



Graduate Program in American Studies at Rutgers-Newark

[home](#) [programs](#) [how to apply](#) [people](#) [links](#) [news + events](#) [contact](#)

PROGRAMS

[Program Objectives](#)
[Interdisciplinary Fields](#)
[Public Scholarship](#)

M.A. Program

Ph.D. Program

How to Apply

Courses

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Graduate Program in American Studies educates students to become knowledgeable and productive scholars who will contribute significantly to a wide range of academic, cultural, and public institutions. The curriculum is designed to:

- train scholars in the theory and methodology of interdisciplinary study and to develop research skills enabling them to draw upon, and eventually contribute to, the collections, archives, and resources of the universities and cultural institutions of the region;
- foster new scholarship which contributes to the advancement of understanding of American civilization's heterodox identities, institutions, and cultures;
- encourage the original and creative articulation of research and scholarly contributions to diverse audiences, including other scholars in the academy; undergraduate and graduate students; scholars and professionals in cultural institutions in the public sector; and the general public, through a variety of media.

The doctoral degree requires 72 credits of research and course work, including two core courses in the theory and methodology of American Studies, substantial work in at least two of six interdisciplinary fields of specialization, and 24 credits of dissertation research. For the Master's degree, 24 credits of course work are required, including the two core courses and substantial work in at least one interdisciplinary field, plus six credits of thesis work or additional electives, for a total of 30

credits.

All students identify one of the six designated interdisciplinary fields as their major concentration. M.A. students select one additional interdisciplinary field of concentration in addition to their primary concentration. Ph.D. students identify two fields of concentration in addition to their primary concentration. These may include either two interdisciplinary fields or extended work in one interdisciplinary field and one existing graduate academic program in the arts, humanities, or social sciences of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Newark.

Students will select courses that are relevant to their chosen concentrations and have access to an extensive and diverse array of course selections offered by the American Studies program and other graduate programs at Rutgers-Newark, including: English, History, Political Science, Jazz History and Research, Liberal Studies, Global Affairs, Public Administration, Urban Systems (Urban Health Systems, Urban Environment Studies, Urban Educational Policy), and Public Health. In addition, with permission, students may also enroll in courses appropriate to their fields offered by the Rutgers-Newark School of Criminal Justice, the Rutgers Law School, Rutgers Business School, School of Public Affairs and Administration, and the New Jersey Institute of Technology. They may also enroll in relevant graduate courses offered on the New Brunswick campuses of Rutgers University.

[Back to Top](#)

INTERDISCIPLINARY FIELDS OF AMERICAN STUDIES AT RUTGERS - NEWARK

- Race, Ethnicity, and Modern Society
- Urban Cultures
- Cultural History and Artistic Production
- America within a Global Context
- The Operations of Social Institutions
- Women's and Gender Studies

Race, Ethnicity and the Modern Society

In this area of specialization students explore how notions of

race and ethnicity are socially and historically constructed. Grounded in the theoretical frameworks supplied by fields such as sociology, anthropology, history, cultural studies, political science, and urban studies, courses examine the ways that race and ethnicity are historicized and systematized, as well as contested. Students analyze theories and definitions of race, ethnicity, and race relations, and how theories and concepts have changed over time. They study intersections among race, ethnicity, class, and gender as they are experienced on both individual and collective levels. Students explore how the media, music, literature, and the arts have formulated and transformed concepts of race. Race and ethnicity are examined, as well, in the contexts of contemporary debates on globalization, international migration, and immigration. How do social, political, and economic transformations affect ideologies of citizenship, whether at global, national or local scales? How does the emergence of global cities complicate ideas of citizenship?

Urban Culture

This specialization examines urban social structures, processes, and cultures from an interdisciplinary perspective. Drawing upon sociology, history, political science, economics, literature, and the arts, the concentration explores the historical development of cities, their social fabric, political-economic structures, and group dynamics. Students examine urban environments as places of both consensual and conflictual group relations, based upon social class, race, ethnicity, and gender. They study the relationships among urban social structure, urban institutions, and group interactions, especially with respect to political power, wealth, and social status, and the ways in which struggles among groups are related to urban change. Special attention is given to how changing demographics result in conflict and change in the urban environment, as well as how multiple cultural groups co-exist in urban environments. Students examine the diversity of cultural groups and cultural forms, including the music, art, language, and rituals manifest within urban life. They explore the ecology of cities, including issues of ethnic concentrations and neighborhood organization, the effects of demographic change through immigration and migration, and the impact of urban architecture, design, and transportation

systems on the urban environment.

