Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies

The Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies represents the study of the United States as an academic field with its own theories, methods, and applications. The program benefits from Penn State Harrisburg’s location in a capital region with internationally known heritage sites and American Studies resources such as the Gettysburg Battlefield, Three-Mile Island, the towns of Hershey and Steelton, the Anthracite Coal Region, and Amish Country. The program emphasizes critical cultural inquiry and the application of American Studies to public heritage, public policy, and cultural resource management — including governmental work, museums, cultural agencies, education, archives and records management, public policy, and communications. A foundation for this application is an understanding of the American experience developed within the intellectual legacy of American Studies.

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Program Website: https://harrisburg.psu.edu/am-studies

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Middletown, PA 17057
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harrisburg.psu.edu
Curriculum
Students progress through the following phases and take courses designated by their doctoral committee:

Candidacy
In this initial phase, the student must (1) make up any deficiencies in graduate courses in American Studies noted in the letter of acceptance; (2) complete with a grade of B or better the following courses — AM ST 500 (Theory and Method), AM ST 591 (Seminar), and TWO SECTIONS of AM ST 502 (Problems in American Studies); and (3) pass a candidacy examination based on these four courses. Admitted students who have met all course prerequisites begin the core courses with AM ST 500 (Theory and Method). Students who have already taken AM ST 500 within three years of admission may begin their program of study with AM ST 502 (Problems in American Studies).

Visit for complete details.

Testimonials
I can say, without exaggeration, that my pursuit of American Studies at Penn State-Harrisburg transformed my life. The content of the courses provided me with the knowledge and skills I needed for work in the arts. My instructors shared their learning and perspectives with me and my fellow students with a remarkable mix of scholarly passion and personal rapport.

Matt Singer
Senior Museum Writer and Communications Officer, Philadelphia Museum of Art

Courses
- AM ST 500 THEORY AND METHODS (3) Introduction to graduate work in American Studies through exploration of the approaches, materials, and interpretations of the field.
- AM ST 502 PROBLEMS IN AMERICAN STUDIES (3 – 6) A variable-content course, addressed each term to a specific problem, topic, or period in American culture.
- AM ST 510 U.S. LITERATURE AND CULTURE (3) Studies exploring the relationship between literature and culture in American Studies
- AM ST 511 PIVOTAL BOOKS (3 – 9 per semester) Exploration of a number of books which have been particularly influential in shaping thinking about American civilization.
- AM ST 520 TOPICS IN POPULAR CULTURE (3) A detailed exploration of aspects of American popular culture, including the relationship to society and scholarship.
- AM ST 530 TOPICS IN AMERICAN FOLKLORE (3) A detailed exploration of aspects of folklore and folklife in America.
- AM ST 531 MATERIAL CULTURE AND FOLKLIFE (3) A detailed investigation of American material culture and folklife.
- AM ST 533 AMERICAN CIVILIZATION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (3 – 9 per semester) Detailed investigation of specific topics in eighteenth-century American civilization.
- AM ST 534 AMERICAN CIVILIZATION IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY (3 – 9 per semester) Representative interdisciplinary investigation of social, historical, economic, and aesthetic forces predominant in nineteenth-century America.
- AM ST 535 AMERICAN CIVILIZATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY (3 – 9 per semester) Detailed investigation of specific periods or topics in twentieth-century American civilization.
- AM ST 540 ETHNOGRAPHY AND SOCIETY (3) Ethnographic theories, methods, and case studies emphasizing current controversies and new strategies in field work.

Visit for complete details.

Program Requirements for Admission

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<th>Requirements</th>
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<td>GPA</td>
<td>Successful applicants with an M.A. typically have a GPA of 3.5 or above (on a 4.0 scale) in their graduate work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Applicants must hold a master's degree in American Studies, or a related field emphasizing American cultural scholarship and public heritage work such as history, English, sociology, political science, folklore, cultural studies, performance studies, ethnic studies, gender studies, communications, art history, museum and library studies, education, and cultural resource management.</td>
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<td>Supporting Materials</td>
<td>✓ Scores from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). ✓ Three reference letters attesting to academic and professional capabilities. (At least two letters should be from academic sources, such as professors or advisers). ✓ A letter of 500 to 1000 words outlining significant scholarly and applied experience, career goals, commitment to American Studies as a field, and academic objectives. ✓ A recent personal vita. ✓ A paper from a graduate course taken previously or publication demonstrating research and compositional skills.</td>
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Application Deadline

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<th>Semester</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>January 15</td>
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*GRE* scores are required for scholarships and assistantships.