

AMERICAN STUDIES, PH.D.

The Department of American Studies at Saint Louis University (<https://www.slu.edu/arts-and-sciences/american-studies/>) is committed to excellence and originality in research, teaching and service.

Our Ph.D. program combines the rigors of training in theory and methods with the development of skills in critical analysis, writing and research design. At the same time, we provide flexibility in our curriculum for SLU students to pursue their own focused interests, and to connect their work with scholarly communities and public institutions. Finally, we maintain a strong commitment to the sound, ethical and broad professional development of every graduate student that comes through our department.

Faculty and graduate students work toward these goals by building strong mentoring relationships; establishing dynamic and innovative classroom experiences; and disseminating research through conferences, workshops, exhibits and publications.

Our award-winning faculty members are trained specifically in the discipline. Most have earned a Ph.D. in American studies, and all have worked extensively in the field as scholars and teachers. Our time and effort as teaching faculty are focused on American studies students. At the same time, we enjoy productive and cordial relations with our colleagues in other departments who teach and conduct research in related fields. Students may take carefully selected courses in those departments, as students in other departments do in American studies.

Our faculty has particular strengths in cultural studies; the study of cities, regions and place; American religion; American musics; American education; and the study of U.S. empire. Right now, faculty research interests are in girlhood, Catholicism and the carceral state; experiences and constructions of mixed-race identities; St. Louis's civil rights history; literature and regional identity; environmental humanities and Indigenous studies; and late 20th-century popular culture.

Curriculum Overview

The Doctor of Philosophy is the terminal research degree in American studies. A total of 45 credits of coursework beyond the B.A. degree, plus 12 credits of dissertation writing, is required. Students with M.A. degrees in closely related fields may be able to count up to 12 credits of their previous relevant coursework.

Graduate Handbook (<https://www.slu.edu/arts-and-sciences/american-studies/-pdf/american-studies-department-grad-handbook.pdf>)

Fieldwork and Research Opportunities

American studies graduate students at SLU benefit from the rich archival and institutional resources available in St. Louis, including relationships with sites such as the Missouri Historical Society, Gateway Arch National Park, Circuit Court Records Project, Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts, Sheldon Galleries, Contemporary Art Museum, Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri Botanical Garden and Historic Landmarks Association.

Careers

American studies graduates from Saint Louis University go on to a wide range of careers in academia, educational administration, museums, libraries, archives, civic organizations, religious orders and ministry, journalism and public agencies.

Admission Requirements

An undergraduate degree or equivalent in a humanities or social science area is required; additional prerequisite work may be required at the department's discretion. Students with relevant M.A. degrees may be granted advanced standing for some of that work, but all Ph.D. students will earn an M.A. as well.

Application Requirements

- Application form (no fee required)
- Transcript(s)
- Three letters of recommendation
- Résumé or cv
- Goal statement of 500 to 1,000 words
- Writing sample of 3,500 to 7,500 words
- Interview (required only of finalists, scheduled in January)

All written materials are due by Dec. 15 for admission the following fall.

Requirements for International Students

All Saint Louis University admission policies and requirements for domestic students apply to international students. International students applying to SLU must also meet the following additional requirements:

- Demonstrate English language proficiency (<https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/office-admission/undergraduate/english-language-proficiency/>)
- Academic records must include an English translation. Unofficial copies may be accepted in some cases for initial admission review, however official copies must be received prior to enrollment. Course-by-course transcript evaluations are accepted and are required in some cases.

Students must submit financial documents to be issued an I-20 for their F-1 visa application. Proof of financial support must include:

- A letter of financial support from the person(s) or sponsoring agency funding the student's time at Saint Louis University
- A letter from the sponsor's bank verifying that the funds are available and will be so for the duration of the student's study at the University

Assistantship Application Deadline

All students who indicate a need for financial assistance and submit a complete application by Dec. 15 will be considered for a graduate assistantship. Applicants interested in funding are very strongly encouraged to apply for SLU's Diversity and/or Presidential Fellowships. For more information and to apply go here: Graduate Scholarships, Fellowships, Assistantships and Awards : SLU - Saint Louis University (<https://www.slu.edu/academics/graduate/graduate-scholarships-fellowships-assistantships-awards.php>)

American Studies Application Review Process

A faculty committee reviews all applications. Finalists will be contacted for an online video interview by early January. Follow the department link above for more information about our graduate program, funding and activities.

