American Studies

Overview
American Studies offers you the opportunity to combine modules with an American focus from our Literature, History and Film courses. You can follow a specified route through the Humanities programme, choosing interdisciplinary American topics at each level, providing a fascinating insight into one of the world’s most influential, complex and multicultural societies. American Studies is available to study as either a minor subject or a joint major.

What is it like to study?
American Studies is intrinsically interdisciplinary, so you will acquire a range of critical, theoretical and historical perspectives that will complement each other and deepen your understanding of American culture, and the part it plays in the world today. You will attend lectures and seminars on a weekly basis and be given self directed tasks such as reading novels, short stories and poetry, watching films and looking at historical case studies.

“The thing I find most rewarding about American Studies is the diversity it offers. By incorporating a variety of disciplines into one pathway, I can broaden my learning experience by studying multiple disciplines while majoring in one of them. It has also encouraged me to consider a wider range of ideas and approaches within my historical studies.”

Martin Williams
Year one modules
American Studies students in Year One must take all four of these modules to provide a foundation in the skills needed in Years Two and Three.

American History, c. 1600-1850
Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination
This module examines the development of American society between the 17th and 19th centuries, tracing its evolution from colonial origins to its emergence as an independent state. It seeks in particular to answer several key questions. First, what were the origins of the different colonies and how did these affect the nature and character of immigration? Second, what factors affected the economic development of the colonies, and what was their role in the transatlantic economy and the British Industrial Revolution? Third, what was the impact of European settlements on the indigenous population and could European settlers and American Indians have co-existed? Finally, how did the colonies develop an American ‘identity’?

Introduction to Film Criticism
Assessment: 100% coursework
This module introduces you to the analysis of film. You will engage critically with how ‘meaning’ is communicated through style - how film texts work. You will be introduced to some of the key moments in cinema history, from the Hollywood system in the first part of the twentieth century, through German Expressionism, Russian Formalism, to the new Hollywood of the 1970s. The module will equip you with an historical awareness of film, and the ability to critically analyse technical innovations. You will gain a knowledge and understanding of some of the critical, historical, theoretical and technological issues involved in the study of film.

Introduction to American Studies
Assessment: 100% coursework
This module offers a multi-disciplinary introduction to the subject of American Studies. It will give you an overview of the history and development of American Studies as an academic subject, and encourage reflection on the direction of the discipline in the twenty-first century. You will become familiar with a variety of critical and methodological perspectives, and develop complementary skills in the component disciplines of History, Literature and Film. The module will be team-taught by lecturers specialising in these subjects, and each topic will be addressed from a different disciplinary angle each week. Topics may be drawn from the following indicative list: immigrant identities and America as ‘the melting pot’; the West; the South; the City; America at war; slavery; Revolution, protest and radicalism; American environmentalism; 9/11; suburbia and small-town America; transnational America; American foodways; American music; American politics and the Presidency; gender and sexuality in America.

Technology, Terror & Transformations: Literature from the Fin de Siècle to WW1
Assessment: 50% coursework and 50% examination
Building on the work carried out in Semester A’s literature core module, Writing and Revolution: Literature from The Romantics to the Victorians, this module is designed to develop further your knowledge of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century literature. We look at the second half of the nineteenth century and the transition from the Victorian to modern age by reading texts produced in the years leading up to the twentieth century and the First World War. You will have the opportunity to read a range of texts from different genres (short stories, plays, novels) which, in their own ways attempt to explore a changing world. The module will explore the relations between the set texts and the wider cultural and intellectual history of the period and we will consider the range of debates which informed and shaped nineteenth and early-twentieth century writing (for example, the British empire, the decline of rural life, technology, national identity, gender).

Year two modules
Students on the minor pathway will study: USA, 1861-1969: From Civil War to Civil Rights American Literature to 1900. Students on the joint major pathway will additionally study: 20th Century North American Writing The Age of the Cold War.

Final year modules
Students on the minor pathway will study: Native American Literature US Cinema: From Studio System to Digital Era Students on the joint major pathway will additionally study: African-American Literature The United States Rise to Superpowerdom, 1918-1945

American Studies
As a student of American Studies your experience at university may be enriched in a variety of ways, including:

• Incorporating a year of study in America
• Studying for a semester at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington
• Attending research seminars in History, Literature or Film
• Attending guest talks by professionals in film
• Becoming involved in the American Studies society

Career Paths
If you have American Studies as part of your degree you will develop skills and knowledge in each of the three component disciplines of Literature, History and Film. Graduates will therefore have developed the skills required to excel in each of these subject areas: analysis, research, writing, oral communication, evaluating evidence and developing coherent arguments. These diverse graduate skills will equip you for careers in a variety of fields, including teaching, the heritage industry, librarianship, law, marketing, advertising, local government, the Civil Service, film production, journalism or broadcasting.

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