AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

81 Wall Street, 203.432.1170
http://afamstudies.yale.edu
M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Chair
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Professors
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Associate Professors
Simone Browne (Visiting), Aimee Cox, Crystal Feimster, Anthony Reed, Edward Rugemer

Assistant Professors
Rizvana Bradley, Carolyn Roberts

Lecturers
Aaron Carico, Thomas Allen Harris, Lauren Meyer

FIELDS OF STUDY
The Department of African American Studies offers a combined Ph.D. in conjunction with several other departments and programs: currently, American Studies, Anthropology, English, Film and Media Studies, French, History, History of Art, Political Science, Psychology, Religious Studies, Sociology, and Spanish and Portuguese. Within the field of study, the student will select an area of concentration in consultation with the directors of graduate studies (DGS) of African American Studies and the joint department or program. An area of concentration in African American Studies may take the form of a single area study or a comparative area study: e.g., Caribbean or African American literature, a comparison of African American literature in a combined degree with the Department of English; an investigation of the significance of the presence of African cultures in the New World, either in the Caribbean or in Latin and/or South America in a combined degree with the Spanish and Portuguese department. An area of concentration may also follow the fields of study already established within a single discipline: e.g., race/minority/ethnic studies in a combined degree with Sociology. An area of concentration must either be a field of study offered by a department or fall within the rubric of such a field. Please refer to the description of fields of study of the prospective joint department or program.

SPECIAL ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS
Strong undergraduate preparation in a discipline related to African American studies; writing sample; description of the fields of interest to be pursued in a combined degree. This is a combined degree program. To be considered for admission to this program you must indicate both African American Studies and one of the participating departments/programs listed above. Additionally, please indicate both departments on all supporting documents (personal statement, letters of recommendation, transcripts, etc.).

REQUIREMENTS FOR TRANSFER INTO THE AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES COMBINED PH.D. PROGRAM
A student currently enrolled in one of the departments or programs participating in the combined Ph.D. in African American Studies who desires to transfer into the combined Ph.D. program may do so after:

1. Providing the DGS of African American Studies with a written statement of interest detailing the reasons for the transfer;
2. Providing the DGS with a letter of support from an African American Studies faculty member agreeing to serve as the student’s adviser;
3. A vote by the African American Studies faculty approving the transfer, with such vote held at a department meeting no earlier than the spring term of the student’s first year as a graduate student at Yale.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE
Students will be subject to the combined Ph.D. supervision of the African American Studies department and the relevant participating department or program. The student’s academic program will be decided in consultation with an adviser, the DGS of African American Studies, and the DGS of the participating department or program and must be approved by all three. Students are required to take five courses in African American Studies, generally at least one course each term. Any variance in scheduling requires DGS approval. Core courses are (1) Theorizing Racial Formations (AFAM 505/AMST 643), which is a required course for all first-year graduate students in the combined program, and (2) Dissertation Prospectus Workshop (AFAM 895 and AFAM 896), a two-term course, which graduate students in their third year of study must satisfactorily complete. This workshop is intended to support preparation of the dissertation proposal; each student will be required to present the dissertation prospectus orally to the faculty and to turn in a written prospectus draft.
by the end of spring term. Three other graduate-level African American Studies courses are required: (1) a history course, (2) a social science course, and (3) a course in literature or culture.

Qualifying examinations and the dissertation proposal will be administered jointly by the African American Studies department and the participating department or program and must be passed within the time required by the participating department or program. A current tenured or ladder faculty member in African American Studies must serve on the dissertation committee, and the dissertation must have an African American Studies component. The total number of courses required will adhere to the requirements of the participating department or program. Each student must complete the minimum number of courses required by the participating department or program; African American Studies courses (excepting the Dissertation Prospectus Workshop) count toward the participating department’s or program’s total. For details of these requirements, see the special requirements of the combined Ph.D. for the particular department or program in this bulletin. Students will be required to meet the foreign language requirements of the participating department or program (see Degree Requirements under Policies and Regulations). Students will not be admitted to candidacy until all requirements, including the dissertation prospectus, have been met and approved by the Graduate Studies Executive Committee of the African American Studies department and the participating department or program. A student who intends to apply for this combined Ph.D. in African American Studies and another department or program should consult the other department’s or program’s Ph.D. requirements and courses.

The faculty in African American Studies consider teaching to be an essential component of graduate education, and students therefore will teach, under the supervision of departmental professors, in their third and fourth years.

