

# American Studies - Undergraduate- 2021/22

**Award Level: BA**

**UCAS Code: T700**

**Start Date: September 2021**

**Mode of study: Full-time, Part-time**

**Duration: 3 years, 6 years**

**Location: Canterbury**

## **Main quote**

If you enjoy history, politics, international relations, literature, and film, and are looking to gain a wide set of skills, I would highly recommend this course.

## **Main quote source**

Emma

## **Course overview**

**America is distinct among modern countries because of the stories it tells about itself; as the land of the free, and as a site of endless possibilities.**

A degree in American Studies asks you to uncover the stories that are not being told and to interrogate the world's superpower using a variety of disciplinary approaches.

Our academics are leading researchers in American Cinema, History, Literature, and Politics and we bring our expert knowledge to bear in challenging and rewarding classes.

## **Why study (course name)**

Why study American Studies?

American Studies is a fascinating subject because the United States is one of the most diverse places in the world, with a rich history, a vibrant political culture, world changing literature and film, and global influence. In this programme – which encompasses BA American Studies Single Honours and BA American Studies Combined Honours – you will learn about the history, culture, and politics of the United States.

## **Text after read more tag**

The degree is both multidisciplinary (drawing on more than one academic discipline to understand the US) and interdisciplinary (using these various disciplines together to enhance this understanding). The disciplines you will encounter are history (social, cultural, racial, and foreign policy), literature and cultural studies (including art history, cinema, and media studies), and politics. You will also take modules that are specifically designed to draw on all of these strands. This broad ranging degree is taught by a team of highly-qualified academics, working on the main campus at the heart of the historic city of Canterbury, where we provide high-quality teaching within a friendly and supportive learning environment.

American Studies students also have several opportunities to study in North America, which enables them to develop confidence, independence, and employability skills. You will have the opportunity to take part in an annual field trip

to a major US city such as New York, or to apply to spend a semester or full year studying at a university in North America.

The student learning experience is at the very top of our list of priorities, but you should know that the American Studies team are not just teachers: we are also professional academics with an impressive track record of nationally and internationally acclaimed research publications on topics as varied as President Barack Obama, gender and the civil rights movement, and the literature of the US South. This research experience feeds directly into our teaching, especially in year three where modules are shaped according to the research specialism of the tutors running them.

**Students on this programme are also eligible to apply to study for a year in North America as part of their degree.**

## **Entry requirements**

A typical offer is 88-112 UCAS Tariff points.

For more information on the IELTS (International English language Testing System) requirements for this course, [please click here to visit our dedicated web page.](https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/study-here/international/english-language-requirements)

[\[More information about entry requirements.\]](/study-here/applying/entry-requirements)

## **All about the course Year 1 text**

American Studies is designed to allow you as much diversity and flexibility as possible. In Year 1 you are given a broad introduction, with modules devoted to America or else to contextualising America, within an inter-disciplinary framework encompassing history, literature and politics.

Students will be able to choose from a selection of modules at Year 2 and from still more choices at Year 3 (although some modules may not run each year).

You will be able to follow Strands (and groups of Strands) from beginning to end, or you can “mix-and-match” modules from across the Strands. The course is designed on a pyramid structure, with Year 1 providing the foundation, or base, and Year 6 the specialisation, or peak. Year 2 is designed to “bridge the gap” by consolidating the knowledge gained at Level 1 and confirming that you have the required knowledge and skills before you specialise in Year 3.

Subject to availability, you will also be able to take certain modules validated within the History, English Literature, and Film, Radio and Television Studies Programmes.

This pyramid structure is designed to support students for success by offering an evolution of academic and graduate skills that progress as you do. The architecture of the programme is designed so that you can excel at each level of study and progress in measurable ways across each of the three levels.

## **All about the course Year 2 text**

Year 2 is designed to “bridge the gap” by consolidating the knowledge gained at Level 1 and confirming that you have the required knowledge and skills before you specialise in Year 3.

## All about the course Year 3 text

By Year 3 you will have reached the peak of your specialisation in American Studies.

Single Honours students will take the core spine of American Studies modules as a matter of course and are able to develop individual learning priorities through their optional modules. Combined Honours students are given more flexibility in their choice of modules, in order to more easily develop a bespoke academic trajectory. Combined Honours students are encouraged to consult with their Personal Academic Tutors, and other members of the academic team, to ensure that they select a range of modules that lead to a coherent academic experience and ensure that students receive appropriate training. At every point, the programme team treats students as partners in learning, and we are committed to a learning experience that encourages personal, as well as academic, development.

