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## **NATURE OF AMERICAN STUDIES AND ITS VALUE FOR ENGLISH FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS**

The article explores the cultures of the United States, as well as their transnational exchanges and impact. The discipline's practitioners seek to understand the historical origins of particular cultures and practices held by individuals and groups within the United States and how those values and beliefs shape social and political realities within and beyond U.S. borders.

**Key words: culture, USA, exchange, historical origins.**

В статье рассматриваются культуры Соединенных Штатов, а также их транснациональный обмен и влияние. Практикующие по этой дисциплине стремятся понять историческое происхождение определенных культур и практики, проводимых отдельными лицами и группами людей в Соединенных Штатах. Эти ценности и убеждения формируют социальные и политические реалии внутри и за пределами границ США.

**Ключевые слова: культура, США, валюты, исторические истоки.**

American Studies explores the cultures of the United States, as well as their transnational exchanges and impact. The discipline's practitioners seek to understand the historical origins of particular cultures and practices held by individuals and groups within the United States and how those values and beliefs shape social and political realities within and beyond U.S. borders. The approach that American Studies takes is interdisciplinary, meaning that in American Studies it helps to answer these questions using tools developed by numerous disciplines including history, sociology, anthropology, literary criticism, folklore, media and science and technology studies.

Besides American studies as an interdisciplinary science provides students with the opportunity to combine courses on art, journalism, literature, music, politics, religion and sociology of the United States into a single major. It emphasizes student initiative in crafting a distinctive program of study that meets the academic interests of each major. Here American Studies also plays an essential part in studying English language for foreign language students.

What is American Studies?

The Major in American Studies is an interdisciplinary and comparative program of study that addresses the U.S. as the outcome of historical processes that are both national in contour and also global in scope. Such processes include migration, labor accumulation, land acquisition, cultural dissemination, implications of U.S. laws and policies, and identity formations

around gender, sexuality, and race.

As an interdisciplinary enterprise, American Studies is not merely characterized by the accumulation of knowledge from different disciplines. It is the arena within which fields in the social sciences and humanities are re-imagined in coherent interrelationships. Students and faculty study within a variety of academic settings, which might include literature, history, sociology, anthropology, geography, cultural studies, art history, urban studies, political science and women's studies. As a comparative enterprise, we study the U.S. in relation to other nations and cultures around the globe.

It should be noted that American Studies also includes the minor in Asian American Studies and connected to African American and African Studies, American Indian Studies and others to make it possible for students to concentrate their work in one of those cultural areas.

What does it mean to be American? What are the origins of American ideals, politics, values and culture? How are their lives shaped by race, ethnicity, class and gender? These are some of the questions explored in American Studies, that delves into American culture and history. Students use perspectives from many fields to gain an understanding of the American experience and its relation to our complex, interconnected world.

The focus area for the American Studies major or minor is a unique feature of the American Studies. Each student creates a concentration area centered on topic that interests him or her - for example, political conflict in the U.S., gender and

popular culture and religion and American activism. The focus area allows students to think creatively about their education and make connections between areas of study.

It seems that students in American Studies have synthetic capabilities that more "disciplined" students lack. This is what Gene Wise called "the connecting mind." Because there are lots of disciplines, and lots of interstices, American Studies has traditionally been committed to "sing the body eclectic," celebrating both disciplinary work and the interdisciplinary work that builds on (and between) it.

#### Mission and Philosophy of the American Studies

The Study of America within a global context invites us to understand society from multiple perspectives over time and space. We can learn how to address complex questions about the dynamics that have shaped Americans and the nation-race, culture, religion, economy, arts, ideas, music, and politics, as well as the ways in which the United States has attempted to shape other nations through war, economics and mass culture. Studying American Studies gives us the skills, perspective and context we need in order to live in a pluralistic and global world. American Studies assists us to train our majors to live, think, and work in a global world that demands not only experts but people who think critically, multiculturally, and creatively. That means considering issues of diversity and equity. American Studies gives students the opportunity to address problems that interest them.

#### Goal of the American Studies

American Studies is a challenging form of inquiry into the meaning of the American experience, usually characterized by a thematic, holistic perspective on American culture, ideas and worldview. It takes as its evidence cultural texts, symbols, and performances; historic events, documents, landscapes, and artifacts; social/political/intellectual movements; and diverse communities and individual profiles. A significant goal of the American Studies enterprise is to identify and interpret patterns, ideas, and themes characterizing the nation and its people. It seeks perspectives on the United States as a unity and diversity of cultures. It uses evidence from traditional and popular expressions - including songs, houses, festivals, novels, films, to name a few - in addition to notable events, arts, and figures studied in America. It recognizes the

country's cultural legacy in comparison to national movements and societies across the globe. It also considers American culture and communities as part of the experience of other countries and regions. It has played a special role in public as well as academic sectors, informing careers especially in education, museums, historical and cultural agencies, libraries and archives, government, and communications.

#### Opportunities to students

While inquiring the structure of American Studies we can see that it has had a publicly active orientation to the advancement of knowledge, where its different sections are identified by the actions taken to achieve intellectual synthesis: locating, identifying, narrating, collecting, materializing.

As the fact the American Studies are well-established and well-respected by many employers who are attracted to graduates for their rigorous training in analysing information and in making creative links between subject areas. American Studies emphasis on key skills – in essay writing, presenting, team working, IT and research – enable students to display to potential employers that they have far more than a degree when they graduate.

The range of careers recent American Studies graduates can enter; they include Accountancy, Civil Service, Information Management, Marketing, Media, Public Relations, Publishing and Social Services. In case when students want to continue studying they can qualify for a profession like Law, or take a vocational Masters course in Journalism or Teaching.

#### Skills Gained

American Studies fosters a wide range of useful skills. The multidisciplinary nature of the American Studies promotes flexibility of thought, initiative and the capacity to communicate persuasively both in writing and speech.

In addition students develop analytic, organisational and team-working skills that will prove advantageous in their life and career beyond university. The growth of the global market over the last twenty years means that many jobs in the public and private sectors have an international and often a transatlantic dimension. Employers are looking for independence, creativity, maturity and a broad cultural outlook, all of which are stressed in the American Studies.

#### Conclusion

When we know what we're doing, that's what

American studies are; and that's certainly what American Studies expresses and elicits. As the old saying goes, when you come to a crossroads, and you're trying to figure out which way you want to go, it's helpful to remember which way you came from. American Studies locates us in a tradition of much creativity and promise.

American Studies often examines experience and the past to gain a perspective on the future.

American Studies is an ongoing debate, a continued formulation of questions and answers relating to the very idea of what America might be, and the manners in which it could be studied, both past and present.

American Studies, then, is an interdisciplinary

branch of learning. Its subject is "America." Its roots include concepts of place, nation, stereotype, symbol, and culture, and they include various definitions of one particular place -- America -- that are both related and worth distinguishing. In "doing American Studies," as in deciding how to define America or culture, scholars aim to be responsive to the diversity of peoples they study, their ability to affect and be affected by turns of events, and by their own sensibilities.

Summing it up, I should say that American studies besides all-above mentioned brings a time of great intellectual excitement—of perimentation, exploration, critical ferment, and lively debate.

### Notes

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2. Jay Mechling, Robert Merideth, and David Wilson, "American Culture Studies: The Discipline and the Curriculum," *American Quarterly* 25 (1973): 363-89. This essay, more than any other, is responsible for the "anthropological turn" in American Studies.

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