

AMERICAN STUDIES

What can I do with this major?

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

EDUCATION

Teaching
Research
Information/Library science
Higher education administration and student support services including:
Admissions
Financial aid
Academic advising
Development
Alumni affairs
International education and study abroad
Career services
Residence life
Student activities and Greek life
Orientation
Leadership
Multicultural student programming

Universities and colleges
Support programs (e.g., Educational Advancement Program, Upward Bound)
Community libraries Nonprofit organizations

Earn a Ph.D. to teach and research at four-year institutions. The interdisciplinary nature of American studies makes it good preparation for advanced education in a variety of fields in the humanities and social sciences.
Obtain a master's degree in student affairs or library/information science if interested in those areas.
Get involved in leadership roles on campus such as peer mentor, resident advisor, or orientation leader.
Join related professional associations as a student member.
Volunteer to assist a professor with research or take an independent study class.
Develop strong communication and public speaking skills.

MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Administration
Curatorial
Preservation and conservation
Restoration
Registrarial
Collections management
Exhibit design/preparation
Archive management
Art authentication
Education
Publications
Development
Docent coordination
Public relations
Reproductions and retailing

Museums: University, public, private archives
Historical homes
Special collections
Historical societies
Natural history museums Living history museum
Art galleries
State and local government
Federal government (e.g., the National Archives, Records Administration)
Non-profit organizations Research institutions
Corporations

Gain relevant experience through internships or volunteer positions in museums or galleries.
Earn a graduate degree in museum studies, conservation, information science, or related area.
Research prerequisites and take the necessary courses. The most competitive candidates may have more than one graduate degree.
Acquire strong experience with computers, databases, and software.
Get involved with relevant student organizations Develop excellent written and oral communication skills, organizational skills, and an attention to detail.
Learn about grant writing, budgeting, and legal issues surrounding historical artifacts.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES CONTINUED

Attend professional conferences and seminars.
Earn the Certified Archivist designation.
Most curators specialize in a material or objects

NONPROFIT

Administration
Management
Public relations
Program coordination
Fund raising and development
Policy analysis
Grant writing
Research
Volunteer coordination
Community education
Direct service

Museums and historical sites
Historical associations and societies
Cultural heritage organizations
Historical projects
Libraries
Educational institutions
Local and national nonprofit agencies
Trade or professional associations
Special interest groups
Foundations
Charitable organizations
Labor unions
Research organizations and think tanks

Gain experience through volunteering or completing an internship.
Obtain leadership roles in relevant campus and community organizations.
Develop strong communication and research skills. Supplement curriculum with courses in business, psychology, sociology, or social work depending upon interest.
Learn how to write grants.
Develop an understanding of budgeting and fiscal management.
Research organizations' values to find a good fit with yours. It is critical that you are knowledgeable about and committed to the work you are going to do.
Investigate term of service or service corps positions as a way to gain entry into the field.
Consider earning a graduate degree for more job

BUSINESS

Sales
Customer service
Management
Insurance:
 Underwriting
 Claims management
 Sales
Real estate:
 Property management
 Sales

Product and service organizations
Retail stores
Hotels
Restaurants
Manufacturers
Banks and financial institutions
Insurance companies
Hospitals and other healthcare organizations
Print and electronic media
Real estate agencies
Private business corporations

Earn a minor in business or take business classes.
Develop strong verbal and written communication, interpersonal, and analytical skills.
Learn to work well on a team.
Seek leadership roles in campus organizations.
Join related professional associations.
Gain experience through internships, part-time, or summer jobs.
Get involved in student organizations and seek leadership roles.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

BUSINESS CONTINUED

Human resources
Training and development
Labor relations
Writing/Editing
Corporate communication
Office management

Association management firms
Other business corporations

Develop computer skills in areas such as spread sheets, databases, and presentation software.
Conduct informational interviews to learn about jobs of interest and to build a network of contacts.
Be prepared to start in entry-level positions such as management trainee programs.
Become knowledgeable about corporate social responsibility.
Look for companies that have an interest in hiring “any major.”

