

American Studies at KU

MA Program Requirements

Required courses	=	18 credit hours
Elective courses	=	12 credit hours
Total	=	30 credit hours

I. Required Courses

A. AMS 801, 802, 803, and 804 (12 credit hours total)

These courses constitute a four-semester sequence: entering graduate students should take 801 during the fall semester of their first year of graduate work and the remaining courses in subsequent consecutive semesters. This sequence of core courses is designed to initiate and reinforce the process of preparation toward completion of the master's degree—that is, completion of a master's thesis or a coherent integration of courses and issues upon which a written examination would be based.

B. Two graduate seminars (6 credit hours total) on broad general topic areas related to American studies (e.g., race and ethnicity; gender; sexuality; class; religion; political economy; material culture; popular culture; social and cultural theory; visual arts, etc.). Given the program's recognition of and commitment to the critical examination of difference and power in American life, students are strongly encouraged to include among these two seminars at least one that focuses on issues of race and ethnicity, gender, class, or sexuality.

C. Master's candidates are required to demonstrate historical depth in their concentrations.

II. Elective Courses and Options (12 credit hours)

Elective courses should constitute a coherent subject concentration, including historical depth in the subject that prepares the student for either the master's written examination or for writing a thesis.

A. Examination Option (discussed fully below):

A minimum of 12 credit hours of elective courses

B. Thesis Option (discussed fully below):

1. A minimum of 6 credit hours of elective courses
2. 6 credit hours of thesis direction

Master's Examination Option ([checklist for M.A. exam](#))

The written exam is designed to test the candidate's (1) grasp of the substantive conceptual and methodological knowledge that he or she has acquired through his or her course work and (2) ability to show relationships between his or her areas of special competence and the wider socio-cultural system. The candidate's knowledge should transcend the study done for particular courses. To achieve this, the candidate should consult with the examiners during the semester before the exam is to be taken and compile appropriate reading lists from which the examiners' questions will be constructed.

Students choosing the written examination option must complete a minimum of 30 hours (with a grade point average of 3.0 or better). By the end of the semester in which they take the exam, they must also have completed a minimum of 12 hours in their concentration. Early in the semester in which they plan to receive the degree, M. A. candidates selecting the written examination should consult with their advisors in writing a précis describing the integration of their work. The précis will guide faculty examiners in formulating appropriate questions.

The examination committee shall be comprised of three members chosen by the student in consultation with the advisor, who normally acts as chair of the committee. The committee shall represent at least two disciplines. Normally, at least one committee member should be a member of the American Studies Steering Committee. Exceptions to this policy will be granted only after petition to the Steering Committee. Customarily, each committee member submits two questions for the examination; the student is required to answer one question from each examiner. All students are advised to exercise their responsibilities to review their curricula and areas of concentration with each faculty examiner prior to the exam.

Written notice of intent to take the exam should be filed with the American Studies office at least three weeks in advance of the examination. The examination is written, read, and evaluated (on the basis of Pass or Fail) by each member of the committee. A favorable majority is required for passing the written exam. After a student passes the master's exam, the committee will make a second judgment, based on the M.A. exam and the student's complete graduate record, whether to recommend to the American Studies Faculty that the M.A. be regarded as a terminal degree in the program or whether the student should continue study in pursuit of the doctorate.

Master's Thesis Option ([checklist for M.A. thesis](#))

Students choosing the thesis option must complete a minimum of 30 hours of course work with a grade point average of 3.0 (B) or better: 12 hours of American Studies core courses, 12 hours of electives (including at least two semesters), and 6 hours of thesis. Master's candidates selecting the thesis option should, in consultation with their advisors, select a committee to oversee and evaluate the thesis. The composition and selection of a thesis committee will follow the same guidelines as for the master's examination committee described above. One member shall act as chairperson and will, among other tasks, ensure that the student and all members of the committee share a common understanding of the objectives, substance, and methods of the project throughout its course.

After the student's committee has approved the thesis, the student shall make to the committee an oral presentation and defense of the thesis research and its significance to the broad field of American Studies. After completion of this oral presentation, the thesis shall be considered completed upon the approval of a majority of the committee members. After a student successfully completes the thesis, the committee will make a second judgment, based on the thesis and its oral presentation and the student's complete graduate record, whether the student should regard the M.A. as a terminal degree or be permitted to continue to study toward the doctorate.

To complete the M.A. degree, **two unbound copies** of the thesis (including a title page signed by the committee members) must be submitted to the College Graduate Division. (Complete instructions are available in the Graduate School office, 300 Strong Hall, or at <http://www.graduate.ku.edu/>.) In addition, **two hard-bound copies**, one for the thesis chair and one for the program, must be submitted to the American Studies program.