

see things from new perspectives

2026 Student guide



UNITED STATES
STUDIES CENTRE



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Study America at Sydney

The United States Studies Centre teaches some of the most innovative and interesting units of study in Australia.



These unique courses cover a wide range of subject areas, from US politics to American comedy, and foreign diplomacy to climate change. They are available to all University of Sydney students.

Our programs at the University of Sydney

The United States Studies Centre offers units of study as part of full-degree programs administered by the University of Sydney.



Exclusive study abroad and internship programs are also offered by the United States Studies Centre for which students earn credit towards their degree at the university.

For more information about the Centre's units of study, internships and study abroad programs, please visit ussc.edu.au/study.

For more information about how to apply to degree programs at the University of Sydney, please visit sydney.edu.au.





2,017

enrolments in 2024

23

units of study
offered in 2024

34

students participated in
study abroad programs

35

scholarships and
prizes awarded

ussc.edu.au

Major in American Studies

American Studies is one of the most diverse majors on offer at the University of Sydney, covering politics, history, culture, and even climate change. It offers experiences outside of the classroom such as internships, events and study abroad programs.

Thinking of studying a Bachelor of Advanced Studies and need a second major? American Studies will complement any number of fields while preparing you for Honours/Bachelor of Advanced Studies coursework in a possible fourth year of study.

Indicative course structure: Three-year degree with a major in American Studies*

YEAR 1		YEAR 2		YEAR 3	
S1	S2	S1	S2	S1	S2
AMST1202 #America: Media, Industry, Tech...	AMST1001 Global America	AMST2701 American Dreams	USSC2601 Power, Conflict and Diplomacy	Elective	AMST3601 American Perspectives
Core/elective	Core/elective	OLET2151* Understanding the USA	AMST2606 Stand Up USA: American Comedy and Humour	USSC3603 Dissent and Protest in America	FASS3999 Interdisciplinary Project
		OLET2120* US Violence: Terror, Guns...			
		OLET2107* Drug Wars			
Core/elective	Core/elective	Core/elective	Core/elective	Major/elective	Major/elective
Minor/major	Minor/major	Minor/major	Minor/major	Minor/major	Minor/major

Each box represents a 'unit of study.' A 'major' is generally 8 units of study and a 'minor' is generally 6 units of study.

*Note that an Open Learning Environment (OLE) unit is worth 2 credit points. Most other units of study are worth 6 credit points.

Indicative course structure: Combined three-year degree and Bachelor of Advanced Studies with a major in American Studies*

YEAR 1		YEAR 2		YEAR 3		YEAR 4	
S1	S2	S1	S2	S1	S2	S1	S2
AMST1202 #America: Media, Industry...	AMST1001 Global America	AMST2701 American Dreams	USSC2601: Power, Conflict and Diplomacy	USSC3703 US Studies Internship	AMST3601 American Perspectives	Project	Project
Core/elective	Core/elective	OLET2151* Understanding the USA	Core/elective	USSC3603 Dissent and Protest in America	FASS3999 Interdisciplinary Project	Advanced coursework	Advanced coursework
		OLET2120* US Violence: Terror, Guns...					
		OLET2107* Drug Wars					
Core/elective	Core/elective	Elective	Elective	Elective	Elective	Elective	Elective
Major	Major	Major	Major	Major	Major	Major	Major

Course structures in this guide are indicative only and subject to change.

“Majoring in American Studies is undoubtedly the highlight of my experience at the University of Sydney. The coursework was a masterclass in critical thinking. Being taught by inspiring academics who are deeply dedicated to their subject area tested my assumptions and shaped me as both a learner and thinker.”

Ava Kalinauskas

Research Associate at the United States Studies Centre
Bachelor of Arts Dual Degree, University of Sydney (Politics and American Studies)
and Sciences Po Paris



With interests spanning history, political science and literature, Ava was drawn to the multidisciplinary offerings of the American Studies major. The course’s enriching classes, professional development opportunities and mentorship equipped Ava with the skills and confidence to kick-start an international career in which she provides foreign policy and political insights on matters of interest to policymakers, industry and the public.

Units of study

AMST1001

Global America

This unit explores America's global influence and the consequences of its interactions with the world. It examines why America remains an insular society despite its global reach.

AMST1202

Hashtag America: Media, Technology, Industry

This unit examines the scope and impact of American media technologies and their global consumption. It surveys multiple forms and formats, including cinema, television, radio, podcasts, literature and social media.

