

# AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

afam.northwestern.edu

The study of black lives, cultures, and experiences has a long and distinguished history in the United States and abroad. Interdisciplinary from its beginnings, the field has developed exciting insights and firm intellectual and empirical foundations to systematically study the social, political, cultural, and economic dimensions of race both domestically and internationally. With these strengths and traditions, the Department of African American Studies provides opportunities to explore the richness and diversity of black life in a meaningful and coherent way.

The department offers courses that focus on people of African descent in the United States and other regions of the Americas and the African diaspora—the communities created by the dispersion of peoples from the African continent. By comparing the black experience in various parts of the world, students learn to analyze identity, race, and racism as formations that change over time and space. This broad study of the black experience is one of the key features that distinguish the department from similar departments at other institutions. Major themes in the curriculum include the nature of colonization and its impact on the colonizer and the colonized; racism and its effects on society as well as on scholarship; the importance of oral language, history, and tradition in the black experience; the roots and development of black music, literature, and religious styles; analysis of key social, political, and economic institutions such as families, churches, and labor markets; and the traffic of people, ideas, and artifacts throughout the African diaspora.

African American studies provides excellent preparation for graduate work in the social sciences, the humanities, and the professions, as well as for jobs and careers in a variety of fields. Education, law, journalism, urban planning, healthcare delivery and administration, business, social work, and politics are only a few of the fields for which African American studies provides an excellent background. In addition, as scholars and political leaders pay increased attention to global economic, political, and social phenomena, African American studies touches on issues of far-reaching national and international significance.

## Programs of Study

- African American Studies Major (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/african-american-studies/african-american-studies-major>)
- African American Studies Minor (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/african-american-studies/african-american-studies-minor>)

**AF\_AM\_ST 101-6 First-Year Seminar (1 Unit)** *WCAS First-Year Seminar*

**AF\_AM\_ST 210-0 Survey of African American Literature (1 Unit)**

Literature of blacks in the United States from slavery to freedom. Works of major writers and significant but unsung bards of the past. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 211-0 Literatures of the Black World (1 Unit)** Introductory survey of fiction, poetry, drama, folktales, and other literary forms of Africa and the African diaspora. Texts may span the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods and cover central themes, such as memory, trauma, spirituality, struggle, identity, freedom, and humor. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 212-1 Introduction to African-American History: Key concepts from 1700-1861 (1 Unit)** African origins, the slave trade, origins of slavery and racism in the United States, life under slavery in the North and the South. AF\_AM\_ST 212-1 and HISTORY 212-1 are taught together; may not receive credit for both courses. *Historical Studies Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 212-2 Introduction to African American History: Emancipation to Civil Rights Movement (1 Unit)** Emancipation to the civil rights era. Reconstruction, rise of legal segregation, strategies of resistance, migration, and urbanization. AF\_AM\_ST 212-2 and HISTORY 212-2 are taught together; may not receive credit for both courses. *Historical Studies Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 213-0 History of the Black World (1 Unit)** Introductory survey of the history of Africans and their descendants across the globe. African civilizations prior to European colonialism, encounters between Africa and Europe, movements of "Africans" to the Americas and elsewhere, and development of black communities in and outside Africa. *Historical Studies Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 214-0 Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies (1 Unit)** Problems and experiences of racialized minorities: blacks, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Latina/os. Comparison of their relationships with each other and with the majority society. *Historical Studies Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 215-0 Introduction to Black Social & Political Life (1 Unit)** Analysis of class, gender, sexuality, immigrant status, and ethnic origin in black society and politics. Focus on demographic trends, lived experiences, and ideological debates. *Ethics Values Distro Area Historical Studies Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules* (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 218-0 Asian/Black Historical Relations in the U.S. (1 Unit)** Comparative historical analysis of relations of these groups in the United States, including racialized and sexualized discourses structuring interracial relations and social, political, and economic location. Slavery, immigration, model minority myth, cross-racial politics. Taught with AF\_AM\_ST 218-0 and ASIAN\_AM 218-0; may not receive credit for both courses. *Historical Studies Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules* (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 220-0 Civil Rights and Black Liberation (1 Unit)** The Northern and Southern civil rights movements and the rise of black nationalism and feminism, 1945-72. *Ethics Values Distro Area Historical Studies Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules* (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>)

