

American Studies – the Local and the Global

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Abstract

American Studies is one of the first unique interdisciplinary areas of inquiry, emerging in the 1930s, strengthening and getting more and more popular after 1960s and 1970s, when inter-, multi-, cross-, and trans-disciplinary exertion spread everywhere. Scholars found it enlightening and enchanting to “smudge genres”, to trespass the boundaries between disciplines and borrow methods, sources, and subjects of other fields to open up their minds. Subsequently, not only in diverse of states in the U.S. universities, but according our research, in different parts of the globe the universities (International Black Sea University – Republic of Georgia; Akaki Tsereteli State University – Republic of Georgia; The George Washington University, Washington D.C. US; Penn State University – Pennsylvania, US; University of Michigan – US; University of New Mexico, US; University of SZEGED, Hungary; have freedom and are encouraged to add, subtract, and rearrange curriculums of American Studies programs on all three levels (B.A., M.A., Ph.D.), depending on geography, history, time, the groups of professors, the mission. And the mission is one: to describe the social, political and economic “rules” that have caused and are causing inequality in the U.S.; to strengthen democratic institutions on the example of the history of the United States of America.

Keywords: Culture, curriculum, exceptional, interdisciplinary, transnational

Introduction

The field of American Studies is not defined by what it chooses to include, but by what it refuses to exclude – which is pretty much everything (Deloria & Olson, 2017, p.3). This field repels definition of every turn. There are writers who take different attitudes on “the rules”, from strict compliance to constant rejection – and everything in between. For some, American Studies means something like classic literary criticism or cultural history. For others, it’s against the idea of “discipline”. For some, it’s founded on the folk, mass and popular culture of the United States. Others see the U.S. as an important but not all-describing-central pivot in a global and transnational orbit of people, ideas, money and goods. American Studies is in close dialogue with a number of adjacent fields – ethnic studies, disability studies, environmental studies, and more. It has always been linked to questions of politics and social justice and it has encouraged a method that stems from pressing social issues, one that takes seriously the past and present of those issues.

Scholars in American Studies often bring a certain enthusiasm to their work – that arises from a desire to change the world - and thus, to change the social, political and economic “rules” that have caused inequality. The “rules” of American Studies are more like the rules of a board game or bowling league; you can always create your own house rules, but it’s still worth learning the more standardized rules if you want to play with people outside your immediate circle of friends. It seems to us that becoming familiar with some common rules can actually help American Studies scholars in the work of understanding and explaining the nature of inequalities and dominations (Ibid, p.4). So American Studies scholars are not trying to dictate iron “rules” – but to describe practices that have proved helpful to many people thinking about American Studies, and that many scholars continue to use to great advantage. American Studies schol-

arship allows and encourages creativity. Knowing ‘the rules’ and questioning the rules are closely intertwined. Boundaries illuminate the ‘object’ of American Studies – the complicated things that we try to understand through interpretation and analysis.

The History of Stemming Diverse American Studies Field Programs in Georgian, United States and European Universities

American Studies is an interdisciplinary practice that aims to understand the multiplicity of the social and cultural lives of people in – and in relation to – the United States, both past and present (Ibid, p.6). Thus, American Studies’ object is two-sided. It reflects the Americans’ lives by Americans in the U.S. and another angle comprises scholarship of American Studies experts and students outside the country. Their prerogative is to explore the U.S. from outside. The definition can be focused on four of its most significant words: “interdisciplinary”, “America/United States”, “social” and “cultural”. There are multiple definitions of culture, but we have adopted the following:

- Culture can be described as a form or pattern that helps structure the thought and behavior of human beings and groups. It is transmitted through human actions and human-created objects. Each act of transmission carries the past of culture forward into the future. It’s historical. And still, culture changes. Each transformation of culture-from one generation to the next, from one social group to another, from one person to another – at the same time bears the possibility of transformation

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of culture. At one glance culture can be dissociated from other human worlds: the economic world in which we exchange value; the political world in which we face our collective governance; the legal world in which laws are established for our conduct; the ethical world in which people decided upon right and wrong; the social world in which people interact, the psychological world of people's inner beings. But simultaneously, culture is inseparable from each of these worlds; they are indivisible, on the other hand, from one another. Subsequently, culture is a certain analytical category that we utilize to think about a particular aspect of human life. So, our assumption will be: American Studies considers as one of its pivotal objects the question of culture, especially as it has been assigned to human beings settled in the place we know as the United States of America. "Culture" is moulded not only as practices and meanings, but as the analytical category. Social worlds are tightly linked to cultural formations, like: race, class, gender, sexuality, age, nation, religion, ability, etc. It's impossible to interpret the flows and fields, and contests encompassing culture without understanding the ways cultures function in relation to social groups. Revolutionary social groups endeavor to produce revolutionary culture. Major social groups exert to impose their cultural norms and values on subordinate groups. Paradoxically, dominant groups also often admire and apportion the cultural practices of the groups they oppress, e.g. admiration of African-American jazz performers by whites starting from roaring twenties of the XX century.

