

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

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

Chair

Phillip Atiba Goff

Director of Graduate Studies

Erica Edwards

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

Associate Professors Crystal Feimster

Assistant Professors Allison Harris, Jonathan Howard, Elleza Kelley, Ernest Mitchell, Carolyn Roberts

Lecturers Thomas Allen Harris, Ferentz Lafargue, Sarah Mahurin

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; music; political science; psychology; religious studies; sociology; Spanish and Portuguese; and women's, gender, and sexuality studies. 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. Students may focus on the history or artistic productions of any region within the African diaspora. Students are encouraged to draw from multiple disciplines in their intellectual pursuits, both in preparation for their qualifying examinations and in their dissertation research and writing. An area of concentration may also follow the fields of study already established within a single discipline, for example, race/minority/ethnic studies in a combined degree with sociology; the study of Black political thought, or voting patterns, in a combined degree with political science; a study of racial bias in a combined degree with psychology; or an ethnography in a combined degree with either anthropology, or sociology. An area of concentration must either be a field of study offered by the joint 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.

This is a combined degree program. To be considered for admission to this program, applicants must indicate both African American studies and one of the participating departments/programs listed above.

REQUIREMENTS FOR TRANSFER INTO THE AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES COMBINED PH.D. PROGRAM

1. Students applying for transfer into the combined Ph.D. program must already have taken AFAM 505 or be taking it in the term of application; must provide a plan outlining the AFAM courses already taken and those they will take; and must submit a research statement that explains how the combined Ph.D. will advance their research interests.
2. Students must provide two letters of recommendation: one from their adviser in the joint department or program, unless that adviser is jointly appointed with African American studies, in which case a letter from the student's DGS in the joint department or program is required; *and* a second letter from a faculty member in African American studies who commits to being the student's adviser throughout the completion of the dissertation.
3. Students cannot apply sooner than the second term of the first year and must apply by January 3, which is the deadline for African American studies' annual admissions cycle. Preference will be given to students in the second year of their Ph.D. program. Applications will receive a faculty vote early in the spring term to approve or reject, and results will be communicated to the student no later than spring break.

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), 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 qualifying examination committee, and on the dissertation committee. Both the qualifying exams 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. The number of courses

that will count depends on the joint department or program. 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 500a / AMST 702a, Global Black Aesthetics Tav Nyong'o

Given the planetary scope increasingly implicit in contemporary art practice and the art world, this course asks after the relationship between politics and aesthetics in the current moment of planetary crisis. Critical discussion of the relation between aesthetics and politics is often framed as solely a question of enhancing democratic participation and emancipating publics. However, this approach is limited and does not sufficiently account for colonial modernity's role in the construction of the aesthetic, as well as its role in political relegating and regulating populations as dispossessed and disenfranchised. Readings include contemporary black aesthetic theories of refusal, fabulation, and poetics and draw on readings from Denise Ferreira da Silva, Fred Moten, Tina Campt, Saidiya Hartman, Christina Sharpe, John Keene, Dionne Brand, Édouard Glissant, and Sylvia Wynter. Prerequisite: one other graduate African American Studies course, preferably AFAM 505.

AFAM 505a, Theorizing Racial Formations Erica Edwards

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 522a / AMST 721a / ENGL 935a, The Beautiful Struggle: Blackness, the Archive, and the Speculative Daphne Brooks

This seminar takes its inspiration from concepts and questions centering theories that engage experimental methodological approaches to navigating the opacities of the archive: presumptively “lost” narratives of black life, obscure(d) histories, compromised voices and testimonials, contested (auto)biographies, anonymous testimonies, textual aporias, fabulist documents, confounding marginalia. The scholarly and aesthetic modes by which a range of critics and poets, novelists, dramatists, and historians have grappled with such material have given birth to new analytic lexicons—from Saidiya Hartman’s “critical fabulation” to José Estaban Muñoz’s “ephemera as evidence” to Tavia Nyong’o’s “Afrofabulation.” Such strategies affirm the centrality of speculative thought and invention as vital and urgent forms of epistemic intervention in the hegemony of the archive and open new lines of inquiry in black studies. Our class explores a variety of texts that showcase these new queries and innovations, and we also actively center our efforts from within the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, where a number of sessions are held and where we focus on Beinecke holdings that resonate with units of the course. Various sessions also feature distinguished guest interlocutors via Zoom, who are on hand to discuss the specifics of their research methods and improvisational experimentations in both archival exploration and approaches to their prose and poetic projects.

