



CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

Jenna Petok '08

American Studies, Dance



Q: What drew you to the American studies major?

A: I thought I wanted to do a self-design major involving government and journalism, and when I met with Dean

Ammirati she said, "Have you thought about American studies?" It was the perfect fit for someone like me who wants to explore history, government, English, sociology, and how they fit into the context of American history and current events.

Q: What were your favorite classes?

A: My favorite classes were "Politics and Culture in the U.S. since 1917" with Professor Stock, where our final project involved determining and analyzing the most significant cultural events in U.S. history in the past 20 years, and "Theorizing Race and Ethnicity" (the inaugural class!) with Professor Kim, which had a challenging course load that led to captivating discussions during class.

Q: Did you study abroad?

A: I studied abroad with other Connecticut College students on SATA Rome, led by Professor Rivkin. It was incredibly rewarding to get fresh perspectives and think globally as a college student.

Q: What are your career plans?

A: I work in public relations at Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in New York City. Alvin Ailey changed the way the world saw dance. Now, over 50 years since he founded his company, it has been named "Cultural Ambassador to the World" by Congress. I feel fortunate to work at a place so rich in cultural history and in the field that I am passionate about.

American Studies

Overview

At Connecticut College, American studies is an innovative, dynamic and interdisciplinary major focused on two critical issues: race and ethnicity and the role of the United States in the world. Our program is one of the strongest such liberal arts college programs in the country, and every year it is among the top majors at the College. After you complete the core requirements for the American studies major, you'll have the opportunity to concentrate on one of three areas of study: comparative race and ethnicity; expressive arts and cultural studies; or politics, society and policy. You'll also participate in community service, fieldwork or an internship. Our graduates can be found in government and non-governmental organizations, as well as graduate studies and academia, where they are shaping the thinking about key issues.

Self-Directed Study

The American studies major is student directed: You'll have the opportunity to shape your own educational experience through the courses you choose, as well as your honors or independent study project. American studies majors have done research on a wide range of topics, including the representation of adolescent sexuality on reality television programming and its possible impact on actual sexual behavior, a critical look at the dolls created for young girls in America and a comparison of religious tolerance in France and the United States.

A Globalized Major

American studies has a worldwide scope and is a connecting point for researching and teaching about race and ethnicity. Recent students have examined the rise of eating disorders in Latin America and the role of American popular culture in the de-Nazification of Germany in the 1950s. Other students have written papers about the impact of Eastern European sports training methods on American sports and how Beijing's selection as an Olympic Games venue has contributed to China's economic rise. The American studies major also is affiliated with Unity House, the College's multicultural center, and the College's interdisciplinary Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity.

Study and Service Abroad

Through study and service at home and abroad, American studies majors encounter first-hand the issues they explore in the classroom. American studies majors have worked and studied around the globe, including South Africa, New Zealand, Germany and Mexico. A course on Latin American migrations and immigration

took students on a trip to the Texas/Mexico border, where they lived with local families. Students in our civil rights seminar have traveled to many of the most important locations of the African-American freedom movement. Students have also gone to New Orleans to see the ongoing impact of Hurricane Katrina.

Faculty

Theresa Ammirati, *Assistant Professor of English; Dean of Studies*

B.A., Douglass College, Rutgers University; M.A., Lehigh University; Ph.D., University of Rhode Island
American studies; 20th-century American literature; rhetoric and composition

MaryAnne Borrelli, *Associate Professor of Government*

B.A., Wellesley College; M.A., Ph.D., Harvard University
Gender and the presidency; U.S. environmental politics and policy, focusing on the American southwest; United States national institutions

David Canton, *Associate Professor of History; Director of the Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity*

B.A., Morehouse College; M.A., The Ohio State University; Ph.D., Temple University
Twentieth-century American social history; civil rights

movement, urban history, hip-hop music and black culture in post-industrial America

James Downs, *Assistant Professor of History*

B.A., University of Pennsylvania; M.A., Ph.D., Columbia University
Nineteenth-century United States history; African-American studies

Cherise Harris, *Assistant Professor of Sociology*

B.A., Seton Hall University; M.A., Ph.D., University of Georgia
Race, class and gender; marriage and the family; social psychology

David Kyuman Kim, *Associate Professor of Religious Studies*

B.A., University of Rochester; M.Div. & Th.D., Harvard University
Philosophy of religion; religion and critical theory; religion and political theory; modern and contemporary religious

thought; human agency; moral philosophy and ethics; religious theory; Asian-American studies

Jennifer Manion, *Assistant Professor of History; Director of LGBTQ Center*

B.A., University of Pennsylvania; Ph.D., Rutgers University
Gender and sexuality; women and social movements; early America

Catherine McNicol Stock, *Professor of History; Director of the American Studies Program*

B.A., M.A., Ph.D., Yale University
Rural radicalism and domestic terrorism; social, cultural and political history of the United States, 1877 to present, including the American West; rural America; the Great Depression and the New Deal



WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH A MAJOR IN AMERICAN STUDIES?

Ethan Stewart '00

Staff writer for the *Santa Barbara Independent*.

Has received three separate excellence in journalism awards from the California Newspaper Publishers Association.

Adrienne Capaldi '06

Teaching in New York City with Teach for America.

Earned a certificate from the College's Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy, was captain of the cross-country team and political chair of the Society Organized Against Racism.

Andrew Higgins '07

English language assistant and a teacher of American history and culture at a school in Andalusia, Spain.

At Connecticut College won the first annual FLIP (Freelance Integrated Poetry) Slam Poetry/Spoken Word contest. Studied abroad in Puerto Rico and worked on an anthropology/archeology field project in Puebla, Mexico.

Selected Courses

Introduction to American Studies; Theorizing Race and Ethnicity; Politics and Culture in The United States Since 1917; History of Sexuality; African-American History; Latin American Immigration and Migration; The Globalization of American Culture Since 1945

About Connecticut College

Connecticut College is a highly selective residential liberal arts college with 1,900 students from all over the country and the world. The academic program offers 43 majors in the arts, sciences, social sciences, humanities and other interdisciplinary programs. Students engage with dedicated faculty and each other to create a vibrant social, cultural and intellectual community in which learning is valued for its own sake — and individuals' diverse perspectives enrich the experience of all.

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