African American Studies (AFAM)

* AFAM 060b / AMST 060b / HIST 016b, Significance of American Slavery  Edward Rugemer
This first-year seminar explores the significance of racial slavery in the history of the Americas during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We read the work of historians and we explore archival approaches to the study of history. Taught in the Beinecke Library with the assistance of curators and librarians, each week is organized around an archival collection that sheds light on the history of slavery. The course also includes visits to the Department of Manuscripts and Archives in the Sterling Library, the British Art Center, and the Yale University Art Gallery. Each student writes a research paper grounded in archival research in one of the Yale Libraries. Topics include slavery and slaveholding, the transatlantic slave trade, resistance to slavery, the abolitionist movement, the coming of the American Civil War, the process of emancipation, and post-emancipation experiences. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  WR, HU

AFAM 115a / WGSS 125a, “We Interrupt this Program: The Multidimensional Histories of Queer and Trans Politics”  Roderick Ferguson
In 1991, the arts organizations Visual AIDS and The Kitchen collaborated with video artist and filmmaker Charles Atlas to produce the live television broadcast “We Interrupt this Program.” Part educational presentation, part performance piece, the show was aired in millions of homes across the nation. The program, in The Kitchen’s words, “sought to feature voices that had often been marginalized within many discussions of AIDS, in particular people of color and women.” This course builds upon and is inspired by this aspect of Atlas’s visionary presentation, an aspect that used the show to produce a critically multicultural platform that could activate cultural histories and critical traditions from various communities. In effect, the course uses this aspect as a metonym for the racial, gender, sexual, and class heterogeneity of queer art and organizing. It conducts its investigation by looking at a variety of primary materials that illustrate the heterogeneous makeup of queer art and trans politics. The course also draws on more recent texts and visual works that arose from the earlier contexts that the primary texts helped to illuminate and shape.  HU RP 0 Course cr

AFAM 121b, Print the Legacy  Andrianna Campbell
Before Two Palms, Crown Point, Gemini G. E. L., and Tamarind presses, Robert Blackburn formed The Printmaking Workshop in 1947. The course surveys print production between 1945-1975, when print shops were sites of unparalleled black excellence, due to access and the opportunity for proprietorship. During a period in the mid-1940s, Roy DeCarava turned almost exclusively to printmaking. This course examines the artwork of artist printmakers and their master printers including Blackburn, DeCarava, Genichiro Inokuma, Samella Lewis, Sol LeWitt, Ruth G. Waddy, Elizabeth Catlett, Emory Douglas, Melvin Eugene Edwards, Emma Amos, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Faith Ringgold, and Sylvia Plimack Mangold. From the woodcuts of Catlett (made at Taller de Gráfica Popular after 1938) to the kimonos printed by LeWitt at Crown Point, prints traversed national borders and state lines. They were a means of experimenting with material, style, and production on an aesthetic and commercial scale. The print workshops themselves are evaluated as sites of integration and disruption. Of focus is the significance of serialization and distribution as necessary units of communication and visualization in the arts.  HU

AFAM 122a, Art Collectives: Protest, Entrepreneurship, and Praxis  Andrianna Campbell
A crowd formed at the Whitney Museum, as San Francisco artists occupied the institution to protest Laura Owens’s solo exhibition opening. The gathering was in successive date order to Patrick Bright’s protest of Dana Schultz’s Emmet Till painting. It came a few years after the HowDoYouSayYaminAfrican? (YAMs collective) protest of Joe Scalan’s Donelle Woolford performance artwork. The protest also foreshadowed the Black Women Artists for Black Lives Matter (BWABLM) series of protests across the country. From the Sackler family to Warren Kanders, those who peddle in rue and misfortune are now being asked to resign from art boards as multiple allegations force them out of planning positions, and remove their names from wings and museum buildings. Hive-like sit-ins and stand-ins are the actions of political organizers to make the democratic body heard in the public sphere. Today, these ethical shifts in art communities criticize and disrupt the planned temple-like meditative space of the museum. Between the cynical mole hill aims of a few of those San Franciscoan artists who capitulated after the Whitney offered them an exhibition, to the effective efforts of BWABLM, we explore where the art object functions in relation to political discourse and performative disruption as art practice.  HU