USSC1201

America and Australia: The Issues Compared

This unit explores major American social issues by comparing them with similar issues in Australia, focusing on personal rights, race, mass incarceration and political differences.

AMST2608

Sex and Law in Modern America

This unit explores how the law has shaped concepts of gender and sexuality in the 20th and 21st-century United States and, in turn, how women, queer and nonbinary people, and their allies have challenged forms of discrimination embedded in law.

AMST2701

American Dreams

This unit introduces students to the complex richness of 'Americanness' and prepares them for the Major in American Studies. Divided into historically grounded modules (race, religion, gender, politics, region), the unit approaches each from various angles: historiographical, literary, cultural, political, and cinematic.

AMST2606

Stand Up USA: American Comedy and Humour

This unit charts comedy and humour's negotiations of race, class, gender and sexuality in American culture and politics.

AMST2607

Climate Change: Problems, Possibilities

Combining history, literature and politics, this unit examines environmental changes within and beyond the United States, considering perspectives on land management, human needs and state policies.

USSC2601

Power, Conflict and Diplomacy

This unit examines key strategic challenges in US foreign policy, including security commitments in various regions and responses to domestic political movements for racial justice and equality.

USSC2602

US Politics: Race, Power, Polarisation

This unit explores American political institutions and culture, focusing on power dynamics, economic inequality, racial tensions and political polarisation.

USSC1604

American Icons: Pop Culture, Star Power

This unit explores the cultural history and intersections between sexuality, race, and American pop culture, from Elvis to RuPaul.

USSC3601

Public Opinion and Voting in the US

This unit examines political beliefs and behaviour in the United States, including public opinion, voting patterns, and the impact of race and party identification on elections.

USSC3603

Dissent and Protest in America

This unit surveys the history of social movements and protest in the United States, covering topics such as abolitionism, feminism, Civil Rights, labour movements and grassroots conservatism.

USSC3703

US Studies Internship

This unit offers students the opportunity to apply their knowledge through an internship in an American-based or affiliated organisation located in Australia or the United States, with assessment including a research project tied to the internship experience.

AMST3601

American Perspectives

This capstone unit presents key texts in the shaping of an American intellectual tradition, considering classic and contemporary debates in American society.

Open Learning Environment (OLE) units

OLET2151

Understanding the USA

This unit introduces students to the politics, culture, economy and society of the world's most powerful nation. It expands on five distinct facets of the United States: regionalism, politics, culture, society and money. Students will learn what makes the United States different, what makes it rich, what makes it poor and what makes it unique.

OLET2120

US Violence: Terror, Guns, Punishment

Centred on the War on Terror, this unit introduces students to the political, cultural and economic issues that drive American violence. Students will identify the relations between the history of American empire, global terrorism and the privatisation of state violence.

OLET2107

Drug Wars

Starting with the US War on Drugs, this unit introduces the cultural, political, health and economic issues of the international illegal drug trade. It advances an understanding of the global commodity chains, migrations, political decisions and cultural meanings that imbue drug production, distribution and consumption.

For a complete list of undergraduate units of study, please visit ussc.edu.au/undergraduate.



Honours

Upon completing a Bachelor's degree, students can pursue a year-long research program that involves the production of a thesis. Honours can be the capstone to an American Studies major giving students an edge on other graduates with their level of expertise in a specific area of enquiry. The autonomous pursuit of information and setting of personal goals better prepares students for the workforce and honours in the first or second class is a great pathway to PhD research.



Freya Bruce-Gilchrist

Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Advanced Studies (Honours), recipient of the University Medal, recipient of a Cambridge Australia Scholarship to undertake PhD studies at the University of Cambridge

“The American Studies discipline is incredibly flexible and I was encouraged to use unconventional means to explore my honours topic. Through the continuous support of the USSC academics, I was able to nurture my passion and develop my understanding. I finished my honours thesis feeling proud of my achievement and excited about my future.”

Intern with USSC

A student internship with the United States Studies Centre offers the chance to gain hands-on experience, contribute to impactful research and earn credit towards your degree. Interns work within the USSC think tank program or with a US-affiliated business, government or non-government organisation based in Australia. From day one, interns are welcomed into a supportive community through activities that help students feel connected and confident.

“Interning at the USSC was a terrific opportunity to put my degree into practice. Completing a research project in a diverse and supportive space, surrounded by leaders in the field, was a challenging yet instructive experience that ultimately improved my research ability. I completed the internship feeling inspired to continue working in the American politics field.”