Across all years you can choose to specialise in several particular strands or 'mix and match' between them. Part-time students have additional flexibility regarding when to take which modules over the course of their six-year degree. Combined Honours students have a greater degree of choice than Single Honours students and can chart a particular intellectual trajectory based on their interests and their other course of study. We are very mindful of the need to enhance your employability prospects and, to this end, we seek from the very outset of your time with us to teach you the kinds of skills that will be valued by potential employers. These include the ability to make sound evidence-based judgements, think critically, use a range of sources effectively, communicate clearly and coherently, work independently and as part of a team, manage diverse workloads and meet deadlines, and to use technology for communication and presentation purposes. Alongside attention to these vital transferable skills, we have ensured that graduate attributes training is embedded at every level of learning, especially in the core spine of American Studies modules.

## Year 1 modules

Divided by A Common Language: Culture, Power, and Society in the UK and the USA

Core module - (20 Credits)

In this bespoke American Studies module, you will gain insight into the nature of American Studies as an interdisciplinary academic entity, and do this through the comparative lens of political and social life in modern Britain and the USA. Beyond this, the aim is to help you recognise and understand the similarities and differences in the social and cultural structures of Britain and the USA.

As a team-taught module, you will be given an overview of the approaches applied by the various disciplines that feed into American Studies. In content, the module will be comparative and topics will include patriotism and national identity, government structures, immigration, citizenship, identities, religion, regionalism, the "Special Relationship," Americanisation and globalisation, and popular culture.

## Making Your Mark

Core module - (20 Credits)

This core module introduces you to the methods and skills needed for degree-level study at university. Writing and researching American history, for instance, poses challenges, some of a philosophical nature, others of a practical kind. A particular aim of the module is to introduce you to - and allow you to practice - key skills. As you will discover, there is an important relationship between the creation of knowledge and accurate, structured writing. The

module also caters for History students, and Medieval/Early Modern Studies students, but whatever your subject, you need to be a first-rate communicator.

### The Invention of America: Texts and Contexts from 1607 to the Present

Core module - (20 Credits)

This module, from our English Literature team, provides you with an introduction to the richness of American literature from the initial colonial rhetoric of discovery and the Puritan call for the foundation of a “City upon a Hill”, to the establishment of national cultural traditions in the nineteenth century and beyond. You will trace continuities and identify discontinuities in the treatment of foundational myths, the definition of quintessentially “American” concepts, and the acknowledgement of the violent underside of the national narrative of democracy and progress. The module works with established canonical texts in American literature as well as the writing of native peoples, African Americans and other minority cultures.

### The Cold War and the Making of the Contemporary World

Core module - (20 Credits)

In this module, you will investigate the origins, course and consequences of the Cold War, the East-West/US-Soviet struggle which dominated the international landscape for much of the second half of the twentieth century. There will be emphasis on the nuclear arms race and the impact of weapons of mass destruction not just on the Cold War military balance but on contemporary culture and society in and beyond the USA. The module also considers the way in which the Cold War and its legacy has shaped the world of today whether in regard to ongoing tensions between Russia/China and the USA/West, turmoil in the Middle East, international terrorism, or the nuclear ambitions of North Korea and Iran.

### Contemporary World Politics

Core module - (20 Credits)

This module, from our Politics and International Relations team, will locate America in the context of political theory and political science. The focus, however, will be primarily historical and on how politics came to be shaped in the way that it is today. The development from the comparatively simple forms of early empires to the emergence of the European sovereign state in the seventeenth century will be analysed, followed by an examination of the state and its imperial expansion during the nineteenth century. The further evolution into a world system dominated by the USA and comparable superpowers will be addressed. By the end of the module, you will be able to engage in a discussion of how the international political system of the past is being replaced by something markedly different – a global political world where state power, including that of the USA, is less significant

## **Year 2 modules**

### Building and Dismantling the American Empire

Core module - (20 Credits)

The aims of the module are to build on students’ understanding of themselves as global citizens introduced in the Level 4 module ‘Divided by a Common Language.’ This module takes an interdisciplinary and broadly historical approach to understanding ideas of the United States as, first, the site of European imperialism and then as an empire in its own right. Students may explore issues pertaining to the ‘discovery’ of North America and the colonisation of Indigenous territories; the history of America’s changing role in global politics; America’s cultural imperialism – either in the form of ‘Coca-Colonisation’ or in the ubiquity of

American cultural texts in the modern world; progressive global movements centred in the United States, including Pan-Africanism and the world-wide Movement for Black Lives; or other relevant topics that position the United States within a broader narrative of global conflict and cooperation. The module will be led by one or more members of the core American Studies team. It will also feature guest lectures by industry professionals and specialists from other programmes in the University who can speak to the specific employable and transferable skills that students are developing. Specifically, these sessions will focus on the capacity of American Studies graduates to excel in an increasingly global workforce.