AFAM 146b / ECON 171b / EDST 271b, Urban Inequalities and Educational Inequality  Gerald Jaynes
Analysis of contemporary policy problems related to academic under performance in lower income urban schools and the concomitant achievement gaps among various racial and ethnic groups in United States K-12 education. Historical review of opportunity inequalities and policy solutions proposed to ameliorate differences in achievement and job readiness. Students benefit from practical experience and interdisciplinary methods, including a lab component with time spent in a New Haven high school. Prerequisites: Any course offered by Education Studies, or one course in history or any social science, either: Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology. EDST 110 is preferred, although not required.  SO

AFAM 160b / AFST 184b / AMST 160b / HIST 184b, The Rise and Fall of Atlantic Slavery  Edward Rugemer
The history of peoples of African descent throughout the Americas, from the first African American societies of the sixteenth century through the century-long process of emancipation.  WR, HU
AFAM 162a / AMST 162a / HIST 187a, African American History from Emancipation to the Present  Staff
An examination of the African American experience since 1861. Meanings of freedom and citizenship are distilled through appraisal of race and class formations, the processes and effects of cultural consumption, and the grand narrative of the civil rights movement.  WR, HU  o Course cr

AFAM 166b / AMST 290b / ER&M 290b / HIST 166b, The History of Right Now  Matthew Jacobson
Historiographic narrative of United States history over the past century and critical/methodological practices of thinking historically and of identifying ways in which our present has been conditioned by historical legacies, both momentous and subtle. Topics include the New Deal, WWII, the arms race, Reaganomics, and 9/11 in terms of their lasting influence on American conditions in the present.  HU  RP  o Course cr

AFAM 170b / HIST 470b / HSHM 241b / WGSS 270b, Sickness and Health in African American History  Carolyn Roberts
A history of American medicine through the African American experience covering the period of slavery through #BlackLivesMatter. Oriented around the complex dynamics of medical abuse and medical resistance, key themes include medicine and slavery; gender and reproduction; medical experimentation and ethics; the rise of racial science; lynching and vigilant social violence; segregation and public health; African-descended approaches to health and healing; the rise of the African American medical profession; and black health activism from slavery to #BlackLivesMatter.  HU

AFAM 186a / LAST 214a / PLSC 378a / SOCY 170a, Contesting Injustice  Elisabeth Wood
Exploration of why, when, and how people organize collectively to challenge political, social, and economic injustice. Cross-national comparison of the extent, causes, and consequences of inequality. Analysis of mobilizations for social justice in both U.S. and international settings. Intended primarily for freshmen and sophomores.  SO  o Course cr

AFAM 192a / AFST 238a / AMST 238a / ER&M 238a, Third World Studies  Staff
Introduction to the historical and contemporary theories and articulations of Third World studies (comparative ethnic studies) as an academic field and practice. Consideration of subject matters; methodologies and theories; literatures; and practitioners and institutional arrangements.  SO  o Course cr

AFAM 198a / CGSC 277a / EDST 177a / EP&E 494a / PHIL 177a, Propaganda, Ideology, and Democracy  Jason Stanley
Historical, philosophical, psychological, and linguistic introduction to the issues and challenges that propaganda raises for liberal democracy. How propaganda can work to undermine democracy; ways in which schools and the press are implicated; the use of propaganda by social movements to address democracy’s deficiencies; the legitimacy of propaganda in cases of political crisis.  HU  o Course cr

* AFAM 210b / AMST 445b / HIST 148Jb, Politics and Culture of the U.S. Color Line  Matthew Jacobson
The significance of race in U.S. political culture, from the “separate but equal” doctrine of Plessy v. Ferguson to the election of an African American president. Race as a central organizer of American political and social life.  HU  RP

* AFAM 216a / FILM 433a, Family Narratives/Cultural Shifts  Thomas Allen Harris
This course looks at films that are redefining ideas around family and family narratives in relation to larger social movements. We focus on personal films by filmmakers who consider themselves artists, activists, or agents of change but are united in their use of the nonfiction format to speak truth to power. In different ways, these films use media to build community and build family and ultimately, to build family albums and archives that future generations can use to build their own practices. Just as the family album seeks to unite people across time, space, and difference, the films and texts explored in this course are also journeys that culminate in linkages, helping us understand nuances of identity while illuminating personal relationships to larger cultural, social, and historical movements.  HU

* AFAM 220b / FILM 434b, Archive Aesthetics and Community Storytelling  Thomas Allen Harris
This production course explores strategies of archive aesthetics and community storytelling in film and media. It allows students to create projects that draw from archives—including news sources, personal narratives, and found archives—to produce collaborative community storytelling. Conducted as a production workshop, the course explores the use of archives in constructing real and fictive narratives across a variety of disciplines, such as—participants create and develop autobiographies, biographies, or fiction-based projects, tailored to their own work in film/new media around Natalie Goldberg’s concept that “our lives are at once ordinary and mythical.”  HU