Oscar King

USSC Research Intern enrolled in
Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Advanced Studies (Honours)

Coursework options

Our postgraduate subjects are designed to support your professional and academic interests. Teaching at the United States Studies Centre concentrates on two key areas: American foreign policy and media studies.

Focus on American foreign policy

If you're interested in international affairs, our subjects provide a specialised focus on American foreign policy, particularly its evolving role in Asia and the Indo-Pacific. This teaching is informed by the Centre's leading research across politics, economics, security, technology and culture.

Units of study aligned with this focus		
USSC6903: US Foreign and National Security Policy	USSC6902: The World of Washington	USSC6205: Internship Project
GOVT6359: US-China Relations	USSC6910: Special Topics in US Studies	USSC6922: The US in the Indo-Pacific
USSC6007: Intelligence Agencies and Emerging Tech	<i>This area of focus is available through subjects offered in both the Master of International Relations and the Master of Public Policy.</i>	

Focus on media and digital cultures

For those drawn to media and digital cultures, our subjects examine the role of American media in shaping public opinion, political discourse, and cultural influence both at home and globally. You'll explore everything from traditional journalism and broadcast media to digital platforms and emerging technologies, with a focus on their political and societal impact.

Units of study aligned with this focus	
USSC6920: US Media: Politics, Culture, Technology	USSC6919: Hollywood vs. Netflix

Doctor of Philosophy

Candidates for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) write a thesis on an approved topic, supported by a supervisory academic team. Our doctoral students are part of a community of scholars engaging in interdisciplinary research across American studies, US foreign policy, and US politics, history, media, and culture.

Committed to fostering the best and brightest researchers, the United States Studies Centre offers a generous PhD scholarship that provides for travel costs and participation in a research boot camp at an American university, in addition to an annual stipend equivalent to an RTP scholarship.

POSTGRADUATE

Units of study

USSC6007

Intelligence Agencies and Emerging Tech

This unit examines the scope and impact of emerging technologies on intelligence agencies and national security. It explores how technologies like big data, artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things are shaping the work of intelligence agencies.

USSC6920

US Media: Politics, Culture, Technology

This unit focuses on media coverage of political campaigns and politics in America. Students review the role of the media in shaping debates in American society as well as the global power of the American media.

USSC6919

Hollywood vs. Netflix

This unit examines the Hollywood studio system before and after the internet. Students consider Hollywood's power as a cultural symbol, and its relationship to film production, cultures of reception and digital distribution.

DATA5207

Data Analysis in the Social Sciences

This unit will provide students a critical understanding of quantitative research, and acquire practical skills to answer social science questions. Techniques covered range from descriptive statistics and linear and logistic regression, to the analysis of unstructured text as data, multilevel and geospatial modelling, all using the open source program R.

USSC6902

The World of Washington

This unit will examine US domestic politics through analysing the structure and separation of powers within the American political system. This understanding will provide an appreciation of the porous nature of US political institutions, offering social actors opportunities to influence political decision-making.

USSC6903

US Foreign and National Security Policy

This unit focuses on the institutions and individuals that make American foreign and national security policy. Students learn the history of US participation in wars, examine key regional and bilateral relationships, and explore the US response to global warming and the international refugee crisis.

For a complete list of postgraduate units of study, please visit ussc.edu.au/postgraduate.



Where can *American Studies* take you?



Bachelor of International and Global Studies (Honours)

Major in American Studies



Summer Intern at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra



Procurement Trainee at NSW Treasury



Policy Officer at the Attorney-General's Department, Canberra



Bachelor of Arts/ Bachelor of Laws

Major in American Studies



Co-founder of USYD Update, Australia's first student-run video news outlet



Paralegal at Foxtel, Sydney



Legal Intern at 21st Century Fox, New York City



Bachelor of Advanced Studies/Bachelor of Arts

Major in American Studies



Semester abroad at University of California, Berkeley



Internships at a DC think tank, the Global Business Policy Council, and the international consultancy Kearney



Served as Vice President of the Australian Institute of International Affairs NSW



NISHTHA SHARMA

Manager of Business Transformation
at Ernst & Young in Sydney



Shifted from a successful
career in the public
service to work in
the corporate sector
at Ernst & Young



RÉMY NUMA

Lead Political Affairs Specialist
at Fox News in New York



TV Intern at
NBC Universal,
Sydney



Leaves Sydney to
pursue his dream
career in media in
New York City



ALICE NASON

Non-Resident Fellow
at the United States Studies Centre



Awarded a Fulbright
Scholarship to study
Australia-US defence
cooperation at the
University of Maryland

