African American Studies Courses (AFAM)

This is a list of all African American studies courses. For more information, see African American Studies.

AFAM:1000 First-Year Seminar 1 s.h.
Small discussion class; topics chosen by instructor. Requirements: first-year standing.

AFAM:1020 Introduction to African American Culture 3 s.h.
Examination of black cultural experiences in the United States and the African diaspora; focus on literature, music, film, comics, anime, popular culture, and visual/performing arts. GE: Values and Culture. Same as AMST:1030.

AFAM:1030 Introduction to African American Society 3 s.h.
Examination of black social and historical institutions in the United States and the African diaspora; focus on education, sports, political science, religion, health, criminal justice, history, sociology, and other disciplines. GE: Social Sciences; Values and Culture.

AFAM:1240 The Art of Listening to Jazz 3 s.h.
What is jazz and its importance; guided introduction to jazz music, anatomy of jazz music, cultural context; development of skills to become an informed listener; process of performing jazz music, its connection with black culture; focused listening/analysis of prominent jazz artists' work from past and present, including intersection between jazz and hip hop; formal music experience or training not required.

AFAM:1241 The Soundtrack of Black America 3 s.h.
Linkage of African American culture and music; black musical innovations that shaped mainstream American musical tastes over the last century; exploration of relationship between black music and culture; examples of blues, jazz, gospel, hip hop; artists including Bessie Smith (blues), Mahalia Jackson (gospel), Miles Davis (jazz), Nas and Talib Kweli (hip hop).

AFAM:1250 Introduction to African American Religions 3 s.h.
GE: Values and Culture. Same as RELS:1350.

AFAM:1830 Music of the African American Diaspora 3 s.h.
History and characteristics of music styles emerging from African American culture from time of slavery to present; beginning with Negro spiritual, exploration of origins and musical anatomy of relevant music styles (blues, gospel, jazz, rhythm and blues, funk); ubiquitous role music plays in civil, cultural, and political unrest amongst African American community throughout 20th century.

AFAM:2014 Giants of Jazz: Miles, Trane, and Duke 3 s.h.
Miles Davis, John Coltrane and Duke Ellington as figureheads of the Jazz music style; how they changed the trajectory of modern music along with sidemen (B. Strayhorn and H. Hancock); Ellington's resolute defiance of stereotypical views of African Americans; Miles' brazen protests against civil injustices; how these icons are much more than mere musicians; cultural impact of landmark albums including "Kind of Blue," "A Love Supreme," and "The Birth of the Cool"; focus on their life, music and sociopolitical impact. Same as MUS:2014.

AFAM:2055 The Look of Blackness: African American Literature and Visual Art 3 s.h.
Examination of African American literature over a 200-year span; how preoccupation with blackness as a visual marker of difference impacts formation of written works; how black writers wield, emphasize, and manipulate visuality; blackness foregrounded as if literary texts operate in league with, or in defiance of, visual images circulating throughout American culture, from late 18th-century poetry to mid 20th-century novels; primary texts placed alongside high art and popular visual forms of distinct historical moments to explore how black American writers deploy visual art forms in narrative conceptions of black identity. Same as ENGL:2462.

AFAM:2064 Racial Inequity and the Experiences of African American Families in the U.S. 3 s.h.
Racial inequality and experiences of African American families in the U.S. during 20th and 21st centuries; historical context for contemporary research on African American family; relative impact of structural and cultural factors on various aspects of African American family life, declining marriage rates, family formation patterns; intersections of race and class in family life; research methods used to examine dynamics of African American family life, including quantitative analysis, structured qualitative interviews, and ethnography. Same as SOC:2064.

AFAM:2070 Black Television Culture 3 s.h.
Social and political impact of television dramas featuring people of African descent in the West; examination of production, reception, representation, and industry as it relates to the African American images that are granted tenure on television screens. Same as COMM:2069.

AFAM:2076 Race, Ethnicity, and Media 3 s.h.
Introduction to debates about media portrayals of race and ethnicity; focus primarily on entertainment media; use of general analytic perspectives (stereotype analysis, aesthetic analysis, history) applied to real-world examples; address one or more racial/ethnic groups in the United States. Same as COMM:2076.

AFAM:2079 Race and Ethnicity in Sport 3 s.h.
Structural and ideological barriers to racial and ethnic equality in sport, with focus on African American sport experiences; historical and contemporary issues, media representations. Same as SPST:2079.
AFAM:2266 Civil War and Emancipation 3 s.h.
150 years later, what can we learn about American history from studying a war that both killed and liberated a remarkable and an unprecedented number of people? Why did it take a war to end slavery? How did emancipation occur and how did enslaved people accelerate the destruction of U.S. slavery during the war? Same as HIST:2266.

AFAM:2267 African American History to 1877: From Slave Cabin to Senate Floor 3 s.h.
Experiences of African and African American people in the American colonies and the states of the new nation; history of Africans and African Americans as early settlers, enslaved and free, in places such as Detroit, Chicago, New York, and New Orleans; interactions with indigenous people; role in the war for American independence; long history of resistance to slavery and racial discrimination; exploration of the rich history of community building, creation of significant black social and cultural institutions, and formation of black political thought and political activism. GE: Diversity and Inclusion. Same as HIST:2267.

AFAM:2465 Selected African American Authors 3 s.h.
English majors and English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the following area and/or period requirement. AREA: American Literature and Culture. PERIOD: 20th/21st-Century Literature. English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the Multiethnic American Literature and Culture requirement. Same as ENGL:2465.