As a field, American Studies has taken on different names in different locations. Some colleges and universities have programs in American culture or American Civilization, clarifying the fact, that exploring culture has been pivotal to American Studies. The word American appears to be the third object of American Studies. People have tried to fix America for more than four centuries.

What then is the American, this new man?... He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds (J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, 1782, pp. 12, 60-61).

American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character (Turner, 1893, p. 12).

It was not particular environment that determined the American character or created the American type, but the whole of the American environment – the sense of spacious-

ness, the invitation to mobility, the atmosphere of independence, the encouragement to enterprise and to optimism (Commager, 1950).

These writings could serve as key moments in a particularly American kind of studies, intending to understand the nature of cultural life in the United States. J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur wrote during the earliest years of the development of the nation, and he underlined not only the newness and potential of American government and culture, but the transformative quality of the New World itself. Diverse people would "melt" together to create a new people, or what he depicted as "this new man". A century later, Frederick Jackson Turner envisaged the end of the frontier, and indicated that the experience of westward expansion explained the phenomenon he called "American character". By the middle of the twentieth century, Henry Steele Commager and many American Studies scholars would be typing to describe the "American mind" - a unique form of history, culture and shared identity.

Each of these scholars considered that there was something special about America. Whether it was the influence of the new world environment, of the divine experiment, the development of new political institutions, or the equating possibility of economic opportunity, there was something in America's location, history and possibility that made Americans different from other peoples. Featuring the various something that made American Americans, offered American Studies its earliest force taking us back to the eighteenth century. Although these traditional experiences have not drained the ways of deep and sophisticated analysis to make sense of America. Let's consider some of them.

One ever feels his twoness – an American, a Negro. From the double life every American Negro must live as a Negro and as an American, as swept on by the current of the nineteenth while yet struggling in the eddies of the fifteenth century, - from this must arise a painful self-consciousness, an almost morbid sense of personality and a moral hesitancy which is fatal to self-confidence (Du Bois, 1903, p. 502).

The status of the immigrant who came to America because he willed to do so and had an end in view, the status of the slave who was forced to come, and the status of the American native, who was here, in their original form, all differ. It is one thing to say, "I came because I desired to rule, another thing to say, "I came because I was compelled to serve", and quite another thing to say, "I was here and this continent was mine" (Parker, 1916, pp. 13-14).

It is often heard that the United States is exceptional – that its history and experience are not only distant but unique, and that this radical distinction marks its superiority over other nations. This "*American exceptionalism*" has a long history. One reason why it is exceptional is, that there is no single culture of the United States, no such thing as a distinct "American mind" or "American character". Rather, there are multiple cultures- each transforming, each overlapping, each struggling and fighting and sharing with one another. Some scholars have noted that cultural segregation is actually on the upswing, as the geographic mobility of a flexible labor marker makes it easier to seek out like-minded

friends and neighbors (Deloria & Olson, 2017, pp. 14-15).

- As a physical place that is the United States or perhaps the Western Hemisphere, with oceans and cities, mountains and rivers, borders and crossings that open out to other physical places around the world. People, objects, and "nature" flow in and out of this place.
- As a social world, built around myriad relationships and categories of identity. These relationships are often brutal, as the lines that define and distinguish people are not eradicated, but continually negotiated and changed.
- As an institutional world, full of structures that both generate multiplicity and constrain American's abilities to think outside of surprisingly narrow boundaries.
- As a cultural field – not simply the product of "many cultures" interacting but also an open ground exchange and a space for the creation of "the new". Such a field cannot be adequately conceived outside of the worlds of educational, political, economic, and legal institutions.
- As an imaginary, a set of dreams and ideals that motivate people to believe, think, and act in certain ways (Deloria & Olson, 2017, p. 16).