Meet our faculty



Dr Aaron Nyerges

Aaron is a Senior Lecturer in American Studies. He is keen to discuss all things related to American literature and culture. As a kid, he loved looking at maps and spent hours pouring over his parent's copy of the *Oxford Atlas of the World*. Later he wrote a book called *American Modernism and the Cartographic Imagination*. His research focuses on the relationship between geographic representation and media technologies, but Aaron teaches and wants to talk to students about a broad range of things, such as: social media and American society, Hollywood and the internet, US popular culture and new media technologies; sexuality, race and gender; colonialism and indigenous studies; critical theory and psychoanalysis; film, literature and aesthetics, and the territorial expansion of the United States, especially in the Caribbean and Pacific.



Professor Brendon O'Connor

Brendon is a Professor of US Politics and US Foreign Relations who is jointly appointed between the United States Studies Centre and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Brendon did his undergraduate studies in politics, international relations and history in New Zealand. During his PhD he also worked on a US Department of Justice/New York City Police Department study for a research centre based in the World Trade Center in New York. He has been a Fulbright Fellow at Georgetown University, a fellow at the Wilson Center in Washington DC and a fellow at the University of Cambridge. Apart from having an obsessive interest in American politics and foreign policy, his other special interests are novels, numerous sports, cooking and eating (especially new things when traveling), and post-punk music.



Dr Kathryn Robison

As well as being a Lecturer in American Studies at the United States Studies Centre, Kat is also a Senior Research Fellow at the Australian Centre for Space Governance. Although she studied Human Evolution and Near Eastern Studies in her undergrad years, she made her way into space policy through science communication and NASA Tweetups, which saw her witness launches to Jupiter and Mars, visit the Mars rovers in clean rooms before their launches and landed her a spot on a space news podcast. Eventually, after an advisor convinced her science communication was at its heart political communication and pointed out that every example she gave was space-related, her PhD focussed on the role of political communication in the formation and dissemination of space policy in the United States and internationally. While space is her first love, she also does work in public opinion, women in STEM, and other science and technology areas.



Dr Kathryn Schumaker

Katy is a Senior Lecturer in American Studies at the United States Studies Centre. She holds a PhD in US history from the University of Chicago and a BA in American Studies from Northwestern University. Her work explores the intersections of race and gender in American law. Her first book examined how secondary students' protests against racial discrimination at school ignited litigation that led to the US Supreme Court recognising the constitutional rights of all public school students. Katy is currently working on two research projects. The first — a history of interracial marriage in the era of racial segregation, when such unions were illegal in the United States — will be published in 2025. Her other project focuses on the legal history of sheriffs in the United States.



Associate Professor David Smith

David is a political scientist, specialising in the role that religion plays in American politics and the politics of other countries. He became fascinated by the overlap between religion and politics in American life when he was doing his PhD at the University of Michigan. He observed that the United States is a far more religious society than any other comparably wealthy democracy, and that religiosity influences everything from music to politics. *Especially* politics. And every American election has apocalyptic overtones, no matter which side you're on — for whoever loses, the end of the world is coming! David takes all religious and non-religious viewpoints seriously, and is dedicated to understanding how those viewpoints shape the political world.



Dr Rodney Taveira

Rodney is a Senior Lecturer in American Studies and the Academic Director of the United States Studies Centre. After completing a combined degree in Arts and Science, he looked back to what drove his passion for American history and culture when deciding upon doctoral studies in the literature and film of the United States. This early passion was sparked, in particular, by reading *American Tabloid* by James Ellroy, a conspiratorial reimagining of the JFK assassination. Two years into his doctoral studies, Rodney interviewed the author over a weekend in Los Angeles, and is now a leading scholar of Ellroy's writing. He has given invited lectures across the United States, serves on the International Committee of the American Studies Association and has a special interest in American humour studies, co-editing a special journal issue on "Humour as a Human Right."

STUDY IN THE UNITED STATES

UCLA Study Abroad Program

Enrich your university experience, make lifelong friends and set yourself up for a global career with our exclusive UCLA Study Abroad Program.

Heading overseas during your semester break is a great way to accelerate your degree while experiencing all that US college life has to offer. Live on campus and interact with students from around the globe all while earning credit. We will be with you every step of the way to ensure you get the most out of it.

