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 (http://catalog.mit.edu/degree-charts/humanities-course-2), the program includes a pre-thesis tutorial (21.THT), a thesis (21.THU), and a minimum of nine restricted electives (508 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 academic administrator, Andrea Wirth (awirth@mit.edu), 4-240, 617-253-4441.
HUMANITIES

17.269 Race, Ethnicity, and American Politics
17.271 Mass Incarceration in the United States
17.281 The War at Home: American Politics and Society in Wartime
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 Latinx in the Age of Empire
STS.001 Technology in American History
STS.021 Science Activism: Gender, Race, and Power
STS.026 History of Manufacturing in America
STS.027 The Civil War and the Emergence of Modern America: 1861-1890
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: Reproductive Health Care in the United States
WGS.225 The Science of Race, Sex, and Gender

Area III: Historical Studies

11.013 American Urban History
11.014 History of the Built Environment in the US
17.281 The War at Home: American Politics and Society in Wartime
21G.043 Introduction to Asian American Studies: Historical and Contemporary Issues
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 Nuclear Age
21H.214 War and American Society
21H.220 Metropolis: A Comparative History of New York City
21H.226 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 Race, Crime, and Citizenship in American Law
21H.320 Gender and the Law in US History
21H.321 Downtown
21H.322 Christianity in America
21H.388 Global Commodities, American Dreams
STS.027 The Civil War and the Emergence of Modern America: 1861-1890
WGS.110 Sexual and Gender Identities in the Modern United States

Counts as Area II or III, but not both.