

American Studies

Learning Goals

1. To understand the development of American cultures in various historical contexts.
2. To situate U.S. national cultures and communities within a global context.
3. To competently utilize the theories and methods of American studies.
4. To apply critical reading skills to various media and types of texts.
5. To culturally and historically contextualize a range of identity categories (e.g., race and ethnicity, gender, disability, sexuality, and class).
6. To complete a substantial independent research project.

About the major

The program in American studies offers students the chance to delve into an interdisciplinary field that is united by both an object of study—American culture—and a mode of inquiry that moves beyond the scope of any single disciplinary approach. Marked by an interplay between cultural history and the examination of diverse creative forms, social analysis, and critical theory, American studies explores primary sources and asks how they might be understood in the broader contexts of aesthetic traditions, political power, and cultural beliefs. While the American studies curriculum is varied in topic and approach, each student in the major will develop a thematic concentration that gives their studies conceptual coherence. These concentrations are popular culture, race and ethnicity, artistic and intellectual traditions, space and place, and cultural politics.

American studies faculty specialize in a range of subjects and methodologies, including literature, anthropology, history, art history, and communication studies. The American studies curriculum is further enriched by cross-listing courses with other departments, including religion, history, film and media culture, and English and American literatures.

“The major gave me the opportunity to learn methods and insights from a range of disciplines, which gave me a deep understanding of American history and culture. It was the perfect gateway to understanding how the U.S. fits into the larger world when I headed to Washington, D.C., to work on Capitol Hill.”

—Elizabeth Robinson '84
Associate Dean, Middlebury College

Reasons you might choose this major

- You would like to develop the skills to think critically about the place of the United States in the world.
- You are interested in integrating different kinds of study to understand American cultures, past and present.
- You want to learn more about the cultural history of the U.S., from music and material culture to social justice movements and mass media.
- You would like to challenge common wisdom about the meanings of America and Americanness.
- You want to cultivate skills central to a wide range of careers.



Translating Learning into Professional Competencies

Throughout your time at Middlebury, you will develop and enhance the following core professional competencies, skills, and dispositions highly valued by employers that will prepare you for leadership and success in any given field:

Critical Thinking: Exercise sound reasoning to analyze issues, make decisions, and overcome problems.

Oral/Written Communications: Articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively in written and oral forms.

Teamwork/Collaboration: Build collaborative relationships with colleagues and customers from diverse backgrounds.

Leadership: Leverage the strengths of others to achieve common goals, and use interpersonal skills to coach and develop others.

Professionalism/Work Ethic: Demonstrate personal accountability and effective work habits.

Global/Intercultural Fluency: Value, respect, and learn from diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, sexual orientations, and religions.

Digital Technology: Leverage existing digital technologies ethically and efficiently to solve problems, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.

Career Management: Identify and articulate one's skills, strengths, knowledge, and experiences relevant to career goals, and identify areas necessary for professional development.

Where American studies majors go

Applying your learning through internships . . .

Students pursue internships and research in a variety of fields, enabling them to apply their liberal arts learning in real-world settings. Internships, research, and self-directed projects enrich your academic experience and help prepare you for life after Middlebury. Students have interned or done research at the following:

Legislative Affairs Office of Governor Phil Murphy

National Baseball Hall of Fame
December Magazine

Carolyn Jenks Literary Agency

Sports Illustrated

Witnify.com

Newswire21

Center for Democracy and Technology

US Department of Education

Atonal Sports and Entertainment

US Commission on International Freedom

J.P. Morgan Chase & Co.

Endeavor Global

U.S. Embassy, Lisbon

Center for Urban Health Equity at Rush University Medical Center

The Smithsonian Institution

Washington Office on Latin America

Bet Tzedek Legal Services

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Consortium on Gender, Security, and Human Rights

. . . leading to meaningful, dynamic, and engaging career paths.

See just some of the many interesting ways our graduates have applied their liberal arts learning to engage the world. If you want to see what other Middlebury alumni are doing now, log into Midd2Midd and search by major. go/midd2midd

Horizon Pictures, *President, Director*

Sword and Plough, *Creative Director*

APL Renewables, *Director, Business Development*

Art Institute of Chicago, *President*

J.P. Morgan Chase & Co., *Managing Director, Global Head of Alternative Investments*

Mystic Seaport, *Director of Museum Education and Outreach*

MIT Sloan School, *Director, Leadership Center*

The Wilderness Society, *Senior Communications Director*

Shutterstock Inc., *Senior VP and Chief Marketing Officer*

Sports Illustrated, *Senior Editor*

Physician, *Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center*

Twitter Inc., *Manager, Public Policy for U.S. and Canada*

Boys & Girls Clubs of America, *Director, Corporate and Cause Partnerships*

Global Consultancy Services, *Vice President, Consulting Services*

Cadre Noir Imports, *Cofounder and Partner*

Philadelphia Charters for Excellence, *Founding Executive Director*

Center for American Progress, *Director for East and Southeast Asia*

House Oversight Committee, *Counsel*

MAC Cosmetics, *Director, Global Artist Training and Development*

New York Yankees, *Senior Advisor, Finance and Business Analytics*

Logmein, *Senior Vice President, Corporate Strategy*

USAID, *Needs Assessment Analyst*