* AFAM 221a / HIST 120Ja, Writing Histories of Slavery  Edward Rugemer
This seminar considers the historiography of slavery as it has developed from the 1950s until today. We also engage with a series of recent studies that suggest the latest methodologies and styles of writing that historians have developed to illustrate the significance of enslavement in human history. Most readings draw from United States and Caribbean history. Students conduct research in primary sources and write an historical essay.  WR, HU

* AFAM 227a / AMST 227a / ER&M 349a / HIST 137Ja, From the Voting Rights Act to #blacklivesmatter  Ferentz Lafargue
This course explores the period beginning from 1964 through the emergence of the #blacklivesmatter movement in 2013. Key concepts covered in this course include the Black Panther Party and rise of the Black Power movement; political campaigns of Shirley Chisholm, Jesse Jackson, and Barack Obama. The seminar concludes with an examination of the #blacklivesmatter movement and broader efforts addressing mass incarceration, poverty, and opportunity gaps in education.  HU

* AFAM 251b / AMST 397b, Critical Race Theory  Staff
Introduction to critical race theory, a radical critique of relations among race, law, and power in U.S. politics and society. Intellectual foundations of the field, with emphasis on African American perspectives; key juridical acts. The centrality of U.S. law in producing
social hierarchies of race and racial difference, gender, sexuality, and class. The extension of critical race theory to global analysis of race, immigration, and cultural difference. HU

* AFAM 259a / AMST 309a / EDST 255a, Education and Empire  Talya Zemach-Bersin
This course offers an introduction to the transnational history of education in relation to the historical development of the U.S. empire both at home and abroad. By bringing together topics often approached separately—immigration, education, race, colonialism, and the history of U.S. empire—we interrogate the ways that education has been mobilized to deploy power: controlling knowledge, categorizing and policing differences, administering unequal paths to citizenship/belonging, forcing assimilation, promoting socio-economic divides, and asserting discipline and control. EDST 110 recommended. HU

* AFAM 271b, The Venice Biennale, Art Fairs, and Foundations  Andrianna Campbell
Since the 1970s, there has been a proliferation of commercial art fairs and new small foundations dedicated to the arts——FIAF, JoBurg, 1-54, Miami Basel, Fondation Cartier, Louis Vuitton Foundation, and the Foundation Zinsou. These and their correlative personal museums such as the Long Museum in China evidence a collecting class untethered from the traditions of encyclopedic, modern, and contemporary museums. The stalwart of these temporary art exhibitionary spaces is the Venice Biennale (1895), which is organized by country and imbricated in late-nineteenth century and twentieth-century representations of nationhood. By the 1950s already struggling to stay current alongside the São Paulo Biennal (1951), Biennale curators have been pushed into constant reinvention and innovation. The course examines Katharine Kuh's influence on a more gender diverse and racially inclusive Biennale in the 1950s, Sam Gilliam's 1970s installation, and current comparisons to Documenta, Berlin, Gwangju and Shanghai Biennales. Alongside these new institutions, the hybrided commercial art fairs pair some of the most historically relevant exhibitions alongside transient booths with works for sale. In an era of changing hierarchies of culture and status, the novelty of these exhibition spaces requires a constant flow of new artists, while they interrupt and silence criticality. The course examines their future impact on art historical scholarship, and their, at times, paradoxical and troubling grandiosity. HU

* AFAM 284a / AMST 282a / ENGL 414a / ER&M 284a, Black Life and the Human/Body  Cera Smith
African American activists have long demanded equal rights by asserting the humanity of Black people. These activists have rejected their racist treatment as animals and property by championing the qualities ascribed to Western Man. More recently, however, scholars have questioned whether claims to humanity really result in freedom and justice for all Black people. They ask, “Does mobilizing humanity as a strategy for recognition and respect benefit Black non-men, disabled people, or the working class? What impact does this assertion of humanity have on our species’ relationship to other living beings and our environments? Ultimately, are all people allowed to be ‘human’?” In this course, we evaluate the category of the “human” by studying the challenge that the U.S. Black past and present pose to the category’s assumed neutrality. We attend to how Black peoples’ bodily experiences confirm, deny, and complicate humanness. We read poetry, short fiction, novels, and creative nonfiction to investigate what it means to live a Black life. Analyzing historical, social scientific, legal, and theoretical texts alongside literature helps us explore the debates over the power dynamics that underlie claims to humanity. Through writing and in-class discussions, we explore the relationship between race, species, and political strategy. HU