**AF\_AM\_ST 225-0 African-American Culture (1 Unit)** Survey of African American culture from slavery to the present. Relation of African American culture to African and Euro-American cultures, the Black Atlantic as a unit of analysis, representations of blackness in the public imagination. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 236-0 Introduction to African-American Studies (1 Unit)** Introduction to the discipline of black studies using key historical and theoretical texts. *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 245-0 The Black Diaspora and Transnationality (1 Unit)** Examination of events, movements, theories, and texts that have shaped development of the African diaspora. Topics include slavery, abolitionism,

pan-Africanism, the culture-politics nexus, hip-hop, AIDS, and linkages among gender, sexuality, and diasporic sensibilities. *Historical Studies Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 250-0 Race, Class and Gender (1 Unit)** Introduction to scholarship and key theories that treat race, class, and gender as intersecting social constructs. Race, class, and gender in work, family and reproduction, education, poverty, sexuality, and consumer culture. How race, class, and gender inform identity, ideology, and politics to incite social change. *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 251-0 The Mixed Race Experience (1 Unit)** Exploration of demographic trends in interracial and interethnic marriages to highlight the complexity of the American experience. Special attention to mixed-race experiences portrayed in film and novels. AF\_AM\_ST 251-0 and ASIAN\_AM 251-0 are taught together; students may not receive credit for both courses. *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 259-0 Introduction to African-American Drama (1 Unit)** Thematic and historical survey of African American drama. Sociopolitical context, the aesthetic reflected in the work, impact on African American and general theater audiences. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 261-0 Queer Literatures in the African Diaspora (1 Unit)** Advanced introduction to critical theories of race, gender, and sexuality in the African diaspora from the 19th century to today. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 310-0 Contemporary Asian Black Relations (1 Unit)** Divides between these groups, as well as areas of positive cross-cultural collaboration. Historical analysis of reparations, the 1992 Los Angeles riots, and affirmative action. Cross-racial exchange in youth expressions, popular culture, hip-hop. AF\_AM\_ST 310-0 and ASIAN\_AM 310-0 are taught together; may not receive credit for both courses. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 315-0 Religion in the Black Atlantic (1 Unit)** Afro-Atlantic religions since the 1400s; traditions of Orisa devotion and monotheisms; religion and revolution in African slave religion; racialization and empire; theories of religion, materialities, and diaspora. *Ethics Values Distro Area Historical Studies Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules* (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>)

**AF\_AM\_ST 319-0 Race, Ethnicity and the American Constitution (1 Unit)** Investigation of how race and ethnicity have influenced the evolution of the US Constitution and legal debate and practice. Topics include affirmative action, school integration, and the death penalty. Prerequisite: AF\_AM\_ST 220-0 or either POLI\_SCI 220-0 or POLI\_SCI 230-0. *Ethics Values Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules* (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 320-0 Social Meaning of Race (1 Unit)** Race as a social concept and recurrent cause of differentiation in multiracial societies. Impact of race on social, cultural, economic, and political institutions. Discussion of prejudice, racism, and discrimination. *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 327-0 Politics of Black Popular Culture (1 Unit)** Examination of the debates within black communities about the proper role and function of black art and artists in relation to black politics. *Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules* (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/>)

*undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext*) *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 330-0 Black Women in the 20th Century (1 Unit)** Experiences and leadership of African American women in major events in recent history, including anti-lynching, women's suffrage, civil rights movements, and World War II. *Historical Studies Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules* (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 331-0 The African American Novel (1 Unit)** Readings in classic black American fiction. The author as creator and participant. Works of Wright, Ellison, Baldwin, and others. Prerequisite: sophomore standing. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 334-0 Gender and Black Masculinity (1 Unit)** Perceptions and constructions of black masculinity within African American and "American" cultures in the United States; readings in gender and sexuality studies, feminist theory, African American studies, and cultural studies. *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 335-0 Race and Literature in 19th Century America (1 Unit)** Examination of the evolution and persistence of the notion of "race" in 19th century America, with attention to the origins of the idea of race in the West. Focus on the multiracial character of 19th century America.