AFAM 687a / AMST 701a / HIST 751a, Race in American Studies Matthew Jacobson

This reading-intensive seminar examines influential scholarship across disciplines on “the race concept” and racialized relations in American culture and society. Major topics include the cultural construction of race; race as both an instrument of oppressions and an idiom of resistance in American politics; the centrality of race in literary, anthropological, and legal discourse; the racialization of U.S. foreign policy; “race mixing” and “passing,” vicissitudes of “whiteness” in American politics; the centrality of race in American political culture; and “race” in the realm of popular cultural representation. Writings under investigation include classic formulations by such scholars as Lawrence Levine and Ronald Takaki, as well as more recent work by Saidiya Hartman, Robin Kelley, and Ann Fabian. Seminar papers give students an opportunity to explore in depth the themes, periods, and methods that most interest them. Permission of the instructor required.

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

This graduate research course is limited to a small number of graduate students who are currently involved in research projects that touch on any issues related to health, medicine, and the body in the context of slavery, colonialism, or neocolonialism. The course includes visits to diverse archives on campus, discussions of archival best practices, and digital organizational tools. The course provides graduate students with a balance of support and independence as they carry out their research. Graduate students in any discipline are warmly welcomed to participate in a compassion-based research community that prioritizes values of deep listening, presence, and care.

AFAM 764a / AMST 715a / HIST 715a, Readings in Nineteenth-Century America

David Blight

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 771a / AMST 830a / HIST 729a, The American Carceral State Elizabeth Hinton

This readings course examines the historical development of the U.S. carceral state, focusing on policing practices, crime control policies, prison conditions, and the production of scientific knowledge in the twentieth century. Key works are considered to understand the connections between race and the development of legal and penal systems over time, as well as how scholars have explained the causes and consequences of mass incarceration in America. Drawing from key insights from new histories in the field of American carceral studies, we trace the multifaceted ways in which policymakers and officials at all levels of government have used criminal law, policing, and imprisonment as proxies for exerting social control in communities of color throughout U.S. history.

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 774b / HIST 740b, Slavery and Abolition in the Atlantic World Edward Rugemer

This course explores the history and historiography of racial slavery in the Atlantic World from its emergence in the fifteenth century through its formal abolition in the nineteenth century and the processes of emancipation that followed.

AFAM 778a / PSYC 728a, Research Topics in Racial Justice in Public Safety Phillip Atiba Goff

In this seminar, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows have a chance to present their research, and undergraduate research assistants learn about how to conduct interdisciplinary quantitative social science research on racial justice in public safety. The course consists of weekly presentations by members and occasional discussions of readings that are handed out in advance. The course is designed to be entirely *synchronous*. Presenters may request a video recording if they can benefit from seeing themselves present (e.g., for a practice talk). This course is intended for graduate students, postdocs, and undergraduates interested in conducting original quantitative social science research about race and public safety. Permission of the instructor is required.

AFAM 820a / HIST 821a, A Greater Caribbean: New Approaches to Caribbean History Anne Eller

We engage with new work emerging about the Greater Caribbean in the context of Latin America, the African diaspora, Atlantic history, global history, comparative emancipation from chattel slavery, and the study of global revolutions. Students make in-class presentations that locate these titles in a deeper historiography with classic

texts. This course crosses imperial boundaries of archives and historiography in order to consider the intersecting allegiances, identities, itineraries, and diaspora of peoples, in local, hemispheric, and global context. Some central questions include: What is the lived geography of the Caribbean at different moments, and how does using different geographic and temporary frameworks help approach the region's history? What role did people living in this amorphously demarcated region play in major historical transformations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? How did the varied but interconnected processes of Caribbean emancipation impact economic and political systems throughout the Atlantic and beyond?

