

Assessment Plan
BA in American Studies at the University of Rochester

Program Goals

The BA in American Studies program is a multidisciplinary undergraduate degree program that will enable graduates to draw on several disciplinary perspectives in the understanding of and contribution to American culture, history, law, and government. With a theoretical foundation drawn from history, English, and other disciplines, graduates are prepared for diverse post-graduate study and professional career paths that can include law, social service, teaching, art, or business.

Program Learning Objectives and Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

The program learning objectives are to develop students':

- A. Objective: Knowledge of the foundational theories and methods of one or more of the major's constituent disciplines, with emphasis on the disciplinary perspectives of history and English.

PLO 1. Students will be able to demonstrate basic conceptual understanding of theoretical foundations of American history and literary studies.

PLO 2. Students will be able to demonstrate in-depth knowledge of his/ her specialization which include Arts in American Culture, Identity and American Culture, and American Thought and Institutions.

- B. Objective: Mastery of critical reading and thinking

PLO 3. Students will demonstrate ability to apply theoretical frameworks and methods of constituent disciplines of American studies in close, critical analysis of historical and literary texts, in interpretation of evidence, understanding and evaluating points of view and developing effective arguments.

- C. Mastery of expository writing skills

PLO 4. Students will be demonstrate ability to convey ideas and develop theses in clear, well organized, written form including essays, short analyses, and research papers.

- D. Mastery of methods of research in one or more of the major's constituent disciplines.

PLO 5. Students will demonstrate ability to use methods of research including framing of questions, evaluating primary and secondary sources, well documented thesis, and citing of evidence.

- E. Objective: Mastery of ability to synthesize diverse materials across disciplinary boundaries in order to explore intellectual questions.

PLO 6. Students will demonstrate ability to examine intellectual issues in American studies using a synthesis of frameworks from constituent disciplines.

- F. Objective: Appreciation for both diversity and commonality in the United States, past and present.

PLO 7. Students will demonstrate appreciation for diversity and commonality in the US, past and present, through students' framing and discussion of issues in their written work and classroom discussions.

- G. Objective: Understanding of the role of the United States as a global actor.

PLO 8. Students will demonstrate knowledge of historical and contemporary perspectives on the United States as a global actor through students' framing and discussion of issues in their written work and classroom discussions.

- H. Objective: Appreciation for the importance of and active participation in American democracy as a liberally educated citizen.

PLO 9. Students will demonstrate an appreciation for the importance of active participation in an American democracy through students' framing and discussion of issues in their written work and classroom discussions.

- I. Objective: Students will be prepared for diverse career paths that reflect the multidisciplinary foundations of American Studies.

PLO 10. Students will be able to apply their knowledge and abilities gained in the American Studies program in pursuit of diverse career paths that reflect the multidisciplinary foundations of American Studies.

Assessment Measures

Direct Measures

1. Independent/ capstone research experience overseen by faculty. Student research paper/ project will be scored by faculty overseeing project using a scoring rubric developed for PLOs 1-7. In addition, beginning in AY 2011-2012, a sample of student papers will be gathered every three years and reviewed by the American Studies faculty curriculum committee.

5. Research paper/ project completed by students in an upper level course in which program learning outcome is addressed at advanced level (see Table 1 for list of American Studies curriculum courses marked with "A"). Faculty will identify a significant research paper / project within courses in each American Studies track. Student research paper/ project will be scored by faculty in charge of course using a scoring rubric developed for PLOs 1-7. In addition, beginning in AY 2011-2012, a sample of student papers will be gathered every three years and reviewed by American Studies faculty curriculum committee.

Indirect Measures

1. Annual senior Survey in which seniors self-assess achievement of PLOs 1-9. Survey will be managed and reported to program by UR Director of Assessment, and reports reviewed annually by American Studies curriculum committee.
2. Alumni Survey in which alumni self-assess achievement of PLOs 1-9 (distribution every 4 years). Survey will be managed and reported to program by UR Dir.of Assessment, and reports reviewed by American Studies curriculum committee.
3. Record of self-reported student/alumni participation in internships, positions, activities related American Studies major (data gathered from Senior Survey and Alumni Survey) as indirect measure of PLO 9.
4. Record of self-reported student/ alumni career paths including graduate school admission, post-graduate degree completion, and jobs (data gathered from Senior Survey and Alumni Survey) as indirect measure of PLO 10.

Table 1. Alignment of American Studies Curriculum and Program Learning Outcomes

American Studies Curriculum	English 115	Hist 251, 252, 267, 268	AMS 200	Amer. Studies Track courses (4 courses)	Amer. Studies Track courses. Students complete at least 1 advanced course with significant research paper/ project.	Independent / capstone research paper/ project
Program Learning Outcome						
PLO 1. Students will be able to demonstrate basic conceptual understanding of theoretical foundations and methods of American history and literary studies.		I	R	R	A	A
PLO 2. Students will be able to demonstrate in-depth knowledge of his/ her specialization which include Arts in American Culture, Identity and American Culture, and American Thought and Institutions.				I/ R	A	A
PLO 3. Students will demonstrate ability to apply theoretical frameworks of constituent disciplines of American studies in close, critical analysis of historical and literary texts, in interpretation of evidence, understanding and evaluating points of view and developing effective arguments.		I	R	R	A	A
PLO 4. Students will be demonstrate ability to convey ideas and develop theses in clear, well organized, written form including essays, short analyses, research papers.	I	I/ R	R	R	A	A
PLO 5. Students will demonstrate ability to use methods of research including framing of questions, evaluating primary and secondary sources, well documented thesis, and citing of evidence.			I/R		A	A
PLO 6. Students will demonstrate ability to examine intellectual issues in American studies using a synthesis of frameworks from constituent disciplines.			I/ R			A
PLO 7. Students will demonstrate appreciation for diversity and commonality in the US, past and present, through students’ framing and discussion of issues in their written work and classroom discussions.		I	R		A	A
PLO 8. Students will demonstrate knowledge of historical and contemporary perspectives on the United States as a global actor through students’ framing and discussion of issues in their written work and classroom discussions.		I	R		A	A
PLO 9. Students will demonstrate an appreciation for the importance of active participation in an American democracy through students’ framing and discussion of issues in their written work and classroom discussions.						
PLO 10. Students will be able to apply their knowledge and abilities gained in the American Studies program in pursuit of diverse career paths that reflect the multidisciplinary foundations of American Studies.						

I = introductory level subject in which student begins development of ability in major: R= intermediate level subject in which student ability development is reinforced: A= advanced level subject in which student ability development is at mastery/ advanced level.