

# AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

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The African American Studies major examines, from numerous disciplinary perspectives, questions of race, culture, and modern struggles for equality centering on the experiences of people of African descent in Black Atlantic societies including the United States, the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, and Africa, and the global impact of those experiences. Students in the department explore the historical, cultural, political, economic, and social development of Black Atlantic societies. Majors work to become informed thinkers who are intellectually prepared to offer clarity and insight to ongoing academic and public debates centered in questions concerning race and inequality.

African American Studies majors become knowledgeable about the history, primary methodologies, and interdisciplinary breadth of the field. Students learn to critique, articulate, analyze, and interpret universal themes concerning both individuals in society and group interactions as they relate to the work of scholars, scientists, writers, artists, musicians, economists, and entrepreneurs.

## REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

African American Studies can be taken either as a stand-alone major or as one of two majors in consultation with the director of undergraduate studies (DUS). Pertinent regulations can be found in Academic Regulations, section L, Special Academic Arrangements, "Two Majors."

The major in African American Studies requires twelve term courses, including seven core courses and five electives in a focus area. The seven core courses include the African American history sequence AFAM 1160 and AFAM 1162, which can be taken in either order; one humanities course in African American literature; one course in the social sciences relevant to African American studies; the junior seminar (AFAM 4310); the senior colloquium (AFAM 4380) and senior essay (AFAM 4391).

**Area of focus** Students majoring in African American Studies are required to choose an area of focus comprised of five courses. This cluster of interrelated courses is intended to ground the student's learning experience in one area of investigation. Often students choose an area of focus in a traditional discipline such as political science, art history, economics, sociology, American studies, history, or English language and literature. Students can also construct interdisciplinary areas of focus that span traditional departments and encompass broader theoretical frameworks such as race and ethnicity, cultural studies, black arts, or feminism and gender studies. All majors are encouraged to take upper-level courses as part of their focus, especially those courses centering on research and methodology. None of the seven core courses may be counted among the required electives in the area of focus.

**Junior seminar** In their junior year students must take the junior seminar, AFAM 4310. This course provides majors with theoretical and methodological bases for the work they will do during their research-oriented senior year.

**Credit/D/Fail** No more than one course taken Credit/D/Fail may be applied toward the requirements of the major.

**Outside credit** Courses taken at another institution or during an approved summer or term-time study abroad program may count toward the major requirements with DUS approval.

#### SENIOR REQUIREMENT

Senior majors participate in a colloquium in AFAM 4380 that provides them an opportunity to exchange ideas with each other and with more advanced scholars. Students in AFAM 4380 submit a prospectus, compile a working bibliography, begin or continue research, and write the first twenty pages of the senior essay. After completing the colloquium, each student carries out the remaining research and writing of a senior essay in AFAM 4391 under the guidance of a faculty member in the chosen discipline or area of focus.

Students are strongly encouraged to use the summer between the junior and senior years for research directly related to the senior essay. For example, field or documentary research might be undertaken in urban or rural communities in America and throughout the diaspora. The particular research topic and design are to be worked out in each case with a faculty adviser.

#### ADVISING

Students considering a program of study in African American Studies should consult the DUS as early as possible. Areas of focus and schedules for majors must be approved by the DUS.

**Two majors** The requirements for double majoring often depend on the other department or discipline in which the student is planning to major. Students interested in double majoring should initially make an appointment with the DUS in African American Studies to discuss their plans and the courses they have already taken toward the African American Studies major. The student should, then, plan a meeting with both the DUS in African American Studies as well as the DUS in the other department to ensure clarity on the requirements for both departments. During this meeting, the student may explore the possibility of writing a joint thesis instead of two separate theses.

**Graduate work** African American Studies offers training of special interest to those considering admission to graduate or professional schools and careers in education, journalism, law, the arts, business management, city planning, international relations, politics, psychology, publishing, public health, or social work. The interdisciplinary structure of the department offers students an opportunity to satisfy the increasingly rigorous expectations of admissions committees and prospective employers.

#### STUDY ABROAD

A limited number of courses taken during sophomore or junior semesters abroad can be counted toward the major with DUS approval.

#### SUMMARY OF MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

**Prerequisites** None

**Number of courses** 12 term courses, incl 7 core courses (incl sen req), and 5 electives in a focus area

**Specific courses required** AFAM 1160, 1162, 4310

**Distribution of courses** 1 humanities course in AFAM lit and 1 relevant social science course, both approved by DUS; 5 courses in focus area

**Senior requirement** Senior colloquium (AFAM 4380) and senior essay (AFAM 4391)

FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

**Professors** Elijah Anderson, David Blight, Daphne Brooks, Hazel Carby (*Emeritus*), Marlene Daut, Erica Edwards, Roderick Ferguson, Kaiama Glover, Phillip Atiba Solomon, Jacqueline Goldsby, Elizabeth Hinton, Matthew Jacobson, Gerald Jaynes, Tavia Nyong'o, Edward Rugemer, Robert Stepto (*Emeritus*), Michael Veal, Shane Vogel