Tuition

Tuition	Cost Per Credit
Graduate Tuition	\$1,450

Additional charges may apply. Other resources are listed below:

Information on Tuition and Fees (<https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/student-financial-services/tuition/>)

Miscellaneous Fees (<https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/student-financial-services/fees/>)

Information on Summer Tuition (<https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/student-financial-services/tuition-summer-current/>)

Scholarships, Assistantships and Financial Aid

For priority consideration for a graduate assistantship, apply by the program admission deadlines listed. Fellowships and assistantships provide a stipend and may include health insurance and a tuition scholarship for the duration of the award.

Explore Scholarships and Financial Aid Options (<https://www.slu.edu/financial-aid/types-of-aid/>)

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will explain the contexts — such as historical, political, geographic, literary, artistic, social or intellectual — that shape American cultural practices, expressions and ideas.
2. Students will assess how American cultural practices, expressions or ideas shape or are shaped by axes of power, such as race, gender, sexuality, class, nation or ability.
3. Students will synthesize two or more disciplinary approaches in analyses of American cultural practices, expressions or ideas.
4. Students will effectively articulate arguments and information for an American studies audience.
5. Students will identify how their research extends, diverges from, or speaks to prior American studies scholarship.
6. Students will construct a usable portfolio of professional documents, such as cover letters, CVs, sample syllabi, statements of teaching philosophy, conference proposals, and grant applications.

Requirements

Code	Title	Credits
Required Courses		9
ASTD 5000	Perspectives in American Studies	
ASTD 5900	Practice of American Studies	
ASTD 6100	Dissertation Colloquium	
Elective Courses		36
<i>Select twelve graduate elective courses, for example:</i>		
ASTD 5010	African American Politics, Culture & Identity	
ASTD 5020	Frontiers & Borderlands: Contact & Conquest in the American Imagination	
ASTD 5440	Cultures of American Religion	
ASTD 5550	Visualizing Race	
ASTD 5700	Metropolitan America	
ASTD 6015	Many Midwests: Race and Citizenship in the Heartland	
ASTD 6020	American Political Thought	

ASTD 6200	Visual Culture Theory	
ASTD 6250	The Cultural Studies Movement: Origins and Contemporary Practice	
ASTD 6350	Native American and Indigenous Studies	
ASTD 6400	Transnational America	
ASTD 6500	Visions of U.S. Empire	
ASTD 6700	Cold War Cultural Politics and the "American Century"	
ASTD 6800	American Food & Culture	
ASTD 6910	Graduate Internship	
Dissertation Research		12
ASTD 6990	Dissertation Research	

Total Credits **57**

Non-Course Requirements

Non-English Language Proficiency

American Studies requires the pursuit of non-English language proficiency as part of its PhD degree. Students may demonstrate that they have engaged substantially with language-learning as a practice by providing evidence of substantial undergraduate work in a foreign language (a major or minor in a foreign language or 4 semesters of passing grades in language courses), earning a passing grade in 1 semester of graduate-level coursework taught in a foreign language, earning a passing grade in a 4000-level language course at SLU, or passing a translation exam. Students who speak a language other than English as a first language are exempt from this requirement.

Portfolio Paper

During their second year, all Ph.D. students will complete a portfolio paper, generally a revised and expanded version of a seminar paper, written as a publishable article. Portfolio requirements are the same as for students in the stand-alone M.A. program; there is no thesis option for M.A.-to-Ph.D. students. The written paper is then defended before a committee. The portfolio paper and 30 credits qualify all students for an M.A. but are also required for the Ph.D. program.

Comprehensive Exams

Written Exam

After completing the portfolio paper, students create a three-person committee (one chair and two additional faculty readers). Working closely with the committee members, students develop three literature review papers, each based in intensive reading in a discrete field or subject area.