* AFAM 284a / ENGL 228a, Counternarratives: Black Historical Fictions  Elleza Kelley
While historical records have long been the source from which we draw our picture of the past, it is with literature and art that we attempt to speculatively work out that which falls between the cracks of conventional archival documentation, that which cannot be contained by historical record—emotion, gesture, the sensory, the sonic, the inner life, the afterlife, the neglected and erased. This course examines how contemporary black writers have imagined and attempted to represent black life from the late 17th to the early 20th centuries, it asks what fiction can tell us about history. Reading these works as alternative archives, or “counterarchives,” which index the excess and fugitive material of black histories in the Americas, we probe the uses, limits, and revelations of historical fictions, from the experimental and realist novel, to works of poetry and drama. Drawing on the work of various interdisciplinary scholars, we use these historical fictions to explore and enter into urgent and ongoing conversations around black life & death, African-American history & memory, black aesthetics, and the problem of “The Archive.” Some familiarity with the events and themes of African American history is strongly recommended, but not required. This course is not open to students who have already take AFAM 013/ENGL 005. HU

* AFAM 309a / ER&M 318a / WGSS 318a, Race as Spectacle  Fatima El-Tayeb
In this course, we analyze how race is both naturalized and deconstructed through visual media. We center one aspect: race as spectacle—the multiple ways in which race is produced as a visual mass culture commodity. This happens in political campaigns, music videos, local news reports, fashion, kids’ cartoons, mug shots, and countless other sites. We explore the modes of production of these racialized images as well as the conditions of their reception and political and philosophical analyses of this process—particularly those relating to questions of gender, class, sexuality, religion, and nation. We also explore counterstrategies, which rather than rejecting visual mass culture attempt to use it to undermine dominant images. HU, SO

* AFAM 313a / THST 319a, Embodying Story  Renée Robinson
The intersection of storytelling and movement as seen through historical case studies, cross-disciplinary inquiry, and studio practice. Drawing on eclectic source materials from different artistic disciplines, ranging from the repertory of Alvin Ailey to journalism, architectural studies, cartoon animation, and creative processes, students develop the critical, creative, and technical skills through which to tell their own stories in movement. No prior dance experience necessary. HU

* AFAM 329a / SOCY 342a, Managing Blackness in a “White Space”  Elijah Anderson
White space” is a perceptual category that assumes a particular space to be predominantly white, one where black people are typically unexpected, marginalized when present, and made to feel unwelcome—a space that blacks perceive to be informally “off-limits” to people
like them and where on occasion they encounter racialized disrespect and other forms of resistance. This course explores the challenge black people face when managing their lives in this white space.  

* AFAM 349b / AMST 326b / HIST 115b / WGSS 388b, Civil Rights and Women’s Liberation  
Staff
The dynamic relationship between the civil rights movement and the women’s liberation movement from 1940 to the present. When and how the two movements overlapped, intersected, and diverged. The variety of ways in which African Americans and women campaigned for equal rights. Topics include World War II, freedom summer, black power, the Equal Rights Amendment, feminism, abortion, affirmative action, and gay rights.  

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* AFAM 397b / ER&M 380b / WGSS 381b, New Developments in Global African Diaspora Studies  
Fatima El-Tayeb
This course traces recent developments in African Diaspora Theory, among them Afropessimism, Queer of Color Critique, Black Trans Studies and Afropolitanism. We pay particular attention to interactions between theory, art, and activism. The scope is transnational with a focus on, but not restricted to, the Anglophone Diaspora. Each session roughly follows this structure: One theoretical text representing a recent development in African diaspora studies, one earlier key text that the reading builds on, one theoretical text that does not necessarily fall under the category of diaspora studies but speaks to our topic and one text that relates to the topic but uses a non-theoretical format. Students are expected to develop their own thematically related project over the course of the semester. Preference given to juniors and seniors. Email instructor for more information.  

H, SO

* AFAM 402b / RLST 435b, Black Religions in Slavery and Freedom  
Nicole Turner
This course explores how enslaved and free black people created and sustained religious communities in the United States during the eras of slavery and freedom. It explores the resonances of African traditions, the role of conjure, Islam and Christianity in sustaining Black people through slavery and the transformations that developed after emancipation. The course challenges the paradigm of black religion as always pointing toward freedom while exploring how the transition in status from enslaved to free was reflected in and influenced by black religious practices and communities. This course explores the religious communities of the “slave quarters,” underground railroad, independent black churches on the political landscape of freedom through the end of the 19th century. This course aims to provide participants with a deeper exploration of the developments within the period from the 19th century through 1915 and the advent of Jim Crow and U.S. imperialism.  

