AMST 290. Special Topics in American Studies. 1 Unit.

May be repeated for credit. Courses offered on particular topics in American Studies, depending on faculty and student interest.

AMST 290V. Civil Rights Travel Course. 1 Unit.

This course focuses on Stetson's Social Justice Value. It will introduce students to major aspects of the Blackled movement for civil rights in the 1950s-60s American South. It consists of a period of classroom learning followed by a week of travel to historically significant sites of struggle for racial justice (and social justice more broadly). Students will connect this movement with present-day struggles for social justice. Depending on the instructor, the course may primarily consider this movement from the perspective of, for example, religion, ethics, law, politics, social movement organizing, the arts, and/or intersections of race with gender and/or class. But the overarching topic will remain this civil rights movement as a case-study of how marginalized communities transform society to more fully realize justice. Permission of Instructor required.

AMST 294B. The Art of Public Explanation. 1 Unit.

This course will combine academic inquiry and workshop practice to increase student understanding of the history of the public sphere and its contemporary cultural challenges, while providing a platform for students to develop their own public voices for presenting and exploring key issues of our times. Writing Enhanced course.

AMST 301B. American Cultural Traditions. 1 Unit.

What are the origins of contemporary American cultural values and debates? The course will use representative themes and stories from colonial contact to the present, on topics including politics, religion, gender and race relations, scientific and intellectual ideas, medicine, and popular culture, giving students an understanding of how the United States has arrived at present circumstances and what to expect of future trends. Course materials include primary and secondary sources in print and digital form; class time will include background lectures, discussions, group work, and experiential activities; and this work will support each student's final research paper. Writing enhanced course. Can be used as an "H" course. Cross-listed as HIST 366B.

AMST 305. Internship in the Mexican American Community. 1 Unit.

This course has an extremely practical orientation. It was conceived in the hope of providing substantial "real world" exposure for Stetson students to both the Spanish language and Mexican American culture through work with our local community of farm workers. The 8 hours of internship work each week will be complemented by reading text about a Mexican American migrant family, an e-mail journal, and a final term paper. Permission of Instructor required.

AMST 310. Topics in American Art. 1 Unit.

A specialized study of selected topics in the history of American art. The course may be repeated with different content (e.g., Nineteenth Century American Landscape, Modernism in American Art). Cross-listed as ARTH 310.

AMST 320H. American Women's History. 1 Unit.

This course studies the history of American women. Focusing primarily on the period from the nineteenth century to the present, the course stresses the variety of women's experiences, make race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality key topics. Other themes include: home and work, the female body, and women's activism. Writing enhanced course. Cross-listed as HIST 362H.

AMST 325V. Beauty and Body in American Culture. 1 Unit.

This course focuses on Stetson's Health and Wellness value. This course studies attitudes about the body in American culture, past and present. We will look at how ideas about beauty and the body have changed over time and how those ideas intersect with forms of power in American culture, with concepts of national identity, with consumer culture, and with various identities including age, race, class, and gender. Topics may include: body-building, diet and exercise trends and fads, ideal body images for women and men, cosmetic surgery, and beauty pageants.

AMST 330. The Multicultural United States. 1 Unit.

In order to illuminate American efforts to wrestle with cultural diversity over time, students will study theories of racial and ethnic difference, sexual identity and gender since the colonial period. They will apply these critical concepts to case studies of American diversity, which may include African American, Asian American, European American, Latino American, Native American, and gay and lesbian experiences. The course also examines the debates over academic theories of multiculturalism itself.

AMST 340. Lives in Context. 1 Unit.

This course uses the life of one person who has played a significant role in American culture, past or present, as a lens for examining the cultural trends, conflicts, and changes of that person's times. Topics will change from year to year.

AMST 350V. Social Responsibility in U.S.. 1 Unit.

This course focuses on Stetson's Social Justice value. Focusing on the period from the nineteenth century to the present, the class investigates conceptions and practices of social responsibility in the United States, particularly those oriented toward addressing inequities rooted in race and socio-economic class. The course focus is two-fold: understanding the meanings of social responsibility at different points in time, and analyzing the ways different types of social activists have given this concept meaning through their social justice work. Junior Seminar.

AMST 354B. Southern History and Culture in the United States, 1800-Present. 1 Unit.

This course examines the history and myriad cultures of the U. S. South from the nineteenth century to the present. In particular, the class focuses on how conceptions of Southern identity have developed and changed over time, on the role of historical memory in shaping understandings of Southern identity and the Southern past, and on the diverse peoples, ideals, and values that have shaped the Southern experience. Cross-listed as HIST 354B. Writing enhanced course.

