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 such as the United States, the Caribbean, and Latin America, including 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. Pertinent regulations can be found under Two Majors in section K of the Academic Regulations.

The major in African American Studies requires twelve term courses, including seven core courses and five electives in an area of concentration. The seven core courses include the African American history sequence AFAM 160 and AFAM 162, which can be taken in either order; one course in African American literature; one course in the social sciences relevant to African American studies; the junior seminar (AFAM 410); the senior colloquium (AFAM 480) and senior essay (AFAM 491). AFAM 162 will not be offered during the 2017-2018 academic year; students who need to fulfill the history requirement during this academic year should enroll in AFAM 125 during the fall term.

Area of concentration Students majoring in African American Studies are required to choose an area of concentration 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 will choose an area of concentration 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 concentration 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 concentration, 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 concentration.

Junior seminar In their junior year students must take the junior seminar, AFAM 410. 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 counted toward the major.

SENIOR REQUIREMENT

Senior majors participate in a colloquium in AFAM 480 that gives them an opportunity to exchange ideas with each other and with more advanced scholars. Students in AFAM 480 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 491 under the guidance of a faculty member in the chosen discipline or area of concentration.

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

Application to the major Students considering a program of study in African American Studies should consult the director of undergraduate studies as early as possible. Areas of concentration and schedules for majors must be approved by the director of undergraduate studies.

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 and or junior semesters abroad can be counted toward the major in consultation with, and the approval of the director of undergraduate studies (DUS).
REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Prerequisites  None
Number of courses  12 term courses
Specific courses required  AFAM 160, 162, 410
Distribution of courses  1 relevant humanities course and 1 relevant social science course, both approved by DUS; 5 courses in area of concentration
Senior requirement  Senior colloquium (AFAM 480) and senior essay (AFAM 491)

FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES


Associate Professors  Crystal Feimster, Anthony Reed, Edward Rugemer, Vesla Weaver

Assistant Professors  Rizvana Bradley, Erica James, Christopher Lebron