

PhD Student Course

Doing American Studies in Europe (7,5 hp)

The Swedish Institute for North American Studies (SINAS) at Uppsala University

Fall semester 2026

Does your research deal with North America? If so, the field of American studies can provide an international and interdisciplinary context for your scholarship. This PhD student course examines the emergence of American studies as a research field, and explores its future development through the ongoing research of the course participants. The course is offered by the Swedish Institute for North American Studies (SINAS) at Uppsala University. It features a workshop in Uppsala as well as a three-day visit to Berlin, Germany.

The course is open to PhD students at Swedish universities within the humanities and social sciences working on any topic or theme relating to the United States and/or Canada, including its history, culture, society, and politics, as well as global connections and transnational relations.

How to apply?

You can apply to the course by submitting 1) a short description (max. 500 words) of your dissertation project and a brief motivation to why you wish to join the course, and 2) a letter from your main supervisor attesting to your status as an active PhD student and stating that the course can be completed as part of your PhD program.

Please send your application to SINAS's research coordinator Leyla Belle Drake at leyla.drake@engelska.uu.se. **Deadline: April 30, 2026.**

If you have any questions, you are welcome to get in touch with Adam Hjorthén, director of SINAS (adam.hjorthen@engelska.uu.se).

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Course description

American studies is an international and interdisciplinary research field. The question of what American studies *is* or *should be*, however, has been a topic of debate ever since its formation in the United States in the mid-twentieth century. What do we mean by “American” in national, continental, and transnational contexts? Does American studies have its own methodological and theoretical underpinnings? And does American studies change when it is done outside North America?

This course explores the field of American studies – historically and today – and asks how it might change moving forward, through the research of early-career scholars and developments of the current political moment. Serving as an introduction to American Studies and an exercise in *doing* American studies, the course also offers an opportunity to create networks and build practical skills valuable in international academia.

The course features a three-day visit to Berlin, Germany, a city uniquely situated to grapple with the significance of doing American studies in Europe. American Studies developed in the United States but spread to European universities during the Cold War, as a deliberate execution of American soft power. US support of academic and cultural institutions in Germany has historically been very strong. Today, there are a number of important US-German institutions in Berlin. This includes the John F Kennedy Institute for North American Studies at the Free University of Berlin, one of the largest and leading centers of American studies in Europe engaged in the broad study of North American history, literature, culture, politics, economics, and society.

The situation in Sweden is, however, very different. Even though there has been and remains great interest in the United States in Sweden, the academic study of the United States is less developed compared to in other European countries. This constitutes a Swedish-American academic paradox. The Swedish Institute for North American Studies (SINAS) at Uppsala University – the host of this doctoral student course – is the only center for the broad study of the US in Sweden. American studies is not yet an established or well-known discipline within Swedish academia. Still, there are plenty of scholars in humanities and social science disciplines whose research either focuses on North America or involves case studies or materials dealing with North America, and who can thus both benefit from and contribute to the vibrant field of American studies.

This course, then, has two overall objectives:

- To study the emergence of American studies as a research field and a discipline in the United States, Europe, and Sweden. This will partly be done through an on-site study of the development of American studies in Germany, and through an exploration of US history and culture in Berlin.

- To develop a critical awareness of how the ongoing scholarship of the course participants benefit from, contributes to, and perhaps challenges American studies in Sweden and beyond.

The course is open to active PhD students at Swedish universities within the humanities and social sciences working on any topic or theme relating to the United States and/or Canada, including its history, culture, society, and politics, as well as global connections and transnational relations.

Practicalities

The course begins with an on-site two-day (lunch-to-lunch) workshop in Uppsala on **27–28 August** 2026. Five online seminars will be held on Zoom in September and October, culminating in a three-day visit to Berlin, Germany on **8–11 November** 2026. The course concludes with a final online seminar in December after the return to Sweden.

The introductory workshop in Uppsala and the on-site visit to Berlin are key components of the course. It is therefore a requirement that students participate in these events. Travel to Uppsala and 1 night's accommodation (for the introductory workshop), as well as air/rail travel from Sweden to Berlin, 3 nights' accommodation in Berlin, and all entrance fees on-site, will be covered by SINAS. Participants will pay for their own local transfers and for meals in Berlin.

Examination

Examination is conducted through active participation at seminars and during on-site visits, as well as through a final written essay based on the ongoing research of course participants. Absence from an online seminar will require a make-up assignment. Attendance is mandatory at the workshop in Uppsala and the visit to Berlin.

Learning outcomes

Upon completing the course, students will be able to:

- demonstrate understanding of the history of American studies and its development in the United States and Europe
- compare American studies in Sweden and Germany through the case of Berlin
- evaluate the epistemology of American studies, relating to its interdisciplinarity, methodologies, theories, and subject matter
- gain insight into how their own research benefits from, and contributes to, American studies scholarship

Course credits

7,5 hp/course credits. In conversation with supervisors and home departments, students must ensure that the course can be included in their PhD program.