

# BLACK STUDIES

Degree Types: PhD

Black Studies by its very nature is an interdisciplinary field. It acquaints students with myriad ways of thinking, researching, and writing about the diverse experiences of African Americans in the United States and of African descended people throughout the African Diaspora (from dispersion, colonialism, the slave trade and slavery, through emancipation, decolonization, independence, and postcolonialism). Black Studies brings together the voluminous scholarship generated by past and present historians; political scientists; sociologists; cultural, literary, and performance studies critics; and scholars working on diverse topics and constructions of class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality.

The Department of Black Studies is comprised of renowned core faculty and faculty affiliates who are integrally involved in the teaching, service, and research interests of the department. Affiliated faculty members are invited, and in fact expected, to be key participants in Black Studies. Both our core and affiliated faculty have appointments in the following Northwestern University schools: Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, School of Communication, and the Bienen School of Music.

The Department offers advanced graduate training through a PhD in Black Studies. Three substantive areas form the basis of this program:

- a. Expressive Arts, Literature, and Cultural Studies
- b. Politics, Society, and Culture
- c. History

Each of these areas is populated by scholars within the department who focus their research within a domestic and/or international context.

The PhD program in Black Studies provides students with the historical background in the experiences of people of African descent, the analytic preparation to carry out rigorous empirical and theoretical research, and the professional development to pursue careers in academia or beyond.

Students in this program are also encouraged to participate in TGS's Interdisciplinary Cluster Initiative program. For more information on how you can have a second intellectual "home" outside of your department or program, please visit the Interdisciplinary Cluster Initiative page (<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/admission/academic-programs/clusters-and-certificates/>).

## **Additional resources:**

- Department website (<https://www.afam.northwestern.edu/>)
- Program handbook(s)

## Degrees Offered

- Black Studies PhD (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/black-studies/black-studies-phd/>)
- Black Diaspora Studies Certificate (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/black-studies/black-studies-certificate/>)

Learning objective(s)/Students should be able to...

- Develop breadth across various subfields of Black Studies.
- Develop depth in chosen subfield(s).

- Contribute original research to scholarly community.
- Develop strong oral skills.

## Black Studies Courses

### **BLK\_ST 401-0 Research Seminar in Black Studies (1 Unit)**

Introduction to central debates in Black Studies on a graduate level. Emphasizes critical thinking, research design and method, forms of argumentation, and theory building. Readings highlight a range of methods – historiographic, literary, ethnographic, social scientific etc. Assignments focused on developing student independent research projects.

### **BLK\_ST 402-0 Theorizing Black Genders and Sexualities (1 Unit)**

Examines the multiple and changing meanings and political effects of gender and sexuality on Black identity in different socio-cultural contexts. Puts in dialogue global Black feminist theory and Black queer theory through the discussion of topics such as: slavery, colonialism, diaspora, citizenship, activism, labor, kinship, desire, art, reproduction, violence, and others.

### **BLK\_ST 403-0 Theorizing Blackness and Diaspora (1 Unit)**

Introduces students to cultural, social, historical, artistic, and theoretical approaches to developing a global analytics of Blackness. Surveys Blackness as a category of critical analysis for both historical and contemporary social formations in the African Diaspora. Considers how gender, class, sexuality, and nationality shape the territory of Blackness.

### **BLK\_ST 410-0 Black Feminist and Black Queer Theories (1 Unit)**

Team taught course stages a series of dialogues between US black feminist theory and black queer theory through the discussion of such topics as the legacy of slavery; activism; work, family and self-esteem; body politics, i.e. sexuality, reproduction, HIV/AIDS, popular culture representation; appropriations and alliances.

### **BLK\_ST 420-0 Expressive Arts and Cultural Studies (1 Unit)**

Utilizes slave narratives, fiction, poetry, music, drama, critical theory, and the visual arts to survey how African-descended writers, artists, and theorists have grappled with such issues as: the relationship to Africa; self-articulation and struggle; performance as a site of knowledge production and contestation; and the global circulation of Black cultural production.

### **BLK\_ST 440-0 Black Historiography (1 Unit)**

Interrogates the development of Black History and its writing. Introduces graduate students to key themes, debates, sources, methods, periods and events that have shaped the emergence of Black Historiography. Examines historical methodology, including the histories of archives, their sources, and the challenges faced by historians seeking to uncover the Black past.

### **BLK\_ST 441-0 History of Black Women in the Diaspora (1 Unit)**

Examines the voices, struggles, theorizing, leadership, and writings of Black women, individually and collectively, locally and in Diaspora. Interrogates and challenges definitions of Black women by probing categories of difference, including ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, gender identity, spirituality, and migrant/immigrant status.

### **BLK\_ST 442-0 Africans in Colonial Latin America (1 Unit)**

Historiography of Africans and their descendents in Latin America, from early colonial times to abolition. Focuses on a series of historical problems affecting Africans, including the realities of slavery, free black life, gender and sexuality, culture, and questions of identity formation.

### **BLK\_ST 444-0 Civil Rights/Black Liberation (1 Unit)**

Surveys the scholarship on what many historians have termed "the long Civil Rights Movement." Begins with the labor activism of the 1930s

and the global wars of the 1940s, and treats the U.S. Black Freedom Movement as part of the broader anti-colonial upheaval of the 20th century.

**BLK\_ST 445-0 Historicizing Race in Latin America (1 Unit)**

Surveys the principle themes, sources, methods and arguments animating scholarship on race, sexuality, and modernity in Latin America.

**BLK\_ST 460-0 Race, Politics, Society, and Culture (1 Unit)**

Uses texts from sociology, anthropology, political science, and other social sciences to consider how the concepts of "race" and "Blackness" have functioned across time and space. Explores how race and Blackness reflect, inflect and inscribe inequality as well as group consciousness, struggle, and everyday life.

**BLK\_ST 467-0 Ethnographies of Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity (1 Unit)**

Interdisciplinary examination of texts for their theoretical, contextual, and methodological approaches to immigration, race, and ethnicity. Themes include the politics of location, representation, and fieldwork.

**BLK\_ST 469-0 Poststructuralism and Black Political Thought (1 Unit)**

Developing theoretical perspectives on the conceptualization of Black politics in the work of different Black thinkers, using the poststructuralist distinction between 'politics and the political'.

**BLK\_ST 475-0 Genealogy of Racism as a Concept: Deconstruction & Governmentality (1 Unit)**

Interrogates the histories and logics of racism as a concept since its formulation and formation during the early 20th century. Critiques the discursive traditions in which racism has been traditionally narrated as a historically self-evident object of moral condemnation or political critique.

**BLK\_ST 480-0 Graduate Topics in African American Studies (1 Unit)**

Explores special topics pertinent to Black Studies. Content changes with instructor.

**BLK\_ST 490-0 Independent Study (1 Unit)**

Individualized reading, research, discussion, and/or writing with faculty member.

**BLK\_ST 491-0 Reading and Pedagogy (1 Unit)**

Individualized training and practice as a teaching assistant (TA). Students registered for 491 and 2 other courses are considered full time.

**BLK\_ST 590-0 Research Seminar (1-3 Units)**

Independent research in first two years of PhD program, including summers. Students registered for 590 and 2 other courses are considered full time.