AFAM 860a / ENGL 957a, *Ecologies of Black Print* Jacqueline Goldsby

A survey of history of the book scholarship germane to African American literature and the ecosystems that have sustained black print cultures over time. Secondary works consider eighteenth- to twenty-first-century black print culture practices, print object production, modes of circulation, consumption, and reception. Students write critical review essays, design research projects, and write fellowship proposals based on archival work at the Beinecke Library, Schomburg Center, and other regional sites (e.g., the Sterling A. Brown papers at Williams College).

AFAM 867a / CPLT 958a / EMST 667a / ER&M 677a / SPAN 867a, *Black Iberia: Then and Now* Nicholas Jones

This graduate seminar examines the variety of artistic, cultural, historical, and literary representations of black Africans and their descendants – both enslaved and free – across the vast stretches of the Luso-Hispanic world and the United States. Taking a chronological frame, the course begins its study of Blackness in medieval and early modern Iberia and its colonial kingdoms. From there, we examine the status of Blackness conceptually and ideologically in Asia, the Caribbean, Mexico, and South America. Toward the end of the semester, we concentrate on black Africans by focusing on Equatorial Guinea, sub-Saharan African immigration in present-day Portugal and Spain, and the politics of Afro-Latinx culture and its identity politics in the United States. Throughout the term, we interrogate the following topics in order to guide our class discussions and readings: bondage and enslavement, fugitivity and maroonage, animal imageries and human-animal studies, geography and maps, Black Feminism and Black Queer Studies, material and visual cultures (e.g., beauty ads, clothing, cosmetics, food, Blackface performance, royal portraiture, reality TV, and music videos), the Inquisition and African diasporic religions, and dispossession and immigration. Our challenging task remains the following: to see how Blackness conceptually and experientially is subversively fluid and performative, yet deceptive and paradoxical. This course will be taught in English, with all materials available in the original (English, Portuguese, Spanish) and in English translation.

AFAM 895a and AFAM 896b, *Dissertation Prospectus Workshop* Erica Edwards

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

AFAM 929a / HSHM 775a, *The Afterlives of Slavery, Health, and Medicine* Carolyn Roberts

This graduate reading course is limited to a small number of graduate and professional school students who are interested in studying historical and contemporary texts that explore the history of slavery and its afterlives from the perspective of health and

medicine. Graduate and professional school students co-create the course based on their interests. All students serve as co-teachers and co-learners in a supportive, compassion-based learning community that prioritizes values of deep listening, presence, and care.

AFAM 947b / ENGL 947b, Black Existentialisms Shane Vogel

This course is an introduction to Black existential thought as it developed in the writing of African American and Afro-Caribbean authors. Existentialism was a historical movement in philosophy and culture typically associated with mid-twentieth-century European intellectuals that asked how individuals constitute themselves within and beyond the given constraints of and possibilities of their situation. But a deep tradition of Black existentialism — or what Lewis R. Gordon calls *Africana* philosophies of existence — is related to but distinct from the European tradition. Throughout the course we explore key existential concepts such as freedom, authenticity, responsibility, action, struggle, situation, anguish, dread, the gaze, and the Other as they have been imagined in Black diasporic expressive cultures. Some of the questions we ask include: How have Black writers developed existential ideas in novels, poetry, and drama? How does the encounter between European and *Africana* existentialisms animate the literature of Black freedom struggles in the US and across the colonial and postcolonial world? How does Black existentialism understand the (im)possibility of self-making within a society structured by dominance, and what might an existentialist understanding of Black collectivity look like? How can Black existential thought provide productive opportunities to reevaluate some of the seeming binaries that have shaped conversations in Black studies (in the mid-twentieth century and again today) such as hope/despair, being/nonbeing, humanism/antihumanism, and social life/social death? Why Black existentialism, and why now? Readings include work by Frantz Fanon, Richard Wright, Lorraine Hansberry, Ann Petry, William Melvin Kelley, George Lamming, Jackie Sibblies Drury, Ralph Ellison, Lewis R. Gordon, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Simone de Beauvoir, and others. This is an introductory level seminar, and no previous knowledge of the course content is required.