AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES

Director, Professor Cheryl Townsend Gilkes
Program Faculty and Advisory Committee: Professors Catherine Besteman (Anthropology), Cedric Gael Bryant (English), Cheryl Townsend Gilkes (African-American Studies and Sociology), Jill Gordon (Philosophy), Bénédicte Mauguière (French), Margaret McFadden (American Studies), James Webb (History), and Robert Weisbrot (History); Associate Professors Chandra Bhimull (African-American Studies and Anthropology) and Tanya Sheehan (Art); Assistant Professors Mouhamédoul Niang (French) and Laura Seay (Government); Associate Dean of Students Tashia Bradley

The African-American Studies Program is an interdisciplinary program of courses organized to provide an overview and introduction to the experiences of peoples of African descent in the United States and to connect those experiences to the literatures, histories, and cultures of Africa and of Latin America and the Caribbean. The program offers students the opportunity to explore the human experience of persons and peoples through the multiple perspectives offered by diverse social scientific and humanistic disciplines. Courses in the program expose students to classical and contemporary literature, to issues of public policy, to critical debates in history and social science, and to main currents of historical analysis and contemporary cultural expression. Students may elect a major or a minor in African-American studies built upon courses in American studies, anthropology, art, history, literature, economics, government, music, philosophy, religious studies, and sociology. The program exposes students to the history, literature, and cultures of African Americans and people of African descent throughout the Americas and requires exploration of African history, cultures, and artistic expressions. While the African-American Studies Program’s use of the phrase African American includes persons and peoples of African descent throughout the Americas, the program’s primary focus is on the literature, history, and culture of people of African descent in the United States and the Caribbean.

Requirements for the Major in African-American Studies

Twelve courses selected from courses specifically focused on African Americans and on peoples and cultures of Africa and the Caribbean. Six required courses: American Studies 276, English 426, History 247; at least one course focused specifically on Africa (e.g., Anthropology 237); at least one course focused specifically on the Caribbean or African-derived cultures in Latin America or the African diaspora (e.g., Anthropology 231); and at least one course focused on art or other aspects of expressive culture. Four or more electives from among the relevant courses in the social sciences, humanities, and relevant interdisciplinary studies programs (e.g., American Studies, Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, English/Creative Writing, Latin American Studies, Education); at least one of the courses should be taken at the 300 or 400 level. Courses not specifically listed may be counted toward the major with permission of the advisor if substantial relevance can be established during a particular semester or in an off-campus program. At least one seminar at the 400 level with a member of the African-American Studies Program faculty where a substantial final paper or equivalent project explores in depth and engages significant debates about an aspect or aspects of African-American life and culture in the United States or in the African diaspora. Such courses could include, when the subject material is appropriate and with the permission of the advisor, American Studies 493, English 413 and 493, Music 493, and Sociology 493. Course substitutions and exchanges may be made in consultation with the African-American Studies Program advisor.

Requirements for the Minor in African-American Studies

Seven courses including American Studies 276; History 247; American Studies 493; at least one course focused on Africa or the Caribbean; and two courses selected from American Studies 493, Anthropology 231, English 346, 413 (when appropriate), Government 255, 336, 455, Philosophy 213, Religious Studies 256, or Sociology 252, 355, 357, 358. Course substitutions and exchanges may be made in consultation with the African-American Studies Program advisor.

Interested students also may consider an independent major in Africana studies (a selection of courses combining study of the Caribbean, the Americas, and Africa) or an independent major that combines African-American studies with another relevant discipline or program, especially American studies, anthropology, art, government, Latin American studies, music, or religious studies.

Majors and minors are instructed to inform faculty in various programs and departments that they are African-American studies majors or minors when seeking the permission of an instructor to register for courses restricted to majors in other disciplines or when asking that prerequisites be waived.