Cultural History and Artistic Production

This concentration is predicated upon the idea that an understanding of the relationship between a people and their cultural production is a vital one for any society. This is particularly true of United States, a country with a relatively brief, but dynamic, history and a broad array of influences stemming from the many ethnic, racial, and national groups that helped form and continue to inform its national fabric. Students study the relationship between cultural production and American society as well as contemporary trends and themes. Areas that are examined include the important role literature has played in shaping America's understanding of itself, the evolution of the fine arts and design from its beginnings to its leadership role in today's world, and the interface between urban life and popular culture. Similarly, American theater and music (particularly the unique place of jazz and the American musical) are examined, as is the role of the media, particularly television, in defining American society to both its citizens and the broader world.

America within a Global Context

The United States cannot be studied fully without seeing its political, economic, and cultural histories within a global framework. Since all of its inhabitants could trace their immediate or ancestral roots to other societies and nations, all aspects of American society manifest the global composite nature of its development. As an emergent world power during the last century—the purportedly “American” century—that now finds itself inextricably bound to a global, transnational system, the United States exerts tremendous influence on and is influenced by many economic, social, and cultural forces arising outside its geographic boundaries. Approaching these issues through the disciplines of the social science and humanities, students study multiple aspects of this global context, among them local, national, and transnational political, ethical, and legal issues; immigration and global movements of peoples; and the international effects of the exportation of American culture and the cultural hybridity within America resulting from the importation and appropriation of global and local artistic and behavioral practices.

The Operations of Social Institutions

This interdisciplinary field encourages scholarship in the social and cultural effects that the structures of social organization have on American life. Students study the historical, economic, and social foundations of governmental, corporate, and non-governmental social agencies. They engage in comparative analyses of the law and criminal justice systems, local, national, and transnational corporations, the news media, the healthcare and education systems, and local, state, and national governments.

Women's and Gender Studies

This area of concentration provides historical and theoretical perspectives on Women's and Gender Studies, both across and within disciplines and in relation to the recent developments in American Studies. Contemporary theoretical frameworks and methodologies within Women's and Gender Studies research analyze, in particular, the situation of women in American culture and life. Students work in fields as diverse as the law, philosophy, history, politics, literature, the arts, and popular culture.

[Back to top](#)

PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP

The American Studies program's emphasis on Public Scholarship is defined by two characteristics: scholars' engagement with questions that arise from the problems of public life and scholars' interests in communicating their work to the public beyond academic institutions. In both cases, we train public scholars to think of themselves as being in a conversation with the public, in a dialogue between equals. The audience we envision is a general public that is hungry for an informed perspective.

All students are encouraged to incorporate some work in public scholarship into their academic program, either by engaging in an "applied" or public project, by working with a public institution, or by participating in the several public programs developed annually by the institutes, centers, and academic

departments on the Rutgers - Newark campus. Thus, Master's and doctorally trained scholars can bring the full apparatus of their academic research to bear on topics that are of importance to public life. In the process, students engage in scholarly inquiry focusing on the theory and issues that arise from and feed back into their public projects.

In addition to scholarly work within their chosen interdisciplinary fields, those students preparing specifically for positions in public scholarship will explore the missions and goals of different public institutions, such as historical archives, museums, historical and cultural commissions, and the communications media, as well as the distinct methods and media utilized by these institutions. Their training will provide opportunities for collaborative work with professionals at these organizations, such as the curators, librarians, archivists, or education staff, all of whom are deeply engaged with making scholarly materials available to the general public.

Many students have opportunities to work closely with public institutions, often through internships, developing the language, skills, and expertise to bring scholarly research to the institutions' public. Other American Studies graduate students receive training through workshops, colloquia, and university courses, where they encounter a range of methods and tools of professional, public scholarship such as oral history, collections development and management, hypertext and web-site design, exhibitions development, and education programming.

[Back to top](#)

[home](#) | [programs](#) | [how to apply](#) | [people](#) | [links](#) | [news + events](#) | [contact](#)