**AF\_AM\_ST 339-0 Unsettling Whiteness (1 Unit)** Making the historical, political, and cultural formation of whiteness in Western modernity visible and narratable for commentary and analysis. Particular reference to contemporary culture. *Historical Studies Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules* (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 342-0 Comparative Slavery (1 Unit)** Traces slavery across historical epochs and geographic contexts, with an emphasis on Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States. *Ethics Values Distro Area Historical Studies Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules* (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 345-0 Afro-Latin America (1 Unit)** Exploration of Afro-Latin communities, cultures, and identities throughout Latin America and the Hispanic diaspora after 1800. Emergence of race and nation in modern Latin America, migration, gender, Afro-Latin spiritual systems and religion, family, and politics. *Historical Studies Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 348-0 Africans in Colonial Latin America (1 Unit)** History of Africans and African-descended people throughout Latin America from 1492 to 1800, emphasizing the varied experiences of slavery and freedom struggles, the emergence of race and colonial categories of difference, and the gendered lives of racialized colonial subjects.

**AF\_AM\_ST 350-0 Theorizing Blackness (1 Unit)** Advanced introduction to critical theories of race and racialization. Investigation of blackness as a category of critical analysis for analyzing Afro-diasporic formations. Consideration of how blackness is shaped by gender, class, sexuality, and nationality.

**AF\_AM\_ST 355-0 Diaspora Studies (1 Unit)** Interdisciplinary examination of the significance of diasporas, their histories, and common dynamics, illustrated with examples drawn from a wide range of cases. *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 358-0 Performing Memory in the Black World (1 Unit)**

Exploration of the ways in which peoples of the Black Atlantic remember slavery and fashion identities through novels, film, folktales, and drama.

**AF\_AM\_ST 360-0 Major Authors (1 Unit)** In-depth examination of a selected author's body of work. Choice of author varies. May be repeated for credit with change of author. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 363-0 Racism in Western Modernity (1 Unit)** Impact of racism in the formation of Western modernity. Critical conceptual and historical analyses of the social formation of "race" and the historical implications of racism in the contemporary West.

**AF\_AM\_ST 365-0 Black Chicago (1 Unit)** Surveys the social, cultural, and political history of African Americans in Chicago, including the Great Migration, the black political machine, black Chicago music, racial segregation, internal class stratification, and the role of black churches.

**AF\_AM\_ST 375-0 Post Colonial African American Studies (1 Unit)**

Development of critical approaches to African American studies from the perspectives of postcolonial analysis. In particular, examination of the meaning of the colonial in the formation of African American experiences and the significance of modernity, race, and black politics in the historical contexts of the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

**AF\_AM\_ST 378-0 Harlem Renaissance (1 Unit)** African American political and social movements and cultural production in theater, music, visual arts, and literature from 1915 to 1930. Prerequisite: AF\_AM\_ST 210-0 or another African American literature course. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 379-0 Black Women Writers (1 Unit)** Intensive, multi-genre examination of the contribution of black women to African American, women's, and American literature, with consideration of the factors and figures that have influenced the reception of black women's writings across time. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

**AF\_AM\_ST 380-0 Topics in African-American Studies (1 Unit)** Advanced work on social, cultural, or historical topics. May be repeated for credit with different topic. Prerequisite: advanced student or senior standing.

**AF\_AM\_ST 381-0 Topics in Transnational Black Studies (1 Unit)**

Examination of texts such as novels, poetry, film, drama, slave narratives, political manifestos, and historical texts in order to compare how people from across the African diaspora have approached issues of identity, culture, and community. Prerequisite: advanced student or senior standing.

**AF\_AM\_ST 390-0 Research Seminar (1 Unit)** Methods of researching the African American experience. Identification of research problems; location, selection, and critique of relevant literature; data gathering and analysis; report writing. Topics vary. Prerequisite: advanced student or senior standing.

**AF\_AM\_ST 396-0 Internship in African-American Studies (1 Unit)**

Analysis of social and cultural institutions through field study and participant observation. Entails a research project sponsored by a Northwestern faculty member. Prerequisite: advanced student or senior standing.

**AF\_AM\_ST 399-0 Independent Study (1 Unit)** Open to advanced students with consent of instructor. Prerequisite: advanced student or senior standing.