



AMERICAN CULTURE

Creating a future in which the past is thoroughly understood and the present supports human flourishing and justice while enacting an ethic of care and compassion

The Department of American Culture (AC) and its four constitutive ethnic studies programs promote socially and publicly engaged scholarship and teaching aimed at understanding the struggles and creativity that have produced the cultural fabric of America. In particular, we seek to illuminate the significance of, the lived experience of, and the relation among race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, and religion, within and extending beyond the borders of the United States. Interdisciplinary connection sits at the heart of an excellent liberal arts college, and American and Ethnic Studies—which have historically negotiated between history, literature, and the social sciences—epitomize the creative crossing of disciplines. Our faculty members have joint appointments in units ranging from History and English to Romance Languages and Literatures, Film, Television, and Media, Women’s and Gender Studies, Afroamerican and African Studies, and Sociology.

Bristling with renowned scholars, many of whom are still in the early stages of their careers, AC is a center for diversity within the University of Michigan, with a majority of women and faculty of color and with a creative and integrative approach to Arab and Muslim American Studies, Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies, Latina/o Studies, and Native American Studies, all of which call the department home. And our mix of senior, mid-career, and young faculty has created a center of American Studies without rival.

As one of the oldest and most well-established American Studies programs in the nation, the Department of American Culture (active since 1935) and its ethnic studies programs make a significant difference to the life of the university, the profession, and the non-academic world. We offer our undergraduates a culturally sophisticated education, emphasizing a new conception of American ethnic studies, one rooted in global migration and movement, transnational identities, and transforming technologies. We are leaders at the University of Michigan in promoting the digital humanities, working closely with the Digital Studies Institute. We place such interests in dialogue with the world of cultural production and consumption—new media, music, visual culture, film, and advertising. And we underpin the entire enterprise with a deep appreciation for the history, literature, and art that has been and continues to be produced from American centers and margins.

AC students explore the American experience through traditional disciplines such as history, literature, and ethnography, and through emergent fields such as popular cultural studies, ethnic studies, and digital studies. Our undergraduate students frequently turn to civic careers in public arts and history, education, politics, and law while others enter into publishing, marketing, advertising, journalism, television, or film. AC's doctoral graduates are found in every kind of higher educational institution, from community colleges to the Ivy League. We also are committed to public scholarship and cultural and intellectual programming, including residencies and lectures, in partnership with public arts organizations, nonprofits, and educational institutions. The Department of American Culture, the Arab and Muslim American Studies Program, the Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies Program, the Latina/o Studies Program, and the Native American Studies Program stand as leaders in American and Ethnic Studies nationally and promise to do so for the foreseeable future.

UNDERGRADUATE WRITING AWARDS

Each year, the department awards two named prizes to American Culture majors (including ethnic studies sub-majors) and/or Latina/o Studies majors for the best essays on topics related to the field of American Studies/Ethnic Studies. The establishment of these annual awards in 2007 celebrates AC's commitment to support our undergraduate students in the pursuit of academic excellence. Support of \$10,000 annually for this fund would provide the resources needed to expand these awards and recognize additional excellent undergraduate students.

UNDERGRADUATE INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Students hone their practical skills in real-world situations by participating in internships across the United States and in countries around the world. For liberal arts students, this experience is critical. With these opportunities, our students apply their skills in practical ways and gain experience and exposure that lead to future career possibilities. Your gift to the college internship program will help support American Culture students with funding for summer and academic year internships. We seek gifts for internships that will provide students with support ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000 to help cover travel and living costs, as well as stipends for students in unpaid summer internships who, without such support, would not be able to participate because of financial barriers. American Culture students have held internships in museums, social justice organizations, relief agencies, the popular culture industry, and media outlets. An endowed gift of \$100,000 will provide funding for two to five students.



“American Culture has been the most influential part of my experience at the University of Michigan. From my ramblings about the future to all the research questions/topics I was interested in, I received so much support and encouragement. Especially while writing my senior honors thesis, the department helped me realize how much I love research and want to continue further in my studies. More importantly, I was able to learn so much more about myself as an Asian American. None of this would have been possible without the supportive staff, faculty, and fellow students!”

