

HUMANITIES

American Studies

American Studies at MIT offers students the opportunity to organize subjects from various fields (e.g., history, anthropology, literature, political science, music, art, architecture, and urban planning) into personally constructed interdisciplinary programs as a way of gaining an integrated understanding of American society and culture. Students can focus on any of several areas of interest, such as American literature; folklore and popular culture; black history and culture; women's studies; American history, politics, or law; the history of science and technology; and American art, architecture, or music. Thus, a program in American Studies is ideal for preparing students for further work not only in the various humanistic fields, but also in law, urban planning, management, architecture, engineering, medicine, teaching, and the media.

The program has three primary objectives:

- To understand the underlying system of beliefs that informs every aspect of American culture—its myths, institutions, politics and literature, its characteristic dreams and rituals.
- To understand the uses and limits of different methods and intellectual disciplines as tools for exploring the complexities of a culture.
- To understand the American present in relation to the American past.

As noted in the degree chart (<https://catalog.mit.edu/degree-charts/humanities-course-21>), the program includes a pre-thesis tutorial (21.THT), a thesis (21.THU), and a minimum of nine restricted electives (108 units) selected from at least two of the following three disciplinary areas:

- Area I: Humanities and the Arts
- Area II: Social Sciences; Science, Technology, and Society
- Area III: Historical Studies

Up to six subjects (72 units) may be used for both the major and the GIRs, but the units from those subjects may not count toward the 180 units required beyond the GIRs. No more than one subject that counts toward the distribution component of the HASS Requirement may also be counted toward American Studies requirements. In addition, at least eight of the subjects required for the program cannot count toward any other major or minor.

The list of restrictive electives below is not exhaustive. Additional information can be obtained from the American Studies advisor, Professor Christopher Capozzola (capozzol@mit.edu), E51-284, 617-452-4960, or from the SHASS Dean's Office, 4-240, 617-253-3450.

Restricted Electives

Select 9–12 subjects from at least two of the following areas:

21L.006	American Literature
21L.011	Introduction to Film Studies (Restricted Electives)
21L.432[J]	Understanding Television
21L.501	The American Novel
21L.504[J]	Race and Identity in American Literature
21L.512	American Authors
21M.215	Music of the Americas
21M.226	Jazz
21M.283	Musicals
21M.284	Film Music
21M.295	American Popular Music
21M.296	Studies in Jazz and Popular Music
21T.242	Asian American Theater
21T.248	Contemporary American Theater
21W.015	Writing and Rhetoric: Writing about Sports
21W.221	Communicating in American Culture (ELS)
21W.742[J]	Writing about Race
21W.788[J]	South Asian America: Transnational Media, Culture, and History
24.912[J]	Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies
CMS.313	Silent Film
Area II: Social Sciences; Science, Technology, and Society	
11.041	Introduction to Housing, Community, and Economic Development (not a HASS subject)
14.41	Public Finance and Public Policy
17.20	Introduction to the American Political Process
17.251	Congress and the American Political System I
17.263	Electoral Politics, Public Opinion, and Democracy
17.265	Public Opinion and American Democracy
17.269	Race, Ethnicity, and American Politics
17.271	Mass Incarceration in the United States
17.28[J]	The War at Home: American Politics and Society in Wartime ¹

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17.317	US Social Policy
17.40	American Foreign Policy: Past, Present, and Future
17.46	US National Security Policy
17.483	US Military Power
21A.120	American Dream: Exploring Class in the US
21A.131[J]	Latinx in the Age of Empire
STS.001	Technology in American History
STS.021[J]	Science Activism: Gender, Race, and Power
STS.036	Science in American Life: 1920-2020
STS.048	African Americans in Science, Technology, and Medicine
STS.049	The Long War Against Cancer
STS.050	The History of MIT
WGS.224	Race, Gender and Social Inequality in Reproductive Health Care
WGS.225[J]	The Science of Race, Sex, and Gender
Area III: Historical Studies	
11.013[J]	American Urban History
11.014[J]	History of the Built Environment in the US
17.28[J]	The War at Home: American Politics and Society in Wartime ¹
21G.043[J]	From Yellow Peril to Model Minority: Asian American History to 1968
21H.101	American History to 1865
21H.102	American History since 1865
21H.187	US Environmental Governance: from National Parks to the Green New Deal
21H.201	The American Revolution
21H.203	The History of American Presidential Elections
21H.211	The United States in the Cold War Era
21H.214	War and American Society
21H.220[J]	Metropolis: A Comparative History of New York City
21H.226[J]	Riots, Strikes, and Conspiracies in American History
21H.227	History of the US Supreme Court
21H.228	American Classics
21H.229	The Black Radical Tradition in America
21H.281	MIT and Slavery: Research
21H.282	MIT and Slavery: Publication
21H.283	The Indigenous History of MIT
21H.315	American Consumer Culture

21H.319	Crime, Punishment, and Policing in America
21H.320[J]	Gender and the Law in US History
21H.321[J]	Downtown
21H.322	Christianity in America
21H.388	Global Commodities, American Dreams
WGS.110[J]	Sexual and Gender Identities in the Modern United States

¹ Counts as Area II or III, but not both.