GOVERNMENT

City or Town management
Translation/Interpretation
Regional planning
Public policy
Intelligence
Community affairs
Campaigning
Legislative assistance
Public information
Research
Lobbying
Conflict negotiation
Program administration
General services
Social services
Foreign service
Legislative, Executive, or Judicial services

There are over 170 federal departments and agencies. See <http://gogovernment.org/>

Local and state government
Political parties
Political Action Committees (PAC)
Industrial, educational, and public interest groups
Campaigns: national, state, or local
Legislatures and other elected public officials
School districts
Court systems

Minor in an applicable interest area such as business, political science, or public administration.
Take courses in conflict management and develop negotiation skills.
Volunteer to work on a local or national political campaigns.
Join related student organizations and earn leadership roles. Get involved with student government and campus campaigns.
Complete an internship with a government agency to get a foot in the door. Research government internship programs.
Maintain a strong grade point average as many government programs are very competitive.
Learn local, state, and federal government job application procedures. Visit the campus career center for assistance.
Develop a network of contacts through informational interviews and referrals.
Consider earning a graduate degree to qualify for more opportunities.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

COMMUNICATION

Journalism
Creative writing
Freelance writing
Copy writing
Editing
Research and Analysis
Advertising

Publishing firms: newspaper, magazine, and book
Wire services and syndicates
Literary agencies
Internet sites
Television and radio stations
Film industry
Freelance
Advertising agencies
Trade, professional, or consumer publications
Internet sites
Private corporations

Obtain a minor in English or journalism or take other writing-focused classes.
Write for campus publications such as college newspapers, magazines, or department/program newsletters.
Volunteer to assist or tutor students in a writing center.
Intern with a publishing house, magazine, or other relevant organizations.
Create a portfolio of writing samples, especially those that have been published.
Seek opportunities for recognition and networking through writing contests and freelance writing submissions.
Become familiar with the proposal and submission process involved in freelance writing.

LAW

See also *What Can I Do With This Major in Law?*

Prosecution
Defense
Contractual
Corporate
Nonprofit or Public interest
Government
Mediation
Other specialties
Law assistance

Law firms
Federal, state, and local government
Private practice
Corporations
Special interest groups
Universities and colleges
Legal aid societies
Nonprofit and public interest organizations
Corporation
Legal clinics
Other private legal services

Develop strong research skills and attention to detail.
Participate in debate or forensic team to hone communication skills.
Choose courses or a minor to specialize in a particular area of law (e.g., a minor in business for a career in corporate law).
Find part-time or summer work in a law firm.
Shadow an attorney to learn more about the field and various specialties.
Get involved in pre-law organizations.
Plan to attend law school and earn a law degree.
Maintain a high GPA and secure strong faculty recommendations. Prepare for the LSAT (Law School Admission Test).
Obtain specialized certification for paralegal positions.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- American Studies majors are excellent candidates for a number of graduate and professional school options because of their broad liberal arts background, as well as, specific interests that may set them apart from other students. For those wishing to pursue graduate education, maintain a high GPA, e
- Establish relationships with faculty to secure strong recommendations, and gain experience through volunteer, work, internships, or research opportunities.
- Carefully research Graduate programs in order to choose specializations and find the best fit for you.
- American Studies provides an interdisciplinary background that helps students develop analytical, critical thinking, communication, and writing skills while gaining knowledge about American culture and society. The curriculum exposes students to many areas including history, literature, religion, music, art, folklore, and material culture. Students gain substantial integrative research experience and build upon research of other scholars across disciplines to advocate critical study of race, class, gender, sexuality, mass culture, civic engagement, social justice, and America as part of a globalized world.
- It is beneficial to pursue specialized or technical skill areas to make your experience more specific. Take courses in marketing, finance, statistics, journalism, or communications depending on your interests. Consider adding a second major or a minor.
- Some students may choose to study American Studies because they enjoy the subject but wish to pursue careers requiring “any major.” In this scenario, it is critical to develop skills relevant to targeted field through internships, part-time or summer jobs, or volunteer experiences.
- Develop strong leadership skills; run for office in school or community organizations. Volunteer to organize or lead an event or project.
- Conduct informational interviews to learn about careers of interest and develop network contacts.
- Gain experience in fund raising and grant writing techniques. Nonprofit and educational organizations are often funded in this manner.