### Extended Essay

Core module - (20 Credits)

This module will enable you to develop skills for independent learning and individual research so that you can undertake a substantial piece of written work on a subject related to one of your other year two modules. You will be able to select your own topic in consultation with tutors, and to work closely with a supervisor expert in that area. This module therefore provides an essential foundation for the dissertation in year three. This module is core for single honours students, but optional for combined honours students.

### Race and Racism: Conquest, Colonisation and Categorisation in America

Optional module - (20 Credits)

This history-focussed module explores the long history of race and categorisation in the US.

### American Independent Cinema (Via Film, Radio, and Television)

Optional module - (20 Credits)

Students will explore the work of major independent filmmakers of the last few decades .

### Mad, Sad, and Bad: Women in American Literature (Via English)

Optional module - (20 Credits)

Explore the various ways in which American women have been imagined – and have defined themselves – in American literature from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

### Race and Politics in Modern America

Optional module - (20 Credits)

Explore the myriad ways in which American racial identity intersects with American political culture

### Atlantic Americas: Commerce, Domination, and Resistance in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800

Optional module - (20 Credits)

Students get to grips with colonial North America, and its relationship to the 'Old World' across the Atlantic.

### Applied Humanities: Employability in Practice (Via School of Humanities)

Optional module - (20 Credits)

Take a practical, hands-on module that locates you in the workforce and gives you the skills you'll need to thrive after University.

## Humanities in the Digital World

Optional module - (20 Credits)

Investigate the shifting treatment of the Humanities in the digital age, and see how online tools can supplement traditional research methods.

## American Girlhood: Life and Representation

Optional module - (20 Credits)

This module uncovers the social, political and cultural relations that shape girls' lives and experiences in historical perspective.

## Style and Substance: Movements in American Literature

Optional module - (20 Credits)

Delve deep into the stylistic conventions in American Literature from slave narratives, through the Beat Generation, to contemporary fiction.

## Isolation to Domination: The United States of America, 1914-1945 (Via History)

Optional module - (20 Credits)

This module lets students discover the development of the US into a modern global superpower.

## War and Revolution in Vietnam, 1930-1975 (Via History)

Optional module - (20 Credits)

Investigate the long history of conflict in Vietnam in a global and political context.

## **Year 3 modules**

### African American Studies in the 21st Century

Core module - (20 Credits)

This module will allow all American Studies students to meet together to apply their knowledge of American Studies both to contemporary debates about race in America and to address the employability agenda as they reach the culmination of their studies. Students are given the opportunity to contribute to cutting edge research in African American studies from one or more members of the core American Studies team with a specialism in African American studies. This module is the culmination of the American Studies core strand and asks students to reflect on their own agency in constructing a decolonised curriculum. Students are encouraged to think intersectionality, about the experiences of contemporary

African Americans in the context of, among other issues, the movement for black lives, the #MeToo movement, and the political resistance to the Trump administration.

### Dissertation

Core module - (40 Credits)

As the culmination of your degree, the dissertation will enable you to build upon skills gained in the extended essay and will equip you with the practical skills and research methodology to undertake research on a topic of your choice in American Studies. Although the dissertation by nature is centred on independent learning, you will work with a supervisor with the expertise to guide you through your project.

**This module is compulsory for Single Honours students, optional for Combined Honours students at 20 credits.**

#### Writing the Colour Line: American Literature from Plessy to Ferguson

Optional module - (20 Credits)

This module puts protest and struggle against segregation at the centre of the development of the African American literary tradition

#### Politics, Identity, and US Foreign Policy

Optional module - (20 Credits)

The module will provide cutting edge insight into the complex but fundamental interplay between American politics and the politics of identity pertaining to US foreign policy.

#### Truth, Justice, and the American Way: A Superhero History (Via History)

Optional module - (20 Credits)

Discover the development of the superhero from the 1930s to contemporary cinema and read comics narratives alongside the narrative of American history.

#### The Modern Black Freedom Movement

Optional module - (20 Credits)

The module examines the enduring social construction of race and racism in the United States, and its impacts on modern African American experience and freedom struggles.

#### Civil Rights Fiction

Optional module - (20 Credits)

Discover how black and white novelists honed their craft in service of the black freedom struggle of the 1950s and 1960s.

#### The Cinematic City (Via Film, Radio, and Television)

Optional module - (20 Credits)

Take an in-depth look at filmic representations of major cities from across American cinema.