**Associate Professor** Crystal Feimster

**Assistant Professors** Na Na Adusei-Poku, Allison Harris, Jonathan Howard, Elleza Kelley, Ernest Mitchell, Carolyn Roberts

**Lecturers** Thomas Allen Harris, Tasha Hawthorne, Ferentz Lafargue, Sarah Mahurin

## *Courses*

**AFAM 1398a / CGSC 2770a / EDST 1177a / PHIL 1177a, Propaganda, Ideology, and Democracy** Staff

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 1615b / WGSS 1125b, "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 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 o Course cr

**AFAM 1946b / ECON 2171b / EDST 1271b / EDST 271, 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 1952a / PLSC 2363a / SOCY 2002a, Topics in Contemporary Social Theory** Philip Gorski

In-depth introduction to recent developments in social theory, with particular emphasis on the last twenty years. Focus on three distinct areas of study: the building blocks and contrasting understandings of human persons and social action; the competing theories of the social structure of markets, institutions, cultures, social fields, and actor-networks; and the theoretical controversies concerning nations, states and empires, ethnic and racial identity, and the relation between facts and values in social research. Authors include Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Jurgen Habermas, Pierre Bourdieu and Bruno Latour. SOCY 151 or equivalent is strongly recommended. WR, SO o Course cr

**AFAM 1986a / LAST 1214a / PLSC 2417a / SOCY 1704a, Contesting Injustice** Staff  
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 first years and sophomores. SO o Course cr

**AFAM 2150a / ER&M 2534a / HIST 1131a / HSHM 2520a, History of Anti-Black Racism and Medicine** Staff

The course traces how anti-Black racism shaped the development of western medicine in the Americas. It examines how ideas of anti-Blackness shaped the work of health practitioners and the experiences of patients. It engages the emergence of racial science and scientific racism, and how they contributed to the production of medical knowledge. More importantly, it centers the voices and experiences of Black people, and the various ways challenged racism through knowledge production and activism. It also addresses the enduring legacies of anti-Black racism in medical practice, and its impact on health inequality. HU o Course cr

**\* AFAM 2310b / AMST 4445b, Politics and Culture of the U.S. Color Line** Matthew Jacobson and Lisa Lowe

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 2317a / TDPS 2012a, Queer Caribbean Performance** Amanda Reid

With its lush and fantastic landscape, fabulous carnivalesque aesthetics, and rich African Diaspora Religious traditions, the Caribbean has long been a setting where

New World black artists have staged competing visions of racial and sexual utopia and dystopia. However, these foreigner-authored fantasies have often overshadowed the lived experience and life storytelling of Caribbean subjects. This course explores the intersecting performance cultures, politics, and sensual/sexual practices that have constituted queer life in the Caribbean region and its diaspora. Placing Caribbean queer of color critique alongside key moments in twentieth and twenty-first century performance history at home and abroad, we ask how have histories of the plantation, discourses of race and nation, migration, and revolution led to the formation of regionally specific queer identifications. What about the idea of the “tropics” has made it such as fertile ground for queer performance making, and how have artists from the region identified or dis-identified with these aesthetic formations? This class begins with an exploration of theories of queer diaspora and queer of color critique’s roots in black feminisms. We cover themes of exile, religious rites, and organizing as sights of queer political formation and creative community in the Caribbean. HU

\* **AFAM 2339b / AMST 4461b / EDST 2209b / ER&M 1692b / WGSS 2202b, Identity, Diversity, and Policy in U.S. Education** Craig Canfield

Introduction to critical theory (feminism, queer theory, critical race theory, disability studies, trans studies, Indigenous studies) as a fundamental tool for understanding and critiquing identity, diversity, and policy in U.S. education. Exploration of identity politics and theory, as they figure in education policy. Methods for applying theory and interventions to interrogate issues in education. Application of theory and interventions to policy creation and reform. EDST 1110 recommended. WR, HU

\* **AFAM 3145a / HIST 3145a, Enslavement in the Americas, 1500–1900** Edward Rugemer

This course explores the practice of enslavement in the Americas from the beginnings of colonization through the nineteenth century. The racialized slavery that emerged in the Americas was new to World History, developed by European colonists to exploit the natural resources of the Americas. Initially, European colonists enslaved indigenous peoples wherever possible, yet by the late sixteenth century the enslavement of Africans had become far more common. We focus upon North American and the Caribbean, where European colonists developed sophisticated agricultural enterprises that produced for export to the European market and were completely dependent upon the enslaved labor of Africans. An enormous ocean commerce trafficked almost twelve million enslaved captives from the Atlantic coasts of Africa to work on the plantations of the Americas. The commerce in tobacco, sugar, rum, and cotton enabled these colonies to develop. Black people resisted enslavement at multiple levels, and throughout the Americas there emerged the Black cultures, languages, musics, struggles, and histories that we know and love today. WR, HU

