BA American Studies and English
Course Handbook
2018/19
Welcome from the Head of HAHP School

Since its inception in 1961, the University of Sussex has consistently ranked among the best British universities for the study of arts and humanities.

In 2009 the University brought together four leading programmes - History, Art History, Philosophy and American Studies - into a new dedicated School of study. The subjects we teach focus on the ability to reason, to analyse, to take critical positions and to expound them. Your studies with us will be an intensive high-level training in how to think - whatever your area of study - fitting you with the skills for a wide range of careers.

The School of History, Art History and Philosophy (HAHP) combines high-quality teaching, cutting edge international research and a friendly and supportive atmosphere.

Professor Liz James
Head of School of History, Art History and Philosophy
Welcome from the Head of Department of American Studies

Welcome to the American Studies and English BA degree! As an American Studies student (with or without a joint degree with another subject) your home school is always HAHP, where American Studies is located. Although half your studies will be in the School of English, HAHP remains your primary School and your first point of contact regarding your course overall. You will graduate with the rest of the American Studies cohort - many of whom are joint honours students with English, History, Politics or Film - and with other students from the HAHP School.

This is the course handbook for your joint degree. It contains important information about how degree course and related matters are organised, which you will need to know as you progress through your years of study here. Please read it carefully. We look forward to meeting you and wish you an enjoyable and fruitful time at Sussex. You are now a member of a higher education academic community. There will be exciting challenges ahead, and we look forward to helping you master them.

All of your lecturers and seminar tutors have office hours twice a week – do by all means avail yourself of the time that they place at your disposal. Your lecturers and tutors are friendly, approachable, and knowledgeable people. They want you to feel
at home at Sussex, help you to succeed as a student, and help you to grow as a person.

I am always happy to meet with you during my office hours or by appointment, and I very much look forward to the opportunity of getting to know you.

Doug Haynes, B342, Director, Sussex Centre for American Studies
D.E.Haynes@sussex.ac.uk

Welcome from the Head of School of English

A very warm welcome to the School of English. Through BA degrees in English Literature, English Language and Linguistics, American Studies, and Drama, we engage with the historical, creative, performed, theoretical, and linguistic aspects of English as a world language and literature. The School is committed to providing our students with teaching of high quality, founded on the expertise of over 50 members of academic faculty whose research has overwhelmingly been celebrated as internationally excellent. Our aim is to provide you with a supportive and intellectually stimulating environment as you work in your chosen degree course, in one of the most exciting Schools of English in the UK. I hope that you will take full advantage of what Sussex University has to offer you, from the wide range of modules and opportunities for study abroad, to the vibrant student networks on campus and in Brighton. I very much hope that you have a pleasurable and productive time with us at Sussex, and look forward to meeting you!

Professor Carol Watts: Head of the School of English
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Key Contacts in your Department and Schools

The American Studies Department sits within the wider unit of the School of History, Art History and Philosophy (HAHP). Administration of your degree and modules is organised by the School, though half of your modules are taught by English. As a joint student with English you will also use the English School Office for much of the English side of your degree. HAHP is situated in Arts A on campus, while English is situated in Arts B (for a campus map, please see https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=campusmap.pdf&site=271).

Your most immediate places to go for help with your degree are:

**HAHP School Office**, Arts A7, and **English School Office**, Arts B133

Your first point of contact for any administrative issues or difficulties that arise, such as changing modules, change of contact details, etc is:

**American Studies Departmental Co-ordinator**: Arts A7,
americanstudies@sussex.ac.uk
Your joint degree convenor is the second person you should contact with regard to any issues arising from the joint nature of your degree: Natalia Cecire N.Cecire@sussex.ac.uk

Other useful contacts are:

**Head of American Studies**  Doug Haynes, Arts B342, D.E.Haynes@sussex.ac.uk

**Head of School**  Liz James, Arts A130, E.James@sussex.ac.uk

**School Director of Student Experience**

Hester Barron, Arts A151, H.Barron@sussex.ac.uk

**School Director of Teaching and Learning**

Kathleen Stock, Arts A114, K.M.Stock@sussex.ac.uk

**School Administrator HAHP**  Deborah Jackson-Smith, Arts A115, D.K.Jackson-Smith@sussex.ac.uk

**School Administrator English**  Emma Carlyle, E.L.Calyle@sussex.ac.uk, B264

In addition, you can find out the contact details of your lecturers and seminar tutors, by checking Sussex Direct (see p.14).

