Can “American Studies” develop a method? In 1957, Henry Nash Smith posed this foundational question in the title of his seminal essay in *American Quarterly*. Smith envisioned the expansion of areas and methods of scholarship as central to the emerging field of American studies, and he called upon practitioners of American studies “to widen the boundaries imposed by conventional methods of inquiry”: “The defining characteristic of American Studies is not the size of its problems but the effort to view any given subject of investigation from new perspectives, to take into account as many aspects of it as possible.”

Recent work in American studies has focused on the efforts of individuals and groups to resist essentializing narratives of U.S. history or explanations for current cultural and political events that minimize economic disparities, racial and ethnic prejudices and hierarchies, persistent gender role expectations, etc. This essay asks you, as an American studies scholar, to continue this trajectory.

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