Oral Exam

After the three-person committee has accepted the final drafts of the written exam, the student schedules a 90-minute oral exam. The accepted versions of the written exam materials must be supplied to all committee members at least two weeks before the oral exam. In general, full-time students aim to take their oral exams at the end of their third year. Funded students must complete the comprehensive exam within one calendar year of completing coursework or they may be deemed ineligible for further assistantship support from the department.

If a student does not pass any portion of the written or oral exam, the student will have one opportunity to re-take that portion. If they fail to pass a second time, they will be dismissed from the program.

Candidacy

After students successfully complete the comprehensive exams and all other requirements, the Office of Graduate Education advances them to candidacy.

Dissertation Proposal and Proposal Presentation

Students must submit a dissertation proposal by the end of the second semester following the successful completion of their comprehensive exams, using the template provided by the department. After the three-person committee has accepted the final version of the proposal, the student schedules a one-hour oral presentation of the proposal before the student’s committee and additional faculty. The accepted version of the proposal must be supplied to all department faculty members at least two weeks before the presentation. Proposal presentations are typically scheduled for one or two days per semester and are open to the public.

Dissertation and Defense

Students write their dissertations working closely with their committee. When the student and committee agree that the dissertation is satisfactory, the student schedules a one-hour public defense of the dissertation. Students must submit the final version of the dissertation to their committee at least two weeks before their defense date. In order to obtain a degree in the spring semester, a full draft of the dissertation should be submitted by the end of February. For the fall semester, a full draft of the dissertation should be submitted by the end of October. Summer defenses will only be scheduled in extraordinary circumstances, and only if a student has submitted a full draft of their dissertation to their committee before May 1.

Continuation Standards

Students must maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.00 in all graduate/professional courses.

Roadmap

This roadmap is just one example of a semester-by-semester plan of study for this program. There are other plans students can and do take. The plan of study for each particular student is established in consultation with each student’s academic advisor; *this roadmap does not replace academic advising appointments.*

Roadmap notes:

- This Roadmap assumes full-time enrollment unless otherwise noted.
- Courses/Milestones marked with an “!” are critical and must be completed in the semester listed in the Roadmap to ensure a timely graduation.
- Course availability and sequencing are subject to change.

Course	Title	Credits
Year One		
Fall		
ASTD 5000	Perspectives in American Studies (Required)	3
Two additional American Studies grad seminars ¹		6
Credits		9
Spring		
Three American Studies grad seminars		9
Credits		9

Year Two

Fall		
Three American Studies grad seminars		9
Prepare MA Portfolio Paper		

Credits 9

Spring

ASTD 5900	Practice of American Studies ²	3
Two additional American Studies grad seminars		6
Complete Checklist for MA graduation		
Complete MA Portfolio Paper and Oral Exam		

Credits 9

Year Three

Fall		
2 American Studies grad seminars		6
Select Literature Review topics and advisors; Begin to put reading lists together		

Credits 6

Spring

ASTD 6100	Dissertation Colloquium	3
Prepare literature reviews for oral exams ³		

Credits 3

Year Four

Fall		
Defend Literature reviews in Oral Exams		
ASTD 6990	Dissertation Research	6
Prepare Dissertation Proposal		

Credits 6

Spring

ASTD 6990	Dissertation Research	6
Complete Dissertation Proposal and Proposal Presentation		

Credits 6

Summer

Remaining semesters are dedicated to dissertation research and writing.

Credits 0

Total Credits 57

¹ Up to two courses outside of the department may be substituted for ASTD seminars, with the approval of the advisor and graduate coordinator.

² Required (must take when offered in the second or third year.)

³ Oral exams must be completed within two semesters of completing coursework, not including ASTD 6100 Dissertation Colloquium (3 cr) which is sometimes taken after orals.

Program Notes

Students can but are not required to use the summers to take their foreign-language requirement, take an outside course, pursue an internship for credit or work on their oral exams.

Contact Us

For additional information regarding admissions and graduate programs in American studies, please email american.studies@slu.edu or call 314-977-2911 and ask to be directed to the graduate coordinator.