Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies

The Ph.D. is a research degree awarded to students who demonstrate not only a mastery in the discipline of American Studies but also by the ability to carry out independent research and to present the results of such research in a scholarly manner. Students are required to enter the American Studies program with a committed first-year advisor.

Concentrations and Supporting Areas of Interest

Doctoral students in the American Studies program must declare both a concentration and a supporting area of interest. The supporting area of interest is a thematic field, for example, Native American Studies, Technology and Culture, or Women's Studies; this requirement is met by 9 credits of coursework and successful completion of comprehensive exams. Concentration requirements are met by 12 or more credits of coursework; students must choose from the following concentration options:

- American Arts - America's visual and performing arts have shaped the substance of American culture from America's founding moments through the present. MSU faculty have expertise in the history of American media, theater, painting, sculpture, and music as well as more specialized mastery of the theoretical underpinnings of these disciplines.
- American History - MSU has internationally recognized strengths in American history and its faculty offer courses from America's colonial period through the present. Many of the Department of History and Philosophy's courses are synchonic and diachronic and therefore serve as perfect points of entry for an interdisciplinary program like American Studies. Closely related to the discipline of history is the discipline of cultural geography. With its expertise in the history of western settlement patterns, the Earth Sciences Department also affords opportunities for collaboration.
- American Literature - It is widely assumed that people around the world understand America only through its electronically mediated exports. At universities around the world, students study American literature to master the metaphoric and syntactic structures of American culture. At MSU, faculty offer both breadth and depth in literary theory and past and present American literature.
- American Pluralism - America is often described as a "nation of nations," comprised of immigrants drawn from divergent cultures of the globe. Students who focus on American pluralism will draw on the expertise of faculty in Anthropology, Latin American Studies, Native American Studies, Religious Studies, and Women's Studies.
- Public History - Public History is a discipline dedicated to the application of cultural criticism to museums, historical sites, and heritage tourism. The Department of History and Philosophy is home to MSU's Museum Studies Minor, a thriving "applied studies" program dedicated to preparing students for work in the museum field. At the graduate level, students would have the opportunity to develop research interests and critical theory dedicated to better understanding the role of museums in American culture.

Foreign Language

Students are required to demonstrate reading proficiency in a foreign language. This requirement may be met by coursework (generally 2 semesters of one foreign language) or through an examination with the Department of Modern Languages & Literatures.

Plan of Study

Below is a list of required coursework for the American doctoral degree, and an outline of a generic plan of study for a student planning to graduate within 5 years.

Course Requirements

The program is built upon research and intensive coursework that will normally require four years of full-time work. Students must complete a minimum of 60 credit hours post-baccalaureate, of which at least 18 must be dissertation credits.

All students are required to take AMST 501 Methods in American Studies and AMST 502 Research in American Studies. Additional coursework will be selected from by the student in conjunction with his or her committee chair and committee members.

Major Field

All students must declare a major field of emphasis, by the third semester of study. The major field will normally require at least 12 credits of coursework. The major fields are:

- American Arts
- American History
- American Literature
- American Pluralism
- Public History

Supporting Area

All students must declare a supporting area, which will normally be acquired through three courses (9 credits) and a four-hour written examination administered by the supporting area adviser. The supporting area will be a thematic field, for example, Native American Studies, Technology and Culture, Women’s Studies.

Foreign Language Requirement

PhD students are required to demonstrate reading knowledge of at least one foreign language. Competency will determined by an examination administered by the program, normally in conjunction with the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. The foreign language requirement must be completed successfully before a student can present the dissertation proposal.
Font Notice

This document should contain certain fonts with restrictive licenses. For this draft, substitutions were made using less legally restrictive fonts. Specifically:

Times was used instead of Adobe Garamond Pro.

The editor may contact Leepfrog for a draft with the correct fonts in place.