The stemming of the field of American Studies happened all at once in the 1930s, one of the first interdisciplinary areas of inquiry emerging out of crossings between history, literature, anthropology, culture, ethnic studies, pop culture, transnationalism and a range of perceptions often linked with social movements. The general historians were soon aware of sources of fresh and dynamic thought among their colleagues in economics, political science, and sociology, whereas literary historians found their interest in environmental goal, reflected among the historians of painting, sculpture, architecture. Both groups found the philosophers turning from the classical forms of their subject to pragmatism and experimentalism and from traditional histories of pure philosophy to a type of intellectual history which was firmly anchored to the time, the place, the group, and the thinker (Spiller, 1960, p. 210). According Spiller's point of view, the field helps to know economics, political science sociology, philosophy and even sculpture. Today such a list might be expanded to include disability studies, ethnic studies, women's studies, etc. at first glance it might seem like chaos, but there is also an order to things, unspoken rules. Considering the above-mentioned, we can conclude, that American Studies' specificity encourages us to add, subtract and rearrange as we build our own curriculum depending on geography, time, and the mission of the program. All these factors are considered, while designing the program at home and internationally. Americans have an interest especially how the United States is viewed and studied transnationally.

Therefore we've made a tour within the US borders and outside the country to observe the specificities of this unique field in different parts of the globe, to introduce the diverse designs of the American Studies programs that serve particular causes and missions.

Comparative Analysis American Studies BA Program International Black Sea University The George Washington University in Washington D.C. American Studies

As the participant of the American Studies Curriculum Design program in Washington D.C. and simultaneously the member of the International visitor's program in 2001, financed by the U.S. State Department to be exposed to the specificities of the oldest traditional and leading American Studies programs in U.S. at The George Washington, Michigan, New Mexico and Penn State Universities stimulated me to initiate the first American Studies BA English program in Georgia at the International Black Sea University in 2002, and later in 2004 winning the U.S. State Department Fulbright Grant and being the research professor at the American Studies Department of the George Washington University in Washington D.C. in 2004/2005, to develop the BA program at IBSU into M.A. programs in 2006, 2011 and a doctoral program in 2007, a central, solid, an only English program in the region.

Why at IBSU?

- The language of instruction was English at the International University (IBSU);
- It was the advice of the Cultural Attaché of the U.S. Embassy in Georgia – Sharon-Hudson-Dean; particularly at IBSU, because the language of instruction was English;
- This was the first Georgian-American project in the sphere of higher education, stimulated by the U.S. Embassy in Georgia.

In 2004/2005 as a Fulbright Grant winner,

- led the research at the George Washington University;
- attended fall-semester courses in: Culture, Literature, Gender;
- established BA, MA, PhD programs at IBSU and compiled the courses: American Multicultural Studies I, American Multicultural Studies II, American Culture and Society, American Institutions, American Women's History, Women's Studies in the US, and the PhD course American Ethnicity for the American Studies programs at IBSU. Therefore American Studies programs of GWU are familiar for me, and I adopted many elements from them, considering Georgian reality and market.

- E.g. Prof. Dr. Bernard Mergan – Head of the American Studies Department at GWU advised to teach American History, Culture, Literature (our major courses) for a longer period, during several semesters, as they are not familiar to applicants, and I realized it: history is studied during two semesters, culture – for three semesters, literature –for four semesters, etc. As for special courses: American Economics, Business Law, considering the market demands in Georgia, spec. courses were designed by corresponding professors, therefore some alumnae work at banks and business companies, besides embassies, departments of culture museums, foreign companies, higher institutions, moreover their BA program integrates additional concentrations: Am. Pop Culture and PR; Translation.

Penn State University (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania)BA program in American Studies

The program gives education to students in different spheres, raises them as critical thinkers, refined communicators, and global citizens, which coincides with our program goals. The American program explores the country's history profoundly, which is stimulated by the state geography and the location of the university near Gettysburg Battlefield, National Civil War Museum, U.S. Army Heritage Center, Historic Museum, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C. and this is beneficial for getting deep knowledge in culture, literature, art and architecture, film, folklore, music and media. IBSU AMS corresponds to Penn State AMS curriculum through courses: American History I, II, American Multicultural Studies I, II, American Culture and Society, Introduction to American Literature, American Short Story, American Novel; as well as one-semester courses: American Art, Hollywood, American Media.

University of Michigan

I got acquainted with American Studies program in this university in 2001, as a member of International Visitor's Program based on American Studies Curriculum Design Project, financed by State Department.

The program emphasizes the interdisciplinary studies of the American Multiculturalism and occupies the highest place in the world from the point of view of ethnicity research. The university is proud to be home to ethnic studies programs at Michigan:

1. African American Studies
2. Arab and Muslim American Studies
3. Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies
4. Latin American Studies
5. Native American Studies

Envisaging the unique multicultural background of the U.S., these programs dwell on exploring of the above-mentioned ethnic segments.

