

# 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:  
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)  
Nonprofit organizations  
Research institutions

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 opportunities and advancement

**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.  
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  
Websites  
Television and radio stations  
Film industry  
Freelance  
Advertising agencies  
Trade, professional, or consumer publications  
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.

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### 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, 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, politics, sociology, 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.