**How we contact you**

We will use your university email address to contact you (not a private one). Therefore, please check it regularly for important course and module information.
Careers and employability

It’s never too early to start thinking about your future career after you leave Sussex. The Careers and Employability Centre is based in the Library. See the Careers and Employability Centre’s website for more details of workshops, cv advice, internship opportunities, employer drop ins, job fairs, individual appointments, and lots more:

http://www.sussex.ac.uk/careers/services/students
The BA American Studies and English degree

As an American Studies and English student, you are a HAHP School student: your degree is administered by HAHP. There will be small differences in tutors’ expectations of you between the modules you take, which stretch across different Schools and subject areas: English, History, Film, Music, etc. Therefore, please do take the opportunity to talk to your tutors and other members of the American Studies faculty; visit them in their office hours, email them, have coffee with them if necessary, to find out how best to write essays and give presentations and perform the academic tasks your degree involves. Substantive differences in style and approach towards assessment across your Humanities-based subjects will be minimal. In fact, you will find it productive to learn how different disciplines work alongside one another. But it is good to be prepared. This degree is a challenging and rewarding one exactly because it demands your engagement and flexibility of thought. You will be taking a wider variety of modules than other students and experiencing the cultures of a number of different Schools and learning styles. This will prepare you for the year abroad in the US and will equip you further for the independent thought and research that your final year work will entail.

BA American Studies and English course aims

The aims of the American Studies course are to:

- Have gained knowledge of the region broadly defined, across a range of disciplines and historical periods
- Have learned to appreciate and understand a range of theoretical approaches to the study of the U.S. and will have gained specialised knowledge in one disciplinary approach.
- Be able to analyse the production, consumption and reception of texts within their historical and cultural context.
- Be able to appreciate a range of literary, historical and political traditions and their effects on cultural formations and identities.
• Have benefited from the educational and cultural experience of a Year Abroad and contributed to the international mission of the University through this aspect of the course.

• Have developed the intellectual and practical skills needed to learn independently.

• Be able to communicate and explain what they have learned clearly in written and oral form.

• Have developed skills that will prepare them for employment in a wide range of contexts or for further study.

• The aims of the English course are to:
  1. Study literatures in English across a range of genres and historical periods.
  2. Analyse the production, consumption and reception of texts within their historical and cultural context.
  3. Appreciate a range of literary traditions, both dominant and marginal, and their effects on cultural formations and identities.
  4. Appreciate and understand a range of theoretical approaches to the study of literature.
  5. Appreciate complexity and variety of language and genre.
  6. Relate literary texts to other media and discourses.

**American Studies and English course learning outcomes**

The American Studies course learning outcomes are as follows ("course learning outcomes" are the skills, abilities and characteristics we expect you to acquire over the length of your American Studies degree course). By the end of your time at Sussex, we expect you to:

• Have demonstrated detailed knowledge of and critical engagement with the US broadly defined.

• Have acquired a range of core and personal attributes, cognitive, research, practical, and transferable skills (HAHP Core Transferable Skills).
• Have gained an understanding of the social, cultural, and historical context in which texts are produced and read.

• Have gained knowledge of a range of literary and/or historical and/or political texts from different periods, including before 1800.

• Have demonstrated awareness of, and ability to use and evaluate a diverse range of relevant information and research resources, including major internet-based resources.

• Have demonstrated awareness and understanding of relevant vocabulary of contributory methodologies and theories that are relevant to the US, and will have the capacity to assess the merits of contrasting approaches.

• Be able to recognise, represent, and critically reflect upon ideas and concepts from other cultures.

• Have gained specialised knowledge in one disciplinary approach to the US.

• Have studied the US through interdisciplinary approaches to the subject area.

• Demonstrate competence in the close reading, description and analysis of literary texts.

• Distinguish generic literary conventions and describe their importance for the shaping of meaning.

• Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the distinctive characters and histories of texts written in the principal genres of poetry, fiction and drama.

• Understand the influence on literature and on literary theory of cultural norms, historical circumstances, discourses of authorship and modes of textual production.

• Structure and develop an argument in clear prose and demonstrate command of a broad range of critical vocabulary and critical concepts.

• Reflect critically on the relationships between literature and other media including film.

• Apprehend the range and diversity of global literature in English.

• Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a range of literature in English from different periods, including literature from before 1800.

• Use bibliographic and referencing skills appropriate to the discipline and in conformity with professional conventions.
- Demonstrate effective oral communication skills through participation in seminars and/or in group presentations or through other media as appropriate.