\* **AFAM 3170b / HIST 172Jb / HSHM 4630b, Care Work: Intersectional Pedagogical, Experiential, and Theoretical Approaches to Healing** Ayah Nuriddin

What does it mean to “care”? What models of care work do we need to attend to current crises? What models of care work can we learn from the past? Can we imagine a world where the concept of care, in its most inclusive, embracing, holistic, liberatory form operates as a fundamental value driving our global societies? These are some of the questions that inspired the creation of this course. In this seminar, students explore theoretical feminist, Black feminist, and Crip-of-Color perspectives of care work as well

as experiential healing modalities that might interrupt cycles of harm often experienced by care workers. HU

\* **AFAM 3615a / WGSS 3305a, Black Feminist Theory** Gail Lewis

This course is designed to introduce you to some of the major themes in black feminist theory. The course does so by presenting classic texts with more recent ones to give you a sense of the vibrancy of black feminist theory for addressing past and present concerns. Rather than interpret black feminist theory as a critical formation that simply puts race, gender, sexuality, and class into conversation with one another, the course apprehends that formation as one that produced epistemic shifts in how we understand politics, empire, history, the law, and literature. This is by no means an exhaustive list of the areas into which black feminism intervened. It is merely a sample of some of the most vibrant ideological and discursive contexts in which black feminism caused certain epistemic transformations. SO

\* **AFAM 3675a / AMST 3355a / ER&M 3574a / FREN 3675a / LAST 2675a, Haiti**

**Writes I** Marlene Daut and Kaiama Glover

From nineteenth-century antislavery pamphleteering to accounts of ecological catastrophe in 21st-century fiction, Haitian literature has resounded across the globe since the nation's revolutionaries declared independence in 1804. Starting with pre-revolutionary writing, including the emergence of Haitian Creole letters, moving through a long, largely francophone nineteenth century, to present-day Haitian writing in the English language, this two-semester exploration of Haitian literature presents the political, cultural, and historical frameworks necessary to comprehend Haiti's vast literary output. Whether writing in Haiti or its wide-ranging diasporas, Haitian authors have boldly contributed to pressing conversations in global letters while reflecting Haiti's unique cultural and historical experiences. Considering an expansive array of poets, playwrights, and novelists - such as Baron de Vastey, Juste Chanlatte, Demesvar Delorme, Edwidge Danticat, René Depestre, Kettly Mars, Dany Laferrière, and Évelyne Trouillot - this course engages students in a fresh examination of Haiti's richly polyglot and transnational literary tradition that spans more than two centuries.

\* **AFAM 3713a / TDPS 3301a, Embodying Story** Renee 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. Limited Enrollment. See Canvas for application. HU

**AFAM 3860a / ENGL 3860a, Black Literature** Staff

If we read it carefully, black literature tells a hidden history of the New World. This course introduces students to the key texts, authors, themes and traditions of African American literature. Reading major works by black writers, from the 18th century to the present, we will chart the historical conditions, social movements, and intellectual circuits that shaped this literature, as well as the innovative forms and aesthetics that characterize its signature style, depth, and dynamism. Engaging in the writing, reading, and archival practices of literary studies, we will explore black literatures as modes of expression, representation, critique, subversion, politics, fantasy, prophecy, and

beyond. Authors include Frederick Douglass, Gwendolyn Brooks, Amiri Baraka, Toni Morrison, and more. WR, HU o Course cr

\* **AFAM 3929a / SOCY 3742a, 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. so

\* **AFAM 4134a / AFST 4834a / ENGL 4834a, Postcolonial World Literatures, 1945 to the Present** Stephanie Newell

Introduction to key debates about postwar world literatures in English, to the politics of English as a language of postcolonial literature, and to debates about globalization and culture. Themes include colonial history, postcolonial migration, translation, national identity, cosmopolitanism, and global literary prizes. WR, HU

\* **AFAM 4357a / AFST 4457a / AMST 4470 / ER&M 4067a / FREN 481 / FREN 4810, Racial Republic: African Diasporic Literature and Culture in Postcolonial France** Fadila Habchi

This is an interdisciplinary seminar on French cultural history from the 1930s to the present. We focus on issues concerning race and gender in the context of colonialism, postcolonialism, and migration. The course investigates how the silencing of colonial history has been made possible culturally and ideologically, and how this silencing has in turn been central to the reorganizing of French culture and society from the period of decolonization to the present. We ask how racial regimes and spaces have been constructed in French colonial discourses and how these constructions have evolved in postcolonial France. We examine postcolonial African diasporic literary writings, films, and other cultural productions that have explored the complex relations between race, colonialism, historical silences, republican universalism, and color-blindness. Topics include the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Black Paris, decolonization, universalism, the Trente Glorieuses, the Paris massacre of 1961, anti-racist movements, the "beur" author, memory, the 2005 riots, and contemporary afro-feminist and decolonial movements.

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\* **AFAM 4380a, Senior Colloquium: African American Studies** Sarah Mahurin

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 4779a / MUSI 4480a, 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/folkloric 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. HU