

American and Canadian Studies (with a Year Abroad)

Submitted by Navpreet

"American history is not something dead and over. It is always alive, always growing, always unfinished." This quotation by President John. F Kennedy summarizes my enthusiasm for the American culture strongly influencing me to opt for a degree in American Studies with history. America is a world superpower and is a country full of contradictions and the cultural and political divide currently evident in America interests me greatly.

The clash between the liberal metropolitan areas and the more conservative rural areas and the controversies surrounding gay marriage, abortion, race relations and gun control are all very current and have a huge influence on people's lives in America and beyond. I am excited to study the history of these issues, what led to these apparent divides and what the future holds.

As part of my A-Level studies, I have been studying a range of American history and literature. One history module that I have relished studying is The USA 1955-92: conformity and challenge. This has included studying the effects of the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal, the oil crisis as well as the policies of presidents from Eisenhower to Bush Sr and evaluating their effectiveness.

Despite knowing of the Civil Rights Act from an early age the module enabled me to study, in-depth, the ways in which the campaigns were fought and the struggles faced by black Americans. Studying English language & literature has also added to my passion for studying American studies. I became submerged in 1920s America whilst reading The Great Gatsby. It enabled me to experience American culture through the eyes of Nick Carraway who Fitzgerald wrote to represent his views that the 1920s was a time of moral failure and hypocrisy. It allowed for me to experience the jazz music scene, the lavish social scene and the conforming society many American's lived in.

I enjoy reading American literature outside my studies too, seeing how the 'American dream' is a constant theme in novels such as Revolutionary Road and The Grapes of Wrath. I am looking forward to studying how Americans live up to the challenge for freedom, democracy and independence. I believe that I have the skills to succeed on the course as I have proven myself to be a persevering and versatile student. I have attended a number of university taster courses to prepare for higher-level study. These have included a history course at an Oxford University residential with sample lectures and research.

Whilst attending a summer school at King's College London, I put what I learnt into practice by taking part in a mock trial where I used my communication and collaborative skills to present my defense. From these courses, I learned the importance of research, wide reading and independent learning. I will be attending an American Studies masterclass at the University of Birmingham where I will gain a further insight on the course. I have taken part in a range of extracurricular activities which have developed my independence, confidence and team-work skills. I have had the privilege of being the Head Girl which allowed me to take responsibility, make use of my organizational skills and lead by example.

During my Duke of Edinburgh expedition, I took the active lead and guided my group whilst overcoming obstacles such as providing aid to a team-member who had broken her ankle. I enjoy keeping fit and have done so through playing team sports such as netball and football whilst representing my school.

The National Citizenship Service allowed me to campaign for mental health awareness and enhanced social skills. Through these activities, and in my role as a Sales Assistant at Next, I have learnt to effectively manage my time, a critical skill in order to succeed at university. I believe that my passion and determination for studying the course, as well as my excitement and eagerness to learn and appreciate more about the history of America, makes me a very suitable candidate for this course.