MASTER’S DEGREES

M.Phil. See Degree Requirements under Policies and Regulations.

M.A. (en route to the combined Ph.D.) Students will be awarded a combined M.A. degree in African American Studies and the relevant participating department or program upon successful completion of all course work except the Dissertation Prospectus Workshop, which is taken in the student’s third year of study. See also Degree Requirements under Policies and Regulations.

More information is available on the department’s website, http://afamstudies.yale.edu.

COURSES

For course offerings in African languages, see African Studies.

AFAM 505b / AMST 643, Theorizing Racial Formations  Kobena Mercer
A required course for all first-year students in the combined Ph.D. program in African American Studies; also open to students in American Studies. This interdisciplinary reading seminar focuses on new work that is challenging the temporal, theoretical, and spatial boundaries of the field.

AFAM 537b / FILM 710b / HSAR 715, Contemporary Art, Race, and the Philosophy of Media  Rizvana Bradley
This course draws from a diverse range of writing in philosophy (especially the philosophy of media), contemporary critical theory (phenomenology, new materialism), contemporary feminist thought, queer theory, and black studies in order to question underlying assumptions about the body and embodied spaces in contemporary art and culture. Drawing from film, literature, performance, and contemporary art, students think about a range of philosophical and critical themes, including the role of the body, the virtual construction of time and space, questions of affect, and sensation, all of which inform concerns over representation, embodiment, and materiality.

AFAM 548b / SOCY 584b, Inequality, Race, and the City  Elijah Anderson
Urban inequality in America. The racial iconography of the city is explored and represented, and the dominant cultural narrative of civic pluralism is considered. Topics of concern include urban poverty, race relations, ethnicity, class, privilege, education, social networks, social deviance, and crime.

AFAM 588b / AMST 710b / ENGL 948b, Autobiography in America  Robert Stepto
A study of autobiographical writings from Mary Rowlandson’s Indian captivity narrative (1682) to the present. Classic forms such as immigrant, education, and cause narratives; prevailing autobiographical strategies involving place, work, and photographs. Authors include Franklin, Douglass, Jacobs, Antin, Kingston, Uchida, Balakian, Als, and Karr.

AFAM 605b / AMST 686b / HIST 769b, Introduction to Documentary Studies  Zareena Grewal
This mixed graduate/undergraduate seminar surveys documentary work in three media—film, photography, and sound—since the 1930s, focusing on the documentary both as a cultural form with a history of its own and as a parcel of skill sets and storytelling and production practices to be studied and mastered. Readings and discussions cover important scholarly approaches to documentary as a genre, as well as close readings of documentaries themselves and practitioners’ guides to various aspects of documentary work. Topics include major trends in documentary practice across the three media, documentary ethics, aesthetics and truth-claims, documentary’s relationship to the scholarly disciplines and to journalism, and documentary work as political activism. Class meetings include screenings/viewings/soundings of documentary works, and practitioners’ panels and workshops with Yale documentarians (including Charles Musser, Zareena Grewal, Elihu Rubin, Gretchen Berland, and Laura Wexler) and local New Haven documentarians such as Jake Halpern (Yale ’97, This American Life). Students’ final projects may take the form of a traditional scholarly paper on some aspect of documentary history.
or a particular documentary producer, or an actual piece of documentary work—a film treatment, a brief video, a set of photographs, a sound documentary, or script.

**AFAM 612b / ENGL 958b, James Baldwin, On Stage  Staff**

Using Baldwin's years in the theater as a timeline, we read black and queer playwrights who came out of the postwar naturalistic tradition that the author upheld in his scripts, while moving on to various traditions—the Black Arts Movement, Queer Theater, Black Surrealism, and so on—that Baldwin did not embrace but that served to enrich the scene. In addition to reading Baldwin’s essays and published thoughts about the theater and film, we analyze his plays, including his unpublished stage adaptation of his 1959 novel *Giovanni's Room*. Also subject to discussion are his brilliant contemporaries, whom we read for context, including Langston Hughes, Tennessee Williams, Lorraine Hansberry, Alice Childress, Ed Bullins, Adrienne Kennedy, Derek Walcott, Wole Soyinka, Charles Gordone, Hanif Kureishi, Caryl Phillips, Ntozake Shange. The class concludes with plays written by Baldwin’s former student Suzan-Lori Parks.