Module Information

The most up-to-date and accurate information on the modules you can take as an American Studies joint student with English is here:

http://www.sussex.ac.uk/ahp/internal/americansciences/ugcourses/2018/TQ731U

You have to take core modules; you can choose the options you would like. Detailed information on modules is also available on this page.

Study Abroad Year

You will spend your third year studying at one of our US or Canadian partners’ campuses. Our range of partner institutions represents every facet of the American experience and includes over 40 American institutions spread across the country and encompassing many different kinds of university and style of educations, from the UC system to Brooklyn College. The preparation, research and selection process for your year abroad happens during your second year. You will receive advice and help from the Year Abroad Office and from the Year Abroad Officer in American Studies, currently Anne-Marie Angelo, Arts A153, A.Angelo@sussex.ac.uk

See here for the full current list of North American institutions:

http://www.sussex.ac.uk/americanstudies/undergraduate/
Please note that you must attain an average of at least 50% in your first year in order to qualify for your year abroad. American universities will also see your whole first year array of marks and attendance and part of your second year. It is hence important to have a good record of attendance as well as sufficiently high marks, especially if you plan to apply to one of the more exclusive American institutions.

You will choose your American placement during the second year by researching different institutions and through dialogue with the Year Abroad Officer. The Sussex selection procedure will be explained clearly to you in meetings with Anne-Marie and the Study Abroad Office. You must attend these meetings in order not to miss out on important advice and information. Students tend to get their first or second choice of US university.

**Reading weeks**

In some modules you will have one week designated as a “reading week.” This is NOT a holiday and is to be used to catch up on reading for your module or to prepare for assessment. Normally you should not go home. Since reading weeks differ from Department to Department, and HAHP and English do not always have the same reading weeks, you should continue to attend classes in your other modules, if they are held.

**Choosing your options**

You will choose your options for the next academic year around the middle of the second term of the previous academic year. You will be sent an email by your departmental co-ordinator at the relevant time. In addition, you will be sent detailed descriptions of all the module available to you in order to help you make an informed choice. If you want further information, please drop in to see the tutor of the module you are interested in during their office hours (see below).

**Student feedback and drop-in hours**
Every member of teaching faculty holds “student feedback and drop-In hours” (sometimes also known as “office hours”) each week during term time, which will be advertised on their office doors and on Sussex Direct. These hours are for, among other things: following up material discussed in lectures or seminars; raising questions you still have; trying out new ideas; discussing any feedback you have received on written work or presentations. They are a form of contact hours available to you throughout your degree, should you wish to make use of them. You are strongly encouraged to “drop-in” during these hours or else make an appointment via email. (If a tutor is away without notice during a published office hour, please let the American Studies Co-ordinator know- see p.5).

Teaching and learning on the American Studies Degree

Modules on the American Studies and English are typically taught via a lecture which is 1 or 2 hours long, and smaller group seminars later in the week, which are also one or two hours long. Sometimes modules are augmented by workshops.

In addition to attending lectures and seminars, you are expected to do independent reading and note-taking and any other tasks the lecturer has set you for the week.

Much of your course material is found on Canvas https://canvas.sussex.ac.uk/, the University’s online learning platform, which you will need to check every week. You should be automatically subscribed to the Canvas sites for your modules but if not, please contact American Studies Co-ordinator (see p.5).

Any additional reading material not on Canvas can be found via the University Library http://www.sussex.ac.uk/library/ In addition to their physical copies of books, they have an extensive electronic library which is accessible remotely. Please contact your tutor if some recommended book or other reading is not there so they can order it for you.

All of your class times and locations, and the contact details of your tutors, are to be found in your timetable on Sussex Direct https://direct.sussex.ac.uk/login.php. Sussex Direct is the University’s online tool for administrating your degree. Please contact American Studies Co-ordinator (see p.5) if anything is missing or in error.
Helpful learning resources for your American Studies and English degree

As one of the first programmes of its kind in the United Kingdom, beginning in the early 60s with the help of Marshall Plan money from the U.S., American Studies at Sussex offers a rich and deep array of library resources to support undergraduate and postgraduate study. Whether your research interests tend toward literary or historical topics, the library at Sussex makes available to you an extensive collection of texts, historical documents, microforms, scholarly books, and journal holdings, all carefully and painstakingly assembled by American Studies experts over the past forty-odd years. We are adding to that collection on a daily basis with higher levels of library spending than ever before.