* AFAM 442b / ANTH 442b, Theory and Methods of Performance Ethnography  
Aimee Cox
Study of the theoretical framework that defines performance ethnography; the methodologies developed and utilized by research practitioners; the similarities and distinctions between ethnography and performance ethnography; and the innovations made in performance ethnography that impact social justice and community-building initiatives in various parts of the world.  

H, SO

* AFAM 455a / EDST 340a / ER&M 438a, Anti-Racist Curriculum and Pedagogy  
Daniel HoSang
This seminar explores the pedagogical and conceptual tools, resources and frameworks used to teach about race and racism at the primary and secondary levels, across diverse disciplines and subject areas. Moving beyond the more limited paradigms of racial colorblindness and diversity, the seminar introduces curricular strategies for centering race and racism in ways that are accessible to students from a broad range of backgrounds, and that work to advance the overall goals of the curriculum. Prerequisite: ER&M 200 or an equivalent course addressing histories of race, ethnicity, and migration.  

SO

* AFAM 459a / AMST 479a / ER&M 402a, The Displaced: Migrant and Refugee Narratives of the 20th and 21st Centuries  
Leah Mirakhor
This course examines a series of transnational literary texts and films that illuminate how the displaced—migrants, exiles, and refugees—remake home away from their native countries. The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have produced massive displacements due to wars, genocides, racial, ethnic and religious conflicts, economic and climate change, among other factors. Our course focuses on several texts that explore questions of home, nation, and self in the context of specific historical events such as the Holocaust, civil rights movements in the U.S., internment, the Indian partition, African decolonization, and Middle Eastern/Arab ethno-religious conflicts and wars. We examine these events alongside the shifting legal and political policies and categories related to asylum, humanitarian parole, refugee, and illegal alien status. Exploring themes such as nostalgia, longing, trauma, and memory, we look at the possibilities and limitations of creating, contesting, and imagining home in the diaspora. Our objective is to debate and develop the ethical, political, geographic, and imaginative articulations of home in an era of mass displacements and geo-political crises. We examine how notions of home are imagined alongside and against categories of race, gender, and sexuality. This course requires a deeper exploration of the developments within the period from the 19th century through 1915 and the advent of Jim Crow and U.S. imperialism.  

* AFAM 471a and AFAM 472b, Independent Study: African American Studies  
Staff
Independent research under the direction of a member of the department on a special topic in African American studies not covered in other courses. Permission of the director of undergraduate studies and of the instructor directing the research is required. A proposal signed by the instructor must be submitted to the director of undergraduate studies by the end of the second week of classes. The instructor meets with the student regularly, typically for an hour a week, and the student writes a final paper or a series of short essays. May be elected for one or two terms.  

* AFAM 479a / MUSI 480a, Music of the Caribbean: Cuba and Jamaica  
Michael Veal
An examination of the Afro-diasporic music cultures of Cuba and Jamaica, placing the historical succession of musical genres and traditions into social, cultural, and political contexts. Cuban genres studied include religious/foikloric traditions (Lucumi/Santeria and Abakua), rumba, son, mambo, pachanga/charanga, salsa, timba and reggaeton. Jamaican genres studied include: folkloric traditions (etu/tambu/kumina), Jamaican R&B, ska, rock steady, reggae, ragga/dancehall. Prominent themes include: slavery, Afro-diasporic
cultural traditions, Black Atlantic culture, nationalism/independence/post-colonial culture, relationships with the United States, music & gender/sexuality, technology.

* AFAM 480a, Senior Colloquium: African American Studies  Carolyn Roberts
A seminar on issues and approaches in African American studies. The colloquium offers students practical help in refining their senior essay topics and developing research strategies. Students discuss assigned readings and share their research experiences and findings. During the term, students are expected to make substantial progress on their senior essays; they are required to submit a prospectus, an annotated bibliography, and a draft of one-quarter of the essay.

* AFAM 491a or b, The Senior Essay  Staff
Independent research on the senior essay. The senior essay form must be submitted to the director of undergraduate studies by the end of the second week of classes. The senior essay should be completed according to the following schedule: (1) end of the sixth week of classes: a rough draft of the entire essay; (2) end of the last week of classes (fall term) or three weeks before the end of classes (spring term): two copies of the final version of the essay.