Study in Los Angeles during winter break

The UCLA Study Abroad Program provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for students to study at the University of California, Los Angeles, placed 18th in the 2025 Times Higher Education world university rankings.

Students choose from hundreds of courses offered by UCLA from a variety of disciplines. Popular courses in the past have included Entertainment Law; Celebrity, Fame, and Social Media; and US Politics. To complement these courses, the United States Studies Centre has previously organised a range of cultural activities such as welcome dinners, city tours, a trip to Disneyland and a Los Angeles Dodgers baseball game.

Open to undergraduate students

As a renowned public university located in a major urban setting, UCLA offers students a unique opportunity to pair quality academics with the excitement and cultural offerings of Los Angeles.

UCLA's beautiful campus features lush landscaping and handsome architecture. Beyond campus, UCLA sits right by the popular college town, Westwood Village, where students have easy access to a wide array of shops, restaurants, theatres, museums and other activities. Other nearby student haunts include Santa Monica's Pier and Promenade, Downtown's eateries and nightlife, Hollywood's shows and orchestra, and Venice's beach and food trucks.

Financial assistance

Financial assistance to participate in the Centre's international programs is available to eligible students. Students may apply for equity and merit-based scholarships awarded on the basis of financial need and academic merit. Students may also be eligible for an OS-HELP loan that can be used for a range of expenses such as airfares, accommodation and other travel or study expenses.

For more information about the Centre's study abroad programs, please visit ussc.edu.au/global.

“Studying in the United States was a dream come true and marked a significant milestone in my personal narrative. The experience has reinvigorated my career ambitions and reminded me to never let go of the ambition that drives me toward my future goals.”

Carol Farhoud

UCLA Study Abroad Program



Tailor-made study tours

The United States Studies Centre collaborates with prestigious organisations and world-renowned experts to present immersive learning opportunities in the United States and other countries. On these tailor-made study tours, undergraduate and postgraduate students from the University of Sydney visit iconic institutions, landmarks, and universities, and engage with prominent academics, policymakers, professionals and organisations through interactive sessions and events.

In 2024, students on the US Presidential Study Tour journeyed to the heart of American democracy, spending two weeks in Los Angeles and Washington DC during the 2024 US Presidential elections.

Students receive academic credit upon completion of the tour, enhancing their degrees with experiential learning and interdisciplinary perspectives.

Financial assistance to participate in the Centre's international programs is available to eligible students. Students may apply for equity and merit-based scholarships awarded on the basis of financial need and academic merit. Students may also be eligible for an OS-HELP loan that can be used for a range of expenses such as airfares, accommodation and other travel or study expenses.

RECENTLY RETURNED

2024 US Presidential Study Tour

Students on the 2024 US Presidential Study Tour took a deep dive into American political institutions and culture while exploring vibrant cities and engaging with experts during the hotly-contested 2024 US presidential elections.

Through partnerships with universities in Los Angeles and Washington DC, students gained insights from renowned experts in American politics and culture. The tour stopped at landmarks including the White House, Capitol Hill and Mount Vernon, with expert guides providing historical context and contemporary insights. An exclusive reception at the Australian Embassy in Washington DC allowed students to connect with diplomats, government officials, and university alumni.



Karina White

2024 US Presidential
Election Study Tour

“The study tour was by far the most valuable experience I have had during my time at university. Exploring Los Angeles and attending lectures at the University of Southern California was so much fun — a perfect balance of learning and exploration. Washington, DC in the lead-up to the election was abuzz with activity, and being amongst it was thrilling.”



Students on the 2025 study tour will venture to Japan and South Korea for an in-depth exploration into how US influence, policy, actions and funding have shaped space, science and technology around the Indo-Pacific region.

