American Studies is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of American society. The program provides a broad, interdisciplinary approach to the study of critical issues to American society, with an emphasis on deep historical, cultural, and political understandings.

When you major in American studies, you’ll undertake a unique, interdisciplinary study of American society, gaining critical perspectives on past and contemporary issues and topics. They typically pursue their own interests within the very broad range of educational opportunities in the program.

Courses offered by the department explore a wide range of topics, including popular culture, politics, migration, religion, history, race, gender, and sexuality, as well as important issues such as America’s changing place in the world, foreign policy, the events of 9/11, and economic crises and inequality.

Majoring in American Studies provides an opportunity for you to pursue particular interests while gaining broad training in a variety of topics and interdisciplinary scholarship. You’ll have the opportunity to work closely with faculty, allowing you to use your skills and knowledge to conduct original research or creative work, which reflects your own interests and expertise on a particular topic.

**The College of Liberal Arts Advantage: More than a major**

When you study American Studies at the University of Minnesota, you gain the added advantage of a College of Liberal Arts education. At CLA, the liberal arts
mean you get more than just a degree in one major or another; it means you will be exposed to different areas of study, to different ways of thinking and learning. In fact, the liberal arts teach you how to learn—how to ask the right questions, how to problem solve, and how to innovate. The liberal arts highlight the complexities of our world, because here at CLA you will study not just, say, politics or art but also where politics and art intersect, where science and ethics intersect, where economics and the environment intersect.

Meet Our Students

Choosing a major is hard. When you’re interested in a variety of subjects, picking just one can feel like finding a needle in a haystack. For Nayelli Guerrero, whose interests include medicine, writing, history, and law, it’s no wonder she started off her college career as an undecided major. Now a sophomore, she has become a top-notch student who actively participates in important work in the community.

Read more about Nayelli’s story, and learn more about our undergraduate program.
The role of culturally appropriate food practices and traditionally practiced indigenous and immigrant gender roles are Madeline Brennan’s focus for research in American Studies. She is a senior in her final semester and is pursuing a career that helps enact change to support these populations.

Read more about Madeline's story.

Student Experiences

Learning Abroad Options in American Studies: Prepare to Lead in a Global Economy

After taking a course on the US in the world and seizing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to study abroad in South Africa, senior Abby Yates has become fascinated by the politics of music. Now, she studies music ambassadors to uncover just how much power music has on politics in the United States.

Learn more about study abroad for American Studies majors.

Undergraduate Research: Turn Your Curiosity into New Knowledge

Research is a central part of the American Studies degree. The BA program culminates in a capstone project conducted in the proseminar. This project is typically a research paper, but can take many forms: digital media project, film, etc. We encourage students pursuing a BA in American studies to take advantage of opportunities to conduct research, such as:

- Independent study with faculty
• Formal research experiences like the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) and the Dean's First-Year Research & Creative Program
• Collaborative research projects, including those which incorporate service learning, internships, or other programs

Past undergraduate research projects have examined the Department of Homeland Security, social justice and labor organizations in the Twin Cities, and immigrant rights law, among other interesting topics.

Meet Our Faculty

Beginning in high school, American studies professor Bianet Castellanos had an interest in the history and the culture of the indigenous people of Mexico. That particular history wasn’t easy to explore.

Read more about Professor Castellanos' work.

Meet Our Alumni

CLA Graduates: Successful Careers and Purposeful Lives

CLA graduates succeed in many different careers — law, health care, medicine, business, government, teaching, advertising, arts and entertainment, international relations, and more — precisely because they understand how to navigate a complex and interconnected world. As our alumni explain below, “Being a good employee means being curious, and continuing to evolve, and learn, and educate yourself, and I can think of no stronger foundation for doing that than a liberal arts
“An education in the liberal arts is a springboard to lifelong career success”
-- Dean John Coleman

You might also explore

Art History
Global Studies
History
Political Science
Sociology

Associated Careers

Advertising, Marketing, and Public Relations Managers; Museum Curators; Elementary, Middle, and High School Teachers; Government Executives and Legislators; News Analysts, Reporters, and Correspondents; Public Interest Lawyers

Admission Information

FRESHMAN: Admission information
TRANSFER STUDENTS: Requirements for the College of Liberal Arts

Beyond admission, if you have questions about transferring, the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) has transfer advisors to help. Please feel free to contact them about any of the topics below!

• Course plans before transferring
• Estimated time to graduation
• Career preparation in CLA
• Getting ready for orientation, if admitted
• Connecting with major/minor departments