At IBSU American Studies programs allocate a significant part to multiculturalism. At BA level I read courses: American Multicultural Studies I, American Multicultural Studies II, and at PhD level- American Ethnicity. These courses and the courses: American History I, American History II dedicate significant part to African American, Latino/a, Native American Studies. The PhD course American Ethnicity considers separate American ethnic groups from both historic and contemporary viewpoint.

University of New Mexico

The American Studies Department of the university involves BA and PhD programs.

- BA program
- American Studies (Major)
- Southwest Concentration (Major)

The undergraduate program works out critical analysis among students. Critical writing skills provides students with opportunity to continue studies in MA program of any specialty and utilize this skill for promotion in any career.

Graduates continue studies not only in American Studies, but anthropology, media, art, and become professors. They work in positions in government agencies, museums and as independent writers, filmmakers.

In no other department on campus can a student find such a wide exposure to so many areas in cultural, political and environmental studies.

The large faculty in American Studies offer courses in six major areas:

1. Transnationalism and Globalization
2. Critical Regionalism and Southwest Studies
3. Critical race and Class Studies
4. Environmental and Social Justice
5. Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies
6. Comparative Cultural and Popular Culture Studies

If we compare UNM program courses with the IBSU American Studies courses, we'll have the following: the MA program (U.S. Foreign Affairs) includes the course: American Studies and Globalization; as for Gender courses, at the BA program at IBSU I read two courses: American Women's History; Women's Studies in the U.S. Race is studied in BA program junior course: American Multicultural Studies I,II. As for comparative Cultural Studies, IBSU program gives chance to students to compare cultures through courses: American Multicultural Studies I,II; American Culture and Society; American Media; American Politics.

Hungary. University of SZEGED

We are starting collaboration through ERASMUS program from 2018 Spring Semester. 2 exchange staff lecturers will give lectures and 2 BA students will study at SZEGED University American Studies program.

The comparison of AMS programs at IBSU and SZEGED gave following results: common is that both are English programs. Despite the fact, that in SZEGED the name of the program is “*English and American Studies*”, and our program is just “*American Studies*”, methodology is the same at the initial stage in both universities students’ English level is strengthened through the intensive courses in Reading, Academic Writing. From the 2nd year the major courses are introduced: Culture and Society, History, Literature. Both programs include Senior Thesis.

Iv. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

American Studies at TSU like IBSU is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary and belong to Humanities, as in both universities more than 70% of courses are humanitarian, though there is a wide spectrum of courses. E.g. in IBSU AMS program: there are one-semester courses: American Economics; American Business Law; NATO; etc. And this diversity gives chance to graduates to get well-employed. Despite the fact, that TSU and IBSU programs have important common parameters, they have differences as well:

- a. American Studies at TSU is a Georgia program. Major courses are: society, history, and politics;
- b. TSU program has no integrated concentrations.

IBSU

- a. American Studies all level programs are English. Dissertations are written and defended in English;
- b. Major courses are from the fields: Culture, history, literature
- c. BA program integrates two concentrations: 1) American Pop Culture and Public Relations; 2) Translation

MA American Studies program at SZEGED offers profound knowledge of major courses: culture, society, History, Literature, which are presented at I stage introduced through: History, culture, Introduction to Literature, whereas at the next stage followed by: Intellectual History, Politics, Popular and Visual Culture, Hungary-U.S. Relations, Gender Studies. The program works out critical and analytical thinking among students.

MA program US Foreign Affairs at IBSU – is the continuation, module of the multidisciplinary and simultaneously interdisciplinary BA American Studies program with a wide spectrum of courses: American History, Literature, Multi-cultural Studies, American Geography, American Women’s Studies, American Politics, Media, Hollywood, NATP, American Art, American Media, American Economics, Business Law, etc. The MA programs at IBSU and SZEGED have common courses in History, Politics, Georgian-American Relations like Hungary-US Relations. Both programs develop students’ analytical and critical thinking.

American Studies MA program (Penn State)

This program is based on the interdisciplinary model of the study of American Culture and Society, as well as other courses from different spheres, e.g. Education, Government, Communication and museums. The program involves the concentrations: Folklore, History of Culture, Politics, Pop culture, Media, International American Studies, Material and Visual Culture, museums, race and ethnicity, and regional studies.