AMST 355V. History of American Science and Religion: Darwinism and the Devine in American Culture. 1 Unit.

This course focuses on Stetson's Ethical and Spiritual Inquiry Value. Charles Darwin's theory of species development has been a flashpoint for controversy between religious and scientific outlooks on the world. Using Darwinism and the Devine as the most significant aspect of science to appear regularly in social thought and political debate, this course will examine the religious beliefs, scientific theories, and cultural values that have emerged in a wide range of interactions between science and religion from the nineteenth century to the present. Cross-listed as HIST 355V. Junior Seminar.

AMST 356H. History of American Health Care. 1 Unit.

Health care is at once an intimate part of private life and an issue of education, academic research, ideological values, civic culture, economics, and public policy. How have Americans managed the medical dimensions of their lives? This course will explore the role of scientific medicine, alternative healing, diverse cultural and ethnic traditions, gender roles, tensions between secular and religious outlooks, intellectual expertise, and marketplace dynamics since the nation's founding. Writing enhanced course. Can be used as an H Course. Cross-listed with HIST 356H.

AMST 359V. Gender, Sexuality, and Reality in Media. 1 Unit.

This course focuses on Stetson's Human Diversity Value. A critical examination of nonfiction media in American culture, including documentary film, memoir, and reality television, considering how it is constructed and what it communicates about sex, gender, and sexuality. Can be used as a J course. Junior Seminar. Cross-listed with COMM 359V. Junior Seminar.

AMST 363V. Political Campaigns and Cultural Ideologies in Recent U.S. History, 1960-Present. 1 Unit.

This course focuses on Stetson's Social Justice Value. The arena of political choices at election time is a major setting for American citizens to make choices about the distribution of power and about policies to achieve social justice. This seminar will examine political campaigning in the United States with particular attention to the history of American elections, political ideologies, recent values orientations, social concerns, cultural polarization, and media coverage of the candidates and the campaigns active during the semester the course is being taught. Cross-listed as HIST 363V. Junior Seminar.

AMST 368. Off-Campus Course. 1 Unit.

Courses involving travel or connected to study abroad offered in particular topics in American Studies, depending on faculty and student interest.

AMST 385. Independent Study. 0.5 or 1 Units.

Opportunities for students to propose topics of inquiry based on compelling interest and faculty expertise. Student read, research, and write based on an approved plan and with regular meetings with the faculty member.

AMST 390. Special Topics in American Studies. 1 Unit.

May be repeated for credit. Courses offered on particular topics in American Studies, depending on faculty and student interest. Prerequisites may be required for upper-level topics offerings.

AMST 395. Teaching Apprenticeship. 0.5 Units.

Pass/Fail only. American studies majors or minors who qualify with outstanding scholarship may be invited to assist the faculty in teaching an introductory course. Apprentices' responsibilities include assisting in class discussions, making presentations, consulting with students outside of class, and reading on pedagogy or course topics. By permission of the instructor. May be repeated once. Pass/fail only.

AMST 397. Internship in American Studies. 1 Unit.

Opportunities for students to gain work experience, test their vocations in particular professions, and make contacts in a particular field of work. Internship opportunities might include experience at area historic sites, media organizations, or museums. Setting, structure, requirements, and outcomes are negotiated with the instructor, but generally include relevant readings, 70 (0.5 unit) or 140 (1 unit) hours of work, and written work documenting and analyzing the internship experience. Letter graded or pass/fail. Internship Orientation: Some majors or internship courses may require completing the internship orientation before starting your course. This orientation is offered asynchronously via Canvas. Please contact your Faculty Internship Course Instructor for details.

AMST 485. Independent Study. 0.5 or 1 Units.

Opportunities for students to propose topics of inquiry based on compelling interest and faculty expertise. Student read, research, and write based on an approved plan and with regular meetings with the faculty member.

AMST 490. Special Topics in American Studies. 1 Unit.

May be repeated for credit. Courses offered on particular topics in American Studies, depending on faculty and student interest. Prerequisites may be required for upper-level topics offerings.

AMST 499. Senior Project. 1 Unit.

This course takes students through the preparation and production of an extended, focused research paper on a topic of the student's choosing. The class includes meetings with faculty and other students to discuss interdisciplinary research approaches, writing strategies, and the student's specific topic. The class culminates in a lengthy written thesis and includes a public presentation of students' work.