–Lisa Ryou, LSA '23

UNDERGRADUATE OFF-CAMPUS RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Juniors and seniors benefit enormously from gaining experience in such off-campus research methods as archival work, direct observation, or interviewing. Gifts of \$50,000 annually would provide travel and lodging costs for several carefully designed major research projects.

GRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP IN PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP

Gifts of \$25,000 or more to support research fellowships in public scholarship will build mutually beneficial partnerships between American Culture graduate students and a broad spectrum of cultural and arts institutions—museums, historic sites, sites of conscience, performing and visual arts organizations, nonprofits and other community groups, government agencies, schools, and other educational partners. Fellowships provide the resources for graduate students to attend workshops and conferences for networking and training opportunities; support a graduate student’s work on a public scholarship project in the planning, pilot, or implementation phase; or supply funding for the planning, writing, and producing of collaborative publications that grow out of the student’s community-engaged scholarship. An endowed gift of \$600,000 to support public scholarship fellowships would allow us to support a graduate student each year.

NAMED PROFESSORSHIP

Endowed professorships have long been recognized as both a hallmark of academic quality and a means by which a university honors its most esteemed scholars, artists, and teachers while creating a philanthropic legacy. They are instrumental in attracting and retaining the most eminent scholars in the field, who influence generations of students and enhance the reputation of the department and institution. Professorships are reserved for scholars of national, or even international, stature, with highly distinguished records of teaching, research, and publication. In response to the urgency of this need, and to demonstrate LSA’s commitment to being the leader and best in these fields, the college is offering a match to endow the first professorship in each ethnic studies areas. The standard investment of \$2.5M for a professorship in LSA would qualify for a \$250,000 match, enabling a gift of \$2.25M to establish an endowment to support a professorship in one of the ethnic studies areas. This investment would cement the University of Michigan’s place at the forefront of original research and scholarly knowledge in the field, as well as excellence in instruction and community outreach.

“American Culture provided me with a vibrant community of mentors and colleagues that I value to this day. During my time in AC I was encouraged to engage in cross-disciplinary scholarship, which allowed me to be exploratory in my scholarship and career choices, and has ultimately led me to a fulfilling career in research and advocacy.”

***–Hanah Stiverson, Ph.D.
Extremism Research,
Human Rights First***

PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP ACTIVITIES

We envision creating an American Culture Community Showcase to bring together the campus and community partners monthly each academic year to engage with the public and educate the community at large about issues studied by faculty and students in the department. An endowed gift of \$800,000 would support novel and impactful public scholarship activities by the department and ethnic studies programs. We would use these funds to build the department's capacity to undertake public scholarship and build awareness in the community about topics like refugees, pop culture, indigenous culture and languages, and cultural history and museums in America.

STRATEGIC FUND

The strength of our strategic funds is critical to our ability to pursue new opportunities and enrich ongoing activities in the department and within specific ethnic studies programs. Contributions of all sizes to the American Culture, Arab and Muslim American Studies, Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies, Latina/o Studies, or Native American Studies Strategic Fund can help support crucial activities such as:

- *Undergraduate Arts in Action:* Undergraduate students and faculty could collaborate to bring a speaker, artist, or performer to campus with the goal of sponsoring three to five cultural activities each year.
- *Public Intellectuals:* AC would host public intellectuals on campus to forge tighter links among the cultural producers and analysts that cluster around the department.
- *Teaching Initiatives:* AC could fund the design and teaching of interactive, skill-based courses in larger undergraduate classrooms (30 students or more) in which instructors will engage students through a non-lecture format. Also, it could provide additional support as needed for faculty members to organize simulations or other group-learning projects in class.

WAYS TO FUND YOUR GIFT

Your gifts of cash, pledges, or appreciated securities change lives. Wills, estate, and planned gifts allow you to create a lasting legacy that will enable the best and brightest minds to experience a liberal arts education, solve problems in a changing world, and yield ideas and innovations that will make a difference in Michigan and around the globe.

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