The following links are meant to serve as an entrée for students and scholars into the American Studies collection housed on campus:

- University of Sussex Library American Studies subject resources
- Primary sources for History dissertations available at University of Sussex: 1860-1945
- Primary sources for History dissertations available at University of Sussex: since 1945
- Primary sources for History dissertations available at University of Sussex: colonial-1860

Helpful learning resources for the English part of your degree

http://www.sussex.ac.uk/english/internal/forstudents/assessment_feedback_submission

http://www.sussex.ac.uk/english/internal/forstudents/uginformation/ughandbooks

http://guides.lib.sussex.ac.uk/english
For those interested in surveying American Studies resources available on the internet or elsewhere in the United Kingdom, the following links will also be of interest:

- Arnet: online resources for American studies (http://www.americansc.org.uk/index.htm)
- Documenting the American South
- Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers
- The Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the American Civil War

A key resource for American Studies and English students is this concise and useful guide to writing essays at degree level. Do read this document and use it for reference from your first essay onwards. It contains information about style, footnotes, best practice for essay presentation and some great practical tips on how to get the best out of the process:

*Essay Writing Made Easy*

Here are some other helpful guides to the assessments you will undertake as an undergraduate at Sussex:

*Examination and Assessment Information*

*Sussex Skills Hub*

*E-submissions and e-feedback help pages*

**Academic mentors**

Mentors are HAHP PhD students who are available to help you with a range of study skills, such as time management and effective planning, help with presentations, planning and structuring written assessments, revision skills and exam preparation, contributing effectively to seminars, and making the best use of feedback. Mentors
run lunchtime drop-in sessions every day of the week; see posters around the school for details.

**Brushing up your general academic skills**

The Careers and Employability Centre runs a range of workshops on specific skills such as: academic writing, planning and structuring essays; referencing; managing stress; revision; and more. See here for a range of online and in-person resources: [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/careers/studyskills](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/careers/studyskills)

**English Language skills**

The Sussex Centre for Language Studies offers resources designed to help students improve their academic English and their understanding of British academic culture.

They offer free workshops, 'time to write' sessions and one-to-one tutorials throughout the academic year for students for whom English is not their first language. These are available to international/overseas students studying for a degree at the University of Sussex.

Contact the team on elas@sussex.ac.uk or see here for more details [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/languages/english/elas](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/languages/english/elas)

**Assessment**

Whilst at Sussex you will sit a range of mid-term and end-of-term assessments, and get marks for them. In First Year, these marks will contribute to an overall mark which determines whether you can progress to Second Year. In Second and Final Year, your marks will be combined to compose your eventual degree classification. Degree classifications are as follows: First (70-100), 2.1 or ‘Upper Second’ (60-69), 2.2 or ‘Lower Second’ (50-59), Third (40-49), Fail (39 or below). Your Second Year marks will be weighted at 32%, your Year Abroad at 20% and your Final Year marks will be weighted at 48% of your overall degree mark.
Assessments may take the form of essays, gobbets, presentations, exams, dissertations, take away papers or in-class tests, for instance.

The Examination and Assessment Regulations govern the way in which all taught students – undergraduate and postgraduate – are examined and assessed at the University of Sussex. Follow this link to the full examination and assessment handbook.

‘Assessment criteria’ broadly describe the characteristics typically associated with various marks and classifications. For American Studies Assessment Criteria, follow the links below:

http://www.sussex.ac.uk/hahp/internal/documents/assessment-criteria.doc

Feedback on your work

Written feedback will normally be provided to all students on all assessments within three weeks of the assessment deadline. If it is necessary to return comments after this time, every effort will be made to notify students in advance, but please remember that sometimes there are unexpected delays for reasons beyond our control (e.g. staff illnesses).

We aim to make our feedback clear and helpful, giving you constructive information about how to improve which you can take forward to other assessments in the rest or your degree. If anything is unclear about a piece of feedback, or you don’t feel it has been as helpful as it might be, we strongly encourage you to discuss it further with your lecturer or tutor during an office hour (see p.11). If you have a complaint about a piece of feedback, please contact the School Director of Teaching and Learning (see p.5), about it and they will try to resolve the matter.

In addition to written feedback, you will get informal feedback during seminars, as you discuss, explore and clarify new ideas with your tutor and fellow students.

Electronic submission

Students taking first and second year modules will usually be asked to submit assessments electronically where assessments are text-based, for example, an essay. Your Sussex Direct webpages and module handbook will give all
assessment details, including whether the assessment is to be submitted via e-submission through Sussex Direct or in hard copy via the School Office. Feedback for all e-submission assessments will also be provided electronically.

