

BA American Studies

Course Handbook

2018/19

Welcome from the Head of 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 BA degree! This is your course handbook. It contains important information about how your 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

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Key Contacts in your Department and School

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 some modules are taught by English. 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>).

HAHP School Office

Arts A7

American Studies Departmental Co-ordinator (your first point of contact for any administrative issues or difficulties that arise, such as changing modules, change of contact details, etc.) americanstudies@sussex.ac.uk

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 Deborah Jackson-Smith, Arts A115,

D.K.Jackson-Smith@sussex.ac.uk

In addition, you can find out the contact details of your lecturers and seminar tutors, by checking Sussex Direct (see p.12).

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.

WHERE DO I GO FOR HELP?

<p>WHAT? Homesick or struggling to settle in Money worries Personal issues Health worries Depression or anxiety</p>	<p>WHAT? Struggling with the module Questions about module content Help with assessments Feedback on assessments References for employment or further study</p>	<p>WHAT? Time management and effective planning Help with presentations Generic essay writing skills Revision skills & exam preparation Making the best use of feedback</p>	<p>WHAT? Change module options Queries about assessment submission Forms to be signed (eg railcards)</p>	<p>WHAT? Suggestions Queries about degree structure, options or electives</p>	<p>WHAT? Worried about the future after university Would like to get a summer job Unsure about how to write a job application or cv</p>
<p>WHO? STUDENT LIFE CENTRE</p>	<p>WHO? MODULE TUTOR</p>	<p>WHO? STUDENT MENTOR</p>	<p>WHO? SCHOOL OFFICE</p>	<p>WHO? HEAD OF DEPARTMENT</p>	<p>WHO? CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY CENTRE</p>
<p>WHERE? Ground floor of Bramber House (opposite end to co-op). You can make an appointment or drop in. 01273 876767 studentlifecentre@sussex.ac.uk</p>	<p>WHERE? Drop in to see your module tutor or convenor in their office hours, or email to make an appointment.</p>	<p>WHERE? Mentors run daily lunchtime mentoring drop-in sessions. See posters around the school or the HAHP internal website for details.</p>	<p>WHERE? Arts A7 - on the other side of the pond to the Arts Piazza cafe. You can also call or email. 01273 678001 hahp@sussex.ac.uk</p>	<p>WHERE? Drop in to see your head of department in their office hours, or email to make an appointment.</p>	<p>WHERE? On the ground floor of the library. You can browse their resources or meet with an advisor. 01273 678429 careers@sussex.ac.uk</p>

You can also email the HAHP Director of Student Experience, Hester Barron, at any time for support or guidance: student.experience@hahp.sussex.ac.uk.

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 degree

As American Studies students, joint and single, you are a HAHP School student, and your degree is administered by HAHP. Your main point of contact is the American Studies Co-ordinator. As interdisciplinary students, 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.

The following handbook is geared towards the Single Honours degree in American Studies.

BA American Studies 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.

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 developed:

- 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, from pre-contact culture to the present.
- 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 U.S. 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 region.
- Have demonstrated detailed knowledge of and critical engagement with the region broadly defined.
- Have studied the region through interdisciplinary approaches to the subject area.

Course structure

In YEAR ONE, modules will introduce you to the history, politics, visual culture and literature of the Americas. Your studies traverse America from Columbus's encounter of the 'New World' in 1492 to the counterculture of the 1960s to 9/11. Literary and cultural texts – including John Winthrop's Puritan sermons, Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, and Harriet Jacobs' slave narratives – will enrich your understanding of the Americas.

These are the modules running in the academic year 2018/19. Modules running in later years may be subject to change.

Core modules

- American Literature to 1890: Part I
- Introduction to American Studies
- Roots of America: From Colonial Settlement to the Civil War and Reconstruction
- American Literature to 1890: Part II
- Modern America

Options

- American Political Culture
- American Humour
- The Look of America

Alternatively, you may choose to take one or two elective modules from other subject areas.

In YEAR TWO, you will choose from a range of modules. Some focus on New Orleans, where you explore the roots of jazz music. Others focus on New York City, where you will analyse the long, rich, transnational history of this centre of immigration, business, entertainment and culture. In literature, you will analyse significant texts by writers including Gertrude Stein and Zora Neale Hurston, and learn about American modernity and postmodernist aesthetics. History modules

include a survey of the black freedom struggle, and a study of how the American Civil War has been remembered since 1865.

These are the modules running in the academic year 2018-19. Modules running in later years may be subject to change.

Core modules

- American Literature Since 1890: Part I
- The African American Experience
- Theoretical Concepts for American Studies
- American Literature Since 1890: Part II

Options

- American Cinema B
- Women in America
- American Cities: New Orleans
- American Cities: New York
- American Drama
- American Popular Music
- English in the United States
- Picasso to Kahlo: Transatlantic Dialogues
- Pulp Cultures
- The Nineteenth-Century American Short Story
- Time and Place: 1831: Slave Revolts
- Time and Place: 1861: The Coming of the American Civil War
- Time and Place: 1980: Iran Hostage Crisis
- Transatlantic Rhetoric: Public Speech and Anglo-American Writing 1750-1900

Alternatively, you may again choose to take one or two elective modules from other subject areas.

In your 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 representative – currently Anne-Marie Angelo

See here for the full current list:

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/americanstudies/undergraduate/abroad>

In **YOUR FINAL YEAR**, you can write a dissertation on a topic of your choice, with one-to-one supervision. Dissertations can be on topics as varied as gun control, to the 60s counterculture, to Black Lives Matter, to trans rights issues and to the musical *Hamilton*. You will also choose options from a range of modules and special author courses on writers such as Edgar Allen Poe, Henry James and Jean Rhys.

These are the modules running in the academic year 2018/19. Modules running in later years may be subject to change.

- America in the 21st Century
- American Culture & Consumption
- American Studies Dissertation
- Art and Letters: Visual Culture in its Literary Contexts
- Current Themes in the Anthropology of Latin America
- Documentary America: Non-Fiction Writing
- History Thematic Course: The Sixties
- Hollywood: Comedian Comedy
- Hollywood: Industry Imaginary
- Immigrant America
- Latin American Development
- Queer Literatures
- Rights, Justice and the Law in US History
- Special Author: Edgar Allen Poe
- Special Author: Rhys and Kincaid
- Special Dissertation: Civil Rights Movement
- Special Dissertation: The U.S in the Middle East, 1917-Present
- Teen Cinema: Coming of Age on the Screen
- The United States in the World

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).

Your Year in the United States

The Study Abroad Office and the Year Abroad Officer will help to coordinate your year abroad.

Your primary contact in the Study Abroad Office will contact you and your cohort during your second year to begin the planning process for your American year.

The Year Abroad Officer in American Studies, and your key point-person, is Anne-Marie Angelo, Arts A153, A.Angelo@sussex.ac.uk

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.

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 Degree 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.

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 the American Studies Co-ordinator in the School Office (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 administering your degree. Please contact the American Studies Co-ordinator in the School Office (see p.5) if anything is missing or in error.

Helpful learning resources for your American Studies 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](#)

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 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>

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>

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 of 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

From 2016, 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/>