#### Contemporary Ethnic American Literature (Via English)

Optional module - (20 Credits)

Conduct intensive readings of literature by a diverse range of contemporary writers.

#### The Bomb: War, Peace, and Society in the Nuclear Age (Via History)

Optional module - (20 Credits)

Explore modern world history through the lens of the threat of nuclear warfare.

The Global Sixties (Via History)

Optional module - (20 Credits)

Explore the turbulent decade of the 1960s from a variety of perspectives, paying particular attention to transnational crosscurrents.

### **Learning and teaching quote**

American Studies provides intellectual flexibility to design your own course of study across disciplines and to learn from a decolonised curriculum that explores the histories and cultures of marginalised peoples.

### **Learning and teaching quote source**

Althea Legal-Miller

### **Learning and teaching quote job title**

Programme Director

### **Learning and Teaching tab 1 label**

Teaching

### **Learning and teaching tab 1 text**

In a typical semester, you will be taking three modules. You will be taught through a combination of lectures, seminars and practical workshops. You will typically have between 9 and 12 contact hours per week.

Seminars in smaller groups will enable you to discuss and develop your understanding of topics covered in lectures. In addition, you will meet with your academic personal tutor.

Styles of teaching, and contact hours, depend on the option modules you select.

All programmes are informed by the University's [Learning and Teaching Strategy 2015-2022](#) ([/asset-library/Courses/Learning-and-Teaching-Strategy-2015-2022.pdf](#)).

### **Learning and teaching tab 2 label**

Independent learning

### **Learning and teaching tab 2 text**

American Studies students are expected to undertake independent research and reading outside of their classroom time. Through the library they will have access to all the relevant books for each module, as well as a wealth of digital resources. Core learning resources will be made available through each module's Virtual Learning Environment, or "Blackboard".

### **Learning and teaching tab 3 label**

Overall workload



### **Learning and teaching tab 3 text**

Your overall workload typically consists of 9 to 12 contact hours during semester time. In addition you will undertake 15 to 18 hours of independent research alongside workshops and one to one supervision sessions. If you choose to undertake a field trip to the United States, average contact time rises considerably.

### **Learning and teaching tab 4 label**

Academic input

### **Learning and teaching tab 4 text**

The team consists of highly qualified academics. They have a range of expertise and experience.

All our team members hold doctoral and teaching qualifications. They are research-active. They have experience in delivering research-informed teaching. You can find out more about the current teaching on our [\[Meet the Team\]\(https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/arts-andhumanities/school-of-humanities/american-studies/our-team.aspx\)](https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/arts-andhumanities/school-of-humanities/american-studies/our-team.aspx) webpage. You should note members of the teaching team might change.

Postgraduate students sometimes assist in teaching and assessing some modules. However, the permanent programme team teach the vast majority of lectures and seminars.

### **Assessment text**

Single Honours American Studies is assessed almost entirely by coursework. Different modules will have different types of coursework, depending on what best suits a particular topic or discipline, but most modules will be assessed by a combination of essays, presentations, and shorter portfolio assignments.

Study in North America

We encourage students to spend time abroad because we understand the importance of personal and academic growth during your university career. If you already know that you want to spend a year or a semester in the USA or Canada, you can apply through UCAS for that option. If you are unsure, you can apply in year 2 through our internal competition to study at one of our exchange partners in the USA or Canada as part of your degree.

[\[Please see this web page for further details.\]\(https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/arts-andhumanities/school-of-humanities/american-studies/time-in-the-usa-and-canada/time-in-theusa-and-canada.aspx\)](https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/arts-andhumanities/school-of-humanities/american-studies/time-in-the-usa-and-canada/time-in-theusa-and-canada.aspx)

Extended essay and dissertation

In second year, you will have the opportunity to produce an Extended Essay, a 5,000 word research project of your own devising that is linked to a module that you have studied. In third year, the dissertation gives you even more freedom, allowing you to work with your supervisor to create an original research question, for which you will produce a 10,000 word response.

### **Careers text**

Employers are looking for a variety of skills and attributes from graduates such as versatility, critical thinking and the ability to work independently and as part of a team. All of these are developed in our American Studies course.

Recent graduates have gone on to further study, and employment in social work, the media, tourism, management, and teaching, but there are few limits to what you can do with an American Studies degree. If you are considering a career in primary or secondary teaching, you may wish to combine American Studies with a subject taught in schools

such as History or English. We also offer tailor-made workshops on employability and graduate skills as part of your degree.

### **Careers quote**

There are many opportunities to work and gain experience alongside your studies which help you gain the valuable skills employers are looking for.

### **Careers quote source**

Luke

### **Careers quote job title**

Graduate