

TEACHING

25th Anniversary of Mason's Cultural Studies Program

Cultural studies, the academic investigation of cultural practices with the goal of understanding, critiquing, and transforming them, has had a home at Mason for 25 years.

The program, described by English professor and cultural studies program director **Denise Albanese** as “the interdisciplinary doctoral program in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences,” draws students with master’s degrees in traditional disciplines such as anthropology, English, philosophy, and sociology, as well as women and gender studies, film and media, and African American studies. Many students arrive with an established interest in radical scholarship and interdisciplinary work.

The degree fosters the study of cultural processes under the conditions imposed by the global capitalist system, and it provides a space for scholarly dialogues that draw

upon myriad theories and methods—critical race theory, ethnography, textual analysis, and political economy—while also working to develop a specific cultural studies approach oriented to topicality.

Mason’s Cultural Studies Program is the United States’ oldest stand-alone doctoral program in the discipline and enjoys an international reputation for excellence in teaching and research. For many years, the program has produced annual colloquia on a variety of topics, welcoming Mason and the local community to explore in-depth considerations of modern cultural questions. Recent themes have included “The University” and “Politics.” In conjunction with its 2018–19 colloquium series, “Capitalism, Climate, and Culture,” the program developed a nine-episode podcast aimed at reaching a still wider audience.

In celebration of its 25th year, the program planned a major symposium examining the cultural, political, and economic impact of Amazon’s new headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, along with a reception specifically honoring its many productive and highly regarded alumni. Unfortunately, the event was cancelled because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Cultural studies, as a discipline, works with the instability of objects, events, and processes under changing capitalist relations as well as the way in which unexpected events press for complex analysis. The long success of Mason’s program suggests that it will remain responsive to cultural exigencies for years to come.

25 YEARS
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
CULTURAL STUDIES PHD