**AFAM 624a / FREN 624a, Slavery and Its Aftermath in French and Francophone Literature  Christopher Miller**

The practices, effects, and culture of both slavery and emancipation in the French empire and the postcolonial francophone world, as seen through literary writings. Readings on New France, the Code Noir, the *Encyclopédie*, the Haitian Revolution. Literary authors include Olympe de Gouges, Claire de Duras, Victor Séjour, Alfred Mercier, Aimé and Suzanne Césaire, Edouard Glissant, Maryse Condé, Ousmane Sembène, Gisèle Pineau.

**AFAM 648b / AMST 679b, Accounting for Black Life  Hazel Carby**

This seminar considers a variety of contemporary works that challenge and transcend how blackness and black lives have been historically constituted and limited through frameworks of loss, trauma, social death, or erosion. We engage their theoretical and methodological approaches to rethinking the boundaries of the human, innovative practices in the archive and think creatively about the form in which we narrate pastness and futurity. Readings include unpublished sections from Jennifer Morgan's new work, *Reckoning with Women in Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Modern Black Atlantic*, and Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (both Morgan and Hartman have agreed to visit the seminar); Marisa J. Fuentes, *Possessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive*; Tavia Nyong'o, *Afro-Fabulations: The Queer Drama of Black Life*; Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*; Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*; Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images*; Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*; and Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*.

**AFAM 649b / AMST 624b / ENGL 918b / WGSS 624b, Psychoanalysis and the Critical Tradition in the Humanities  Greta LaFleur**

This seminar introduces students to major works in the psychoanalytic tradition, including but not limited to works by Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott, and Jacques Lacan. It is designed to allow graduate students to develop better fluency in psychoanalytic vernaculars, frameworks, and large-scale theories in order to gain a deeper and more nuanced appreciation of the persistence of psychoanalytic ways of thinking in the broader critical tradition in the humanities. Importantly, this is not a seminar dedicated solely to the psychoanalytic tradition; rather, it introduces students to seminal works by some of the major thinkers of early twentieth-century psychoanalytic thought in order to build a basis from which to understand the impact of psychoanalysis on the development of later twentieth-century critical movements, including woman-of-color feminist theory, queer theory, postcolonial studies, and black studies. In other words, the course provides a graduate-level introduction to the intellectual history and critical aftermath of psychoanalysis as a field of thought. It pays special attention to understanding psychoanalytic theories of the self, the subject, and the abject (among others), and putting these modes of conceptualizing the subject into conversation with both contemporaneous and later theories of subjectivity (materialist, Foucauldian, etc.). Readings include works by Freud, Klein, Winnicott, Lacan, Jean Laplanche, Frantz Fanon, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Judith Butler, Kaja Silverman, Hortense Spillers, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Lee Edelman, Leo Bersani, Elizabeth Grosz, and others. Assignments include a midterm annotated bibliography and a 20–25-page final research paper. This course satisfies the “theory” course requirement for the Certificate in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

**AFAM 716a / AMST 910a / HIST 764a, Working Group on Latina/o Studies I  Alicia Camacho and Stephen Pitti**

A continuous workshop for graduate students in American Studies, History, African American Studies, and related fields. This group devotes the fall term to intensive reading and discussion of important interdisciplinary texts in Latina/o studies. Students interested in participating should contact stephen.pitti@yale.edu.

**AFAM 718b / AMST 911b / HIST 765b, Working Group on Latina/o Studies II  Stephen Pitti**

A continuous workshop for graduate students in American Studies, History, African American Studies, and related fields. The spring term focuses on the development of individual research projects and on public history work with the Smithsonian Museums and organizations in New Haven. Students interested in participating should contact stephen.pitti@yale.edu.

**AFAM 738a / AMST 706a / HIST 711a / WGSS 716a, Readings in African American Women’s History  Crystal Feimster**

The diversity of African American women’s lives from the colonial era through the late twentieth century. Using primary and secondary sources we explore the social, political, cultural, and economic factors that produced change and transformation in the lives of African American women. Through history, fiction, autobiography, art, religion, film, music, and cultural criticism we discuss and explore the construction of African American women’s activism and feminism; the racial politics of the body, beauty, and complexion; hetero- and same-sex sexualities; intraracial class relations; and the politics of identity, family, and work.

