

Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies

Emphasizing the interdisciplinary study of American society and culture, coursework and hands-on experiences provide students with the knowledge and analytical skills to thrive in teaching and administrative roles in colleges, universities, and high schools; governmental and public policy agencies; museums, cultural organizations, and archives; and communications venues.



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PennState
Harrisburg

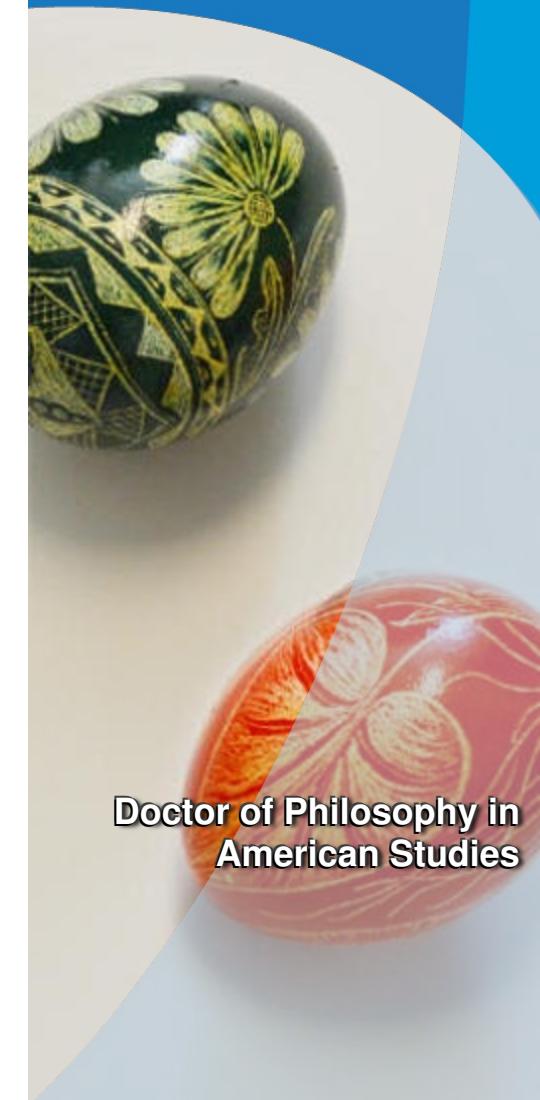
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PennState
Harrisburg

School of Humanities



Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies

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 Overview

The American studies Ph.D. program prepares students for teaching, research, and leadership in universities and schools, museums, historic sites, archives, and communications venues, and governmental and public policy agencies. Students who plan to teach at the post-secondary level enroll in Effective College Teaching (AMST 502), which provides a guided experience in designing their own class. Experiential learning is embedded in courses such as Public Heritage (AMST 550) and Ethnography and Society (AMST 540). Students often undertake internships at museums, archives, and governmental organizations to expand their experiences and hone career choices. Many Ph.D. students choose to complete the Graduate Certificate in Public Heritage and Museum Practice or the Graduate Certificate in Folklore and Ethnography .

The program allows students to focus on a broad range of interests and specialties. Foundational courses include AMST 500, which offers advanced preparation in American studies theories and methods, and AMST 591, which prepares students to devise, research, and write their dissertation. Many students elect to take some or all of the semester-long courses covering American Culture in the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries (AMST 533-536).

Topical courses allow students to focus on American literature, material culture, folklore and ethnography, and environmental history, among other areas. Numerous other classes provide additional perspectives on issues such as gender, race, ethnicity, and class in America. Material culture courses include Cultural Landscapes and American Decorative Arts and Material Culture (both, AMST 570). Robust offerings in American Folklore and Ethnography include Material Culture and Folklife (AMST 531). Doctoral candidates work closely with faculty members to identify, research, and complete their dissertations (AMST 601).

For course descriptions and requirements, see the [University Bulletin](#).

Program Requirements for Admission

Requirements	More Information
GPA	Successful applicants with an M.A. typically have a GPA of 3.5 or above (on a 4.0 scale) in their graduate work.
Education	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.
Supporting Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ 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.

Application Deadline

Semester	Deadline
Fall	January 15

*[GRE](#) scores are only required for certain funding packages.