2025 STUDY TOUR

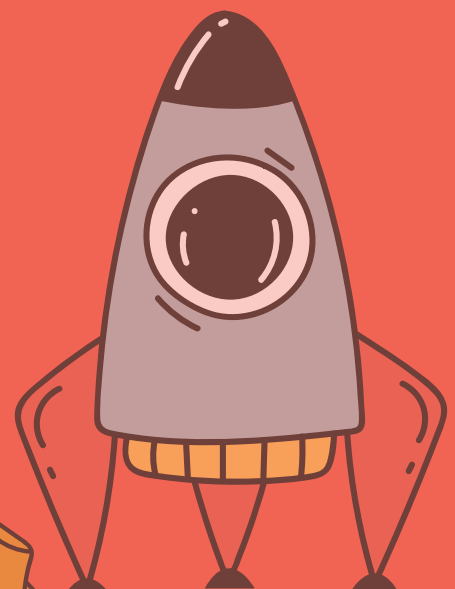
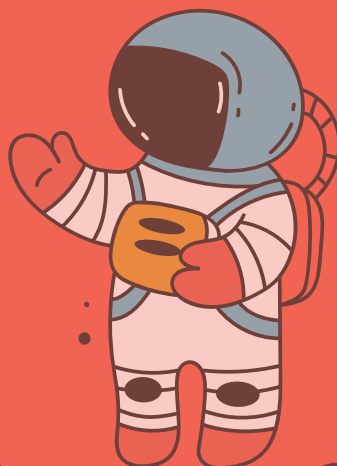
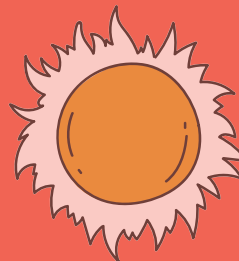
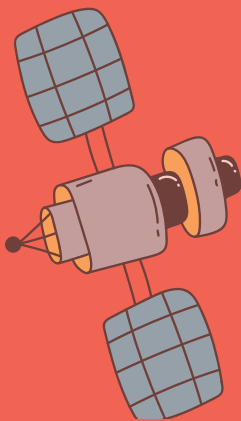
US Space, Science and Technology Policy in the Indo-Pacific

This unique study tour offers students the chance to visit sites of historic interest and modern importance in Australia, Japan and South Korea. Led by expert guides, students will observe and explore how the United States has influenced and impacted the domains of space, science and technology across the Indo-Pacific region.

During the two-week intensive study tour, students will travel to Japan and South Korea to immerse themselves in a world of experiential learning. Through site visits, guest lectures and direct engagement, participants will explore the dynamic interaction between the United States and the Indo-Pacific region across critical sectors.



For more information about the Centre's international programs, please visit ussc.edu.au/global.



Scholarships and prizes

The United States Studies Centre is committed to supporting students from all walks of life through a range of scholarships and prizes that are reviewed each year.

We offer targeted support for students experiencing financial hardship, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, international students and those with a strong interest in public policy and civic engagement.

We also celebrate academic excellence across our undergraduate and postgraduate programs with a variety of student prizes awarded annually to high-achieving students in USSC and American Studies units. These accolades are bestowed in recognition of exceptional academic merit, symbolising the commitment to excellence that defines our student cohort.

“The USSC’s equity scholarship was a huge help. Not only was it accessible to a student struggling with financial considerations, but the support it offered was invaluable. The whole team at the USSC were steadfast and accommodating in their assistance with my application, and I felt incredibly privileged by their genuine will to lift students up.”

Conor Tangney

Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Advanced Studies (Honours)



Get involved

At the United States Studies Centre, student experience is at the heart of what we do. Throughout the academic year, we host a range of events designed to foster community, celebrate achievement and provide professional networking opportunities. Highlights include our County Fair Pop-Up during Welcome Week in 2025, which featured food trucks, games and giveaways.

We also host student prize nights, film screenings, trivia nights and networking events designed to connect students with each other, alumni and professionals in fields related to US politics, media and foreign policy.

We are proud to support student-led initiatives and offer sponsorship to student societies whose aims align with the Centre's teaching and values. These activities help build a vibrant, inclusive community around American Studies and USSC programs at the University of Sydney.

“Every single element of American Studies has been useful in figuring out what I’m interested in and what I want to do with my life. The lessons have remained with me, even several years after I finished the major.”

Rémy Numa

Lead Political Affairs Specialist, Fox News, New York
Bachelor of Arts (Media and Communications) and
Bachelor of Laws and Politics and International Relations







How to enrol

University of Sydney students can enrol through sydneystudent.sydney.edu.au.

Non-University of Sydney students may be eligible to complete a USSC unit of study through cross-institutional study. In order to receive credit for this study, students will need to apply to the University of Sydney.

Those who wish to undertake one or more units of study for their own interest but not towards a degree may enrol as a non-award student. The application process is managed by the University of Sydney.

Stay informed

Join the USSC mailing list to get the latest student news, analysis and event invitations straight to your inbox. Sign up at ussc.edu.au/subscribe.

Keep up to date with all that's happening at USSC via our socials.

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 [@USSC](https://twitter.com/USSC)

ussc.edu.au

Analysis of America.
Insight for Australia.
Solutions for the Alliance.



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THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

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