At IBSU we also had an MA American Studies multidisciplinary program from 2006-2016, but as our BA program is based on a very diverse multidisciplinary program, and our students’ interest focused on a deeper exploration of the US Foreign Affairs and History, we integrated it with the MA program “*US Foreign Affairs*”.

The George Washington University in Washington D.C. American Studies. Master of Arts (MA)

American Studies at GW is one of the nation’s most rigorous and innovative programs. The program emphasizes interdisciplinary cultural analysis with approaches from anthropology, architectural history, art history, English, Geography, media studies, history, performance studies, and political theory. The department’s particular strengths are in cultural history and cultural studies, art and culture, race and ethnicity, gender, transnational American Studies, political and public cultures, religion, urban studies of space.

GW can pursue a general degree in American Studies, or can select from two concentrations: museums and material culture or historic presentation. The general MA is a strong cultural studies degree that prepares students for advanced work. The material culture and historic presentation, which draw on the department’s interdisciplinary strengths in the analysis of culture, provide professional training with strong links to pertinent D.C. cultural resource management institution – such as the Smithsonian Institution.

University of Michigan

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Envisaging the unique multicultural background of the U.S., these programs dwell on exploring of the above-mentioned ethnic segments.

At IBSU American Studies programs allocate a significant part to multiculturalism as well.

Akaki Tsereteli State University Faculty of Humanities American Studies MA program

The program is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary and offers diverse courses: geography, natural resources, native Americans and the population of the U.S. according race, class, ethnicity, gender, philosophy: Besides the major courses, the program involves three modules: U.S. History, American Literature, American Culture and Society.

If we compare this program with the IBSU MA program:

1. MA program at IBSU is the only English Program in Georgia;
2. As the BA program at IBSU is very diverse, we met the requirement of students and opened the MA program "U.S. Foreign Affairs", implying narrowing and at the same time deepening of the knowledge acquired at the BA level in connection with US history and foreign affairs.

Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies (Penn State)

The program benefits from Penn State Harrisburg's location in a capital region with internationally known heritage sites and American Studies resources such as the Gettysburg Battlefield, the towns of Hershey and Steelton, the Anthracitic Coal Region, the Amish Country. The program emphasizes critical cultural inquiry and the application of American Studies to governmental work, museums, cultural agencies, education, archives, communications. A foundation for this application is an understanding of the American experience developed within the intellectual legacy of American Studies.

Doctoral Program (IBSU) Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies

The program gives chance to doctoral students to conduct research in the American multicultural, historical-political and literature using theories, critical analysis, and worked-out methodology, based on my experience as the program coordinator with outstanding professors of American Studies PhD program at The George Washington University, Penn State, Michigan and New Mexico Universities in the U.S. taking into consideration the focal major courses accents in the above-mentioned universities; correspondingly literature and culture in The George Washington University, Historical-Political focus in Penn State University, Ethnicity in Michigan and New Mexico Universities.

Results of research always involve useful recommendations in different spheres, which can be used in governmen-

tal reforms, as well as in higher educational or other institutions while reading American Studies courses. It's a must for Doctorants:

1. To publish articles in English in the IBSU reviewed journal in Humanities International Black Sea University, ISSN: 2298-0245, reviewing is done in the U.S. by the American professors; 2
2. To publish articles in the periodical of the American Studies Annual International Research Conference "American Studies Periodical". IBSU. ISSN 1987-9105 www. ibsu. edu.ge

The George Washington University in Washington D.C. American Studies. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

GW PhD interdisciplinary program highlights major problems in American Studies and in related disciplines, such as art history, English, history and political science. Students develop research agencies early in their studies through participation in seminars and workshops, often drawing on the rich resources of Washington-based archives and research institutions.

University of Michigan

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University of New Mexico

UNM American Studies department was the first to offer the PhD program in New-Mexico. The Department promoted critically-engaged innovative academic research and teaching. American Studies is a formal academic discipline that began more than seventy years ago.

UNM's program, one of the first four American Studies programs in the nation, remains a dynamic place of critical inquiry, as well as a leading resource for scholarly explorations of the Southwest and New Mexico in particular.

Conclusion

As the United States of America is exceptional in many ways, so is the unique interdisciplinary American Studies field, allowing and encouraging American Studies scholar's creativity to trespass the boundaries of American culture, history, literature and establish dialogue with a number of bordering fields – in order to understand the multiplicity of the social and cultural lives of people-in-and in relation to the United States.

The specificity of the field encourages the Americanists in Georgia and other parts of the globe to design the curriculums creatively depending on history, geography, time, mission and professionalism of professions.

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