**AFAM 745a / HSAR 786a, Black Atlantic Visual Arts since 1980  Kobena Mercer**

This seminar surveys black diaspora practices in late-twentieth- and early twenty-first-century art while questioning the survey genre as such. Examining contributions of black artists to paradigm shifts that have interrogated the identity of art over the past thirty years,
we review the demands that issues of race and ethnicity place on interpretive models in the historiography of art. Considering thematic

categories in which to understand what is distinctive to the diasporic conditions of Black Atlantic practitioners, while consistently

relating their concerns to broad patterns in art practice as a whole in an era of globalization, the aim is to identify critical terms that best

narrate the transformations black diaspora artists have introduced to a period characterized by the shift from modern to postmodern to

contemporary.

**AFAM 752b / HIST 937b / HSHM 761b, Medicine and Empire**  Carolyn Roberts

A reading course that explores medicine in the context of early modern empires with a focus on Africa, India, and the Americas. Topics

include race, gender, and the body; medicine and the environment; itineraries of scientific knowledge; enslaved, indigenous, and

creole medical and botanical knowledge and practice; colonial contests over medical authority and power; indigenous and enslaved

epistemologies of the natural world; medicine and religion.

**AFAM 763a or b, Workshop on Race and Ethnicity in the Social Sciences**  Gerald Jaynes

This sampling of U.S. cultural history from the early national period to the present is designed to unfold on two distinct planes. The first

is a rendering of U.S. culture itself—a survey, however imperfect, of the major currents, themes, and textures of U.S. culture over time,

including its contested ideologies of race and gender, its organization of productivity and pleasure, its media and culture industries,

its modes of creating and disseminating “information” and “knowledge,” its resilient subcultures, and its reigning nationalist iconographies

and narratives. The second is a sampling of scholarly methods and approaches, a meta-history of “the culture concept” as it has informed

historical scholarship in the past few decades. The cultural turn in historiography since the 1980s has resulted in a dramatic reordering of

“legitimate” scholarly topics, and hence a markedly different scholarly landscape, including some works that seek to narrate the history of

the culture in its own right (Kasson’s history of the amusement park, for instance), and others that resort to cultural forms and artifacts

to answer questions regarding politics, nationalism, and power relations (Melani McAlister’s *Epic Encounters*). In addition to providing a

background in U.S. culture, then, this seminar seeks to trace these developments within the discipline, to understand their basis, to

take the means and methods of “the cultural turn,” and to assess the strengths and shortcomings of culture-based historiography as it

is now constituted.

**AFAM 764a / AMST 715a / HIST 747a, Methods and Practices in U.S. Cultural History**  Matthew Jacobson

The course explores recent trends and historiography on several problems through the middle of the nineteenth century: sectionalism,

expansion; slavery and the Old South; northern society and reform movements; Civil War causation; the meaning of the Confederacy;

why the North won the Civil War; the political, constitutional, and social meanings of emancipation and Reconstruction; violence in

Reconstruction society; the relationships between social/cultural and military/political history; problems in historical memory; the

tension between narrative and analytical history writing; and the ways in which race and gender have reshaped research and interpretive

agendas.

**AFAM 773a / SOCY 630a, Workshop in Urban Ethnography**  Elijah Anderson

The ethnographic interpretation of urban life and culture. Conceptual and methodological issues are discussed. Ongoing projects of

participants are presented in a workshop format, thus providing participants with critical feedback as well as the opportunity to learn

from and contribute to ethnographic work in progress. Selected ethnographic works are read and assessed.

**AFAM 832a or b, Workshop on Race and Ethnicity in the Social Sciences**  Gerald Jaynes

This workshop is devoted to in-depth exploration of new, cutting-edge research in the social sciences treating the interaction of race,

ethnicity, gender, and class. The workshop focuses on methods of analysis ranging from ethnography to quantitative approaches as

utilized in the disciplines of anthropology, economics, political science, psychology, sociology, and interdisciplinary fields utilizing any

combination of these disciplines. We intend to address new approaches to classic issues and contemporary questions of interest to social

scientists and policy makers such as (but not limited to): race relations; inequality; racial and class formation; criminal justice; politics;

and education and social mobility. Graduate students taking the workshop for course credit must attend consistently and write an end-of-
term paper. This course satisfies the social science requirement in African American Studies.

**AFAM 880a or b, Directed Reading**  Staff

By arrangement with faculty.

**AFAM 895a and AFAM 896b, Dissertation Prospectus Workshop**  Gerald Jaynes

A noncredit, two-term course, which graduate students in their third year of study must satisfactorily complete. This workshop is

intended to support preparation of the dissertation proposal. o Course cr per term