

Regular Am. Lit. and U.S. History	American Studies
In both courses, the study of works and events is usually linear, focusing on the works of a certain time or era.	The study of literature and history is thematic, though the study of historical events is still chronological within each theme.
Two separate courses that may overlap, but not necessarily. Often one course is ahead of or behind the other in time.	One course in which the two sides are inextricably linked always.
Work is largely individual, with the exception of periodic group work in class and the possibility of a few group projects.	<p>Work in class is almost always in groups. Students are specifically instructed on and evaluated on their collaboration in groups.</p> <p>Each unit is designed around a project that is based on a real-world job in the humanities field. All projects require research and planning, for which students receive guidance in class.</p>
For literature, most works are fiction, and most units are novel-based.	The readings for the course are about half fiction and half non-fiction, with the exception of the history textbook. Students - "read" primary source documents, film, art, and songs just as they would any other literary work.
Writing is generally course-specific. In literature, students write literary analysis essays, creative essays, and persuasive essays. In history, students write historical research papers.	<p>Writing focuses on essential questions that pertain to the unit being studied. Students are required to combine sources and draw from both literature and history to respond to their own essential questions.</p> <p>Students generally write the same amount as they would if taking two separate classes, but the type of writing may be different. They also receive the support of Writing Coaches, who are senior American Studies alumni.</p>
Students can succeed without needing to work with others for any extended period of time.	Students will not succeed unless they can learn to work well with others.

American Studies is for the type of kid who may not have the skill level for AP U.S. History or Honors American Literature, but still gets excited by working on projects and studying those subjects. This student is usually better at demonstrating his or her understanding of a topic by talking about it or doing something with it rather than by taking a test or writing an essay (though we do work on those skills extensively in the class, and both essays and tests are still a huge part of their grade). Most kids in the class liked group work going in and do not shy away from taking responsibility in groups (though we do have some "shy" students who are still good group members).

A student choosing this class is choosing an alternative learning environment in which the teacher is the facilitator of learning rather than the provider of knowledge. It is up to the students to teach each other much of the time through group projects and day-to-day collaborative learning activities. High motivation/low skills students seem to do really well in the class.