WHAT CAN I DO WITH A MAJOR IN … AMERICAN STUDIES

OCCUPATIONAL OVERVIEW:

According to the UNM American Studies (2013) website, “American Studies is a formal academic discipline that began more than seventy years ago as the United States was undergoing a series of crises over the meaning of the nation. Then, as now, American Studies has posed critical questions to Americans about the meaning of the United States in a global society.” The UNM American Studies (2013) department provides a variety of concentrations: 1) Transnationalism, Globalization, and Colonialism; 2) Critical Regionalism and Southwest Studies; 3) Critical Race and Class Studies; 4) Environment, Science and Technology Studies; 5) Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies; and 6) Comparative Cultural and Popular Culture Studies. American Studies further explains that, “students have the opportunity to develop an interdisciplinary approach to their specific areas of interest, and receive training in a broad range of historical, literary, visual, and ethnographic theory and methods.”

“What can you do with a major in American Studies? In the years after our students graduate from UNM, they routinely find success in law school, graduate school (and not only in graduate programs in American studies but also in History, Geography, Anthropology and English), in journalism, and art. They become professors. They work in positions in government agencies, in museums and as independent writers. They are filmmakers and artists” (UNM American Studies, 2013).

EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS:

A bachelor’s degree is the minimum formal education required, and is excellent preparation for entering a variety of diverse occupations that require excellent writing skills, competency in research, and strong interpersonal skills. However, depending upon the student’s career interests, some occupations may require a graduate degree (Master’s, Ph.D., J.D.). Consult O’Net for more information on the specific KSAs (Knowledge, Skill, Ability) that are required for this career.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO:

The UNM American Studies Program offers a bachelor’s degree in American studies and it also “offers the only Ph.D. in American Studies in the Rocky Mountain region and one of the largest and most diverse programs in the country” (UNM American Studies, 2013).

INDUSTRIES & TARGET EMPLOYERS:

A variety of employers specifically recruit UNM students and alumni. Consult UNM’s Lobo Career Connection for a complete list of employers and current job postings. Speak with a Career Development Facilitator at the UNM Office of Career Services for help with identifying employers or additional resources for your occupation of choice.

Government
City or town management, translation/interpretation, regional planning, public policy, intelligence, community affairs, campaigning, legislative assistance, public information, research, lobbying, conflict negotiation, program administration, general services, social services, foreign service, legislative, executive, or judicial services

Communications/Education
Public relations representative, technical writer, researcher, columnist/journalist, editor, publicationist, elementary or secondary educator, professor, principal, admissions, financial aid, academic advising, alumni affairs, international education and study abroad, career services, residence life, student activities and Greek life, orientation, leadership, multicultural student programming

Museums and Galleries
Administration, curatorial, preservation and conservation, restoration, registrarial, collections management, exhibit design/preparation, archive management, art authentication, education, publications, development, docent coordination, public relations, reproductions and retailing, museums: university, public, private, archives, historical homes, special collections, historical societies, natural history museums, living history museums, art galleries, state and local government, federal government, particularly the National Archives and Records Administration, non-profit organizations, research institutions, corporations
Research/preservation
Exhibit preparation coordinator, historical background analyst, librarian, biography creationist, preservationist, museum specialist, curator, conservator, restorer, research association

Human Services
Youth counselor, social work specialist, case worker, volunteer services coordinator, community planning specialist, community organization worker, employment counselor, parole/probation officer, development officer, welfare, investigator

Business/Nonprofit
Market research analyst, personnel officer, sales/marketing representative, investment researcher, underwriter, insurance agent, loan administrator, manpower planner, organizational planner, management trainee, campaign planner, corporation, historian/archivist, consultant/research, consultant/cultural resource management, banker, stockbroker, account coordinator, customer supply analyst, arts council director, fundraising director, grants specialist, tour guide, foundation administrator, policy analyst, hospitals and other healthcare organizations, print and electronic media, retail stores, restaurants, hotels, manufactures

Communication
Journalism, creative writing, freelance writing, copy writing, editing, research and analysis, advertising, newspapers, magazines, broadcast media companies including television and movie industry, trade, professional, or consumer publications, Internet sites, advertising agencies, publishing house, self-employment/freelance

Student Affairs:
Administration, Greek affairs, advising, multicultural affairs, residence life, student activities

Suggested Strategies
• Gain professional experience in your area of interest through involvement in internships, student employment, Co-ops, and/or volunteer opportunities.
• Consider working in multiple departments throughout campus to gain experience in areas you are interested in through work study or student employment.
• Make strong connections throughout campus organizations by networking and attending campus events and activities.
• Consider earning a second degree, minor, or pursuing additional coursework in a complementary field of study (e.g., business).
• Focus on developing “transferable skills” such as computer competency, written/verbal communication, and project management.
• Seek leadership opportunities on campus. Some positions may require an advanced degree.
• Students who are interested in graduate school should maintain a high undergraduate GPA and develop relationships with faculty and community leaders.
• Speak with mentors and faculty about career opportunities.
• Research government internship program and think about interning with a government agency to get a foot in the door, as well as building your resume.
• Make sure to research organizations’ values, so it could be congruent with yours. Knowledge about organizations is critical, because it shows to employers that you’ve done your research and committed to work for them.

WHO HIRES AMERICAN STUDIES MAJORS?
• Universities and colleges, support programs (e.g. Educational Advancement Program, Upward Bound, etc.), community libraries, and nonprofit organizations

WHERE SHOULD I BEGIN?
USA Jobs (official job site of the federal government) www.usajobs.gov
Idealist.org (comprehensive site of international nonprofit opportunities) http://www.idealista.org/
STATE AND NATIONAL WAGES
Adapted from CareerOneStop (2013):

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INFORMATIONAL/ORGANIZATIONAL WEBSITES

UNM American Studies
American Studies Association
Britain Association for American Studies
American Studies Crossroads Project
American Historical Association
American Studies Majors DC Internships
The FUND for American Studies

OTHER INFORMATIONAL WEBSITES


REFERENCES