Please refer to the frequently asked questions available on the following webpage for further information:

www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/standards/examsandassessment/esubmission

**Turnitin**

You are encouraged to use the internet-based text-matching service, Turnitin, prior to submitting your assessments. This may help you identify problems with your referencing.

Turnitin is also used during the marking process as a means of checking the originality of submitted work. From 2014/15 all assessments submitted electronically via e-submission will be uploaded to the Turnitin database and an Originality Report will be made available to the marker. Please refer to the frequently asked questions available on the following webpage for further information:

www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/standards/examsandassessment/esubmission

**Late Submission**

Should you miss an assessment submission deadline (for whatever reason) you may still submit the assessment after the published deadline. However, this will incur a penalty, as follows:

- Work submitted up to 24 hours late shall incur a penalty deduction of 5 percentage points (not 5% of the actual mark)
- Work submitted after 24 hours and up to 7 days late shall incur a penalty deduction of 10 percentage points (not 10% of the actual mark)
- No work shall be accepted after the 7 day penalty period has elapsed
Exceptional Circumstances - please see the Student Life website

The Student Life Centre

The Student Life Centre offers information and advice to all Sussex Students. Our aim is to help you to gain the best university experience you can, whatever your circumstances, by ensuring if you run into problems you get appropriate guidance and support.

The Student Life Centre is based in the heart of the campus: on the ground floor at the side of Bramber House. There are lots of ways to access our service. We are open from 9.00 am – 5.00 pm every week day, you can drop in to see us, call 01273 876767, email studentlifecentre@sussex.ac.uk or make an appointment – just go onto your Sussex Direct site, click on your ‘Study’ tab and then on Student Life Centre. You can select the advisor you wish to see at a time that suits you.

Amongst the many issues we can help you with are:

- Personal concerns affecting study progress or well-being.
- Funding and finance including scholarships, bursaries and hardship funds.
- Sources of help to improve academic performance – identifying obstacles to learning.
- Understanding university systems and regulations in relation to assessment, services, complaints, conduct, and discipline.
- Progression, intermission and withdrawal processes - discussion and support.
- Referrals to other professional services on campus.
- Exceptional circumstances claims help.
- If you don’t know who to talk to or who to ask – start at the Student Life Centre.

Because we are also a proactive service you may be contacted directly by the SLC while you are a student here as we may wish to offer you particular support. This may be, for example, in response to concern from your School about your attendance, participation or engagement with your course.
Good academic practice

The University takes academic misconduct very seriously, as does the American Studies Department. Academic misconduct includes plagiarism, collusion, and personation (getting someone else to write work for you). It is your responsibility to find out what constitutes plagiarism, collusion, and personation, and to avoid them. If in doubt, please ask your tutors. Here are some useful links:

Sussex Student Union information on academic misconduct: https://www.sussexstudent.com/support/academic-misconduct/

Sussex Skills Hub material on Plagiarism: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/skillshub/?id=386

Sussex Skills Hub Referencing and Plagiarism quiz: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/skillshub/?id=377

American Studies Department Referencing guide

University regulations on Academic Misconduct http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/standards/academicmisconduct

English language resources and support: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/languages/english/acadev

Your feedback to us

We like to hear from you how we are doing and how we might improve things. There are several ways you can get in touch:

- Informal feedback half way through the module, normally taken in class by your module tutor (if this doesn’t happen, please ask your tutor, or failing that, alert the Director of Teaching and Learning – see p.5).

- Electronic course evaluation questionnaires after the module is over (you will be sent an email with a link).

- A chat with your lecturer or tutor passing on any concerns you have.
• A chat with your Student Rep. For information about the Student Rep system, and to find your Rep, please see here
https://www.sussexstudent.com/student-reps/for-students/

• If you have a major concern that you can’t resolve with your tutor, please contact either the Director of Student Experience or the Director of Teaching and Learning (see p.5).

**What do to if you decide to change course**

We recognise that sometimes students can feel after some reflection that a course is not for them, and wish to change to some other more suitable course. If this describes your situation, please see the Curriculum and Assessment Officer Molly Butterworth (Arts A7, M.P.J.Butterworth@sussex.ac.uk) who will guide you through the process of applying to make a change. If you want advice on changing course, please see the Director of Student Experience, Hester Barron (Arts A151, H.Barron@sussex.ac.uk).

**The University Student Handbook**

For other more general material, please also see the University student handbook

http://www.sussex.ac.uk/students/essentials/studenthandbook/