AFAM:2500 Black Culture and Experience: Contemporary Issues 3 s.h.
Exploration of various contemporary social topics (e.g., education, religion, literature, theater, media, politics, sports, criminal justice, health, economics); use of readings, interactive experiences, course assignments (reading essays, interview/profile, observation analysis, case study, final paper), and unit quizzes to understand black life in the 21st century. GE: Diversity and Inclusion.

AFAM:2700 The Black Image in Sequential Art: Comics, Graphic Novels, and Anime 3 s.h.
Provides a foundation to critically interpret the representation of people of African descent in sequential art; primary focus on serial comic strips, gags, comic books, graphic novels, video games, animation, anime, Manga, film, zines, and televisual examples of blackness; emphasis of readings and viewing materials on gender, sexualities, economics, ethnicity, the transnational circulation and commodification of the black image, fandom communities, independent and mainstream sequential art producers. Same as AMST:2700.

AFAM:2730 African American Islam 3 s.h.
Same as RELS:2730.

AFAM:2781 Black Literature and Politics: Controversies of National Allegiance 3 s.h.
Black literature born amid political controversy, from slave narratives to award-winning texts of late 20th century; evolving politics of African American writers; changing political landscape of this expansive period and representative literature; how African American writers shape U.S. political debate; surprising politics of many canonical African American writers. English majors and English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the following area and/or period requirement. AREA: American Literature and Culture. PERIOD: Varies by semester. English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the Multiethnic American Literature and Culture requirement. Same as ENGL:2460, POLI:2107.

AFAM:2800 African American Women, Health, Hair, and Sexuality 3 s.h.
From the exotic to the erotic, African American women’s bodies have been constructed to fulfill a variety of personal and cultural fantasies as well as social functions that are “killing us softly”; how cultural icons and myths of black women—Jezebel, Mammy, Tragic Mulatto, Aunt Jemima, Sapphire, Matriarch, Welfare Queen, and more recently, the overachieving black woman—shape and create restrictions and visions of the self that contribute to health disparities; engaging black feminist/womanist theory to explore how larger images influence everyday acts of self-care and pleasure, such as hair and sexuality, on the health of African American women. Same as GWSS:2800.

AFAM:3053 The Civil Rights Movement 3 s.h.
History of the Civil rights movement. Same as AMST:3053.

AFAM:3130 Black American Cinema 3 s.h.
Major historical and cultural movements in black cinema; independent and early Hollywood films, animation, blaxploitation, the black renaissance, black auteurs (e.g., Spike Lee, Julie Dash), hip-hop cinema, womanist films, 21st-century developments in film (e.g., theatre to film adaptions of Tyler Perry), new media's effect on film and cinema; particular attention given to gender, sexualities, region, ethnicity, and class. Same as AMST:3130.

AFAM:3245 Twentieth-Century African American Religion: Civil Rights to Hip-Hop 3 s.h.
Twentieth-century African American religious history; major political and cultural movements, such as civil rights, black power, black feminism/womanism, hip-hop. Same as RELS:3745.

AFAM:3275 History of Slavery in the U.S.A. 3-4 s.h.
Beginning, expansion, and ending of American slavery; how our national memory of slavery in popular culture (in high school history, in historical landmarks and museums) helps or hinders our understanding of history of slavery in the U.S. Same as HIST:3275.

AFAM:3400 Black Popular Music 3 s.h.
History and expressive culture of people of African descent living in America through popular music forms; historical time span between the 17th and 21st centuries; poetry, music, cultural analysis, film, and art as sources for the study of black music; genres covered include spirituals and gospel, blues, jazz, rock, rhythm and blues, Afropunk, alternative and neo soul, and hip-hop. Recommendations: AFAM:1020 and AMST:1030. Same as AMST:3400.

AFAM:3459 African American Literature Before 1900 3 s.h.
English majors and English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the following area and/or period requirement. AREA: American Literature and Culture. PERIOD: 18th/19th-Century Literature. English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the Multiethnic American Literature and Culture requirement. Same as ENGL:3459.

AFAM:3460 African American Literature After 1900 3 s.h.
English majors and English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the following area and/or period requirement. AREA: American Literature and Culture. PERIOD: 20th/21st-Century Literature. English majors may apply this course to the Multiethnic American Literature and Culture requirement. Same as ENGL:3460.
AFAM:3462 African American Drama 3 s.h. English majors and English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the following area and/or period requirement. AREA: American Literature and Culture. PERIOD: 20th/21st-Century Literature. English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the Multietnic American Literature and Culture requirement. Same as ENGL:3462, THTR:3462.

AFAM:3465 African American Autobiography 3 s.h. English majors and English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the following area and/or period requirement. AREA: American Literature and Culture. PERIOD: 20th/21st-Century Literature. English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the Multietnic American Literature and Culture requirement. Same as ENGL:3465.

AFAM:3500 Malcolm X, King, and Human Rights 3 s.h. Religion and politics of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. in the context of U.S. civil rights and international human rights in West Africa and the Muslim world; emphasis on civil rights connections to Gandhi, the Nobel Peace prize, and other international experiences that have impacted Pan Africanists, such as Stokely Carmichael, who worked on human rights. Recommendations: international studies major or undergraduate standing. Same as RELS:3808.

AFAM:3550 African Literature 3 s.h. English majors and English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the following area and/or period requirement. AREA: Transnational Literature and Postcolonial Studies. PERIOD: 20th/21