Courses That Apply to the African-American Studies Major

American Studies
- 276 African-American Culture in the United States
- 368 Great Books by American Women of Color: From Hurston to Danticat
- 493 Seminar in American Studies: Spike Lee’s United States of America

Anthropology
- 231 Caribbean Cultures
• 258 Anthropology, History, Memory
• 274 Africans in America: The New Diaspora
• 341 Culture, Mobility, Identity: Encounters in the African Diaspora
• 421 Anthropology of Creativity

Art
• 256 African-American Art

English
• 346 Culture and Literature of the American South
• 413A Author Course: Toni Morrison
• 457 American Gothic Literature

French
• 236 Introduction to the Francophone World: The Americas
• 237 Francophone African Cinema
• 361 Creolization, Culture, and Society in the Indian Ocean Islands

Government
• 255 Introduction to African Politics
• 336 Politics of Development in Africa
• 455 Conflict and Crisis in Africa

History
• 247 African-American History, from Slavery to Freedom
• 342 Crisis and Reform: American Society and Politics in the 1960s

Music
• 114 Jazz Improvisation
• 118 African Music

Philosophy
• 213 Philosophical Inquiries into Race
• 360 African Philosophies, 1945 to Present

Religious Studies
• 256 The African-American Religious Experience

Sociology
• 214 African-American Elites and Middle Classes
• 252 Race, Ethnicity, and Society
• 355 African-American Women and Social Change
• 357 Civil Rights, Black Power, and Social Change
• 358 The Sociology of W.E.B. Du Bois

Note: Additional courses, often taught by visiting faculty, may be available from time to time as temporary offerings, and such courses may be counted toward the major or the minor with permission of the African-American Studies Program advisor.

Course Offerings

AA214j African-American Elites and Middle Classes  Listed as Sociology 214.  Three credit hours.  S, U.  GILKES

[AA226] Sociology of Martin Luther King Jr.  Listed as Sociology 226.  Three credit hours.  S, U.

[AA231] Caribbean Cultures  Listed as Anthropology 231.  Four credit hours.  I.

AA237f Introduction to the Francophone World: Africa  Listed as French 238.  Four credit hours.  I.  NIANG

AA252f  Race, Ethnicity, and Society  Listed as Sociology 252.  Four credit hours.  U.  GILKES

AA256  African-American Art  Listed as Art 256.  Four credit hours.  A, U.

AA258s  Anthropology, History, Memory  Listed as Anthropology 258.  Four credit hours.  BHIMULL

AA274  Africans in America: The New Diaspora  Listed as Anthropology 274.  Three credit hours.  S, U.

AA276s  African-American Culture in the United States  Listed as American Studies 276.  Four credit hours.  S, U.  GILKES

AA297  Race and Democracy in the Nation's Capital  Listed as History 297.  Three credit hours.  H, U.  ASCH

AA336  Politics of Development in Africa  Listed as Government 336.  Four credit hours.  I.

AA341f  Culture, Mobility, Identity: Encounters in the African Diaspora  Listed as Anthropology 341.  Four credit hours.  S, I.  BHIMULL

AA342f  Crisis and Reform: American Society and Politics in the 1960s  Listed as History 342.  Four credit hours.  H.  WEISBROT

AA343f  African-American Literature: Speaking in Tongues  Listed as English 343.  Four credit hours.  L, U.  BRYANT

AA355  African-American Women and Social Change  Listed as Sociology 355.  Four credit hours.  U.

AA357  Civil Rights, Black Power, and Social Change  Listed as Sociology 357.  Four credit hours.

AA358  The Sociology of W.E.B. Du Bois  Listed as Sociology 358.  Four credit hours.  S, U.

AA364f  Spike Lee's United States  Listed as American Studies 364.  Four credit hours.  MCFADDEN

AA413  Author Course: Toni Morrison  Listed as English 413A.  Four credit hours.  L.

AA491f, 492s  Independent Study  Individual study of special problems in African-American studies in areas where the student has demonstrated the interest and competence necessary for independent work. Prerequisite: Permission of the instructor and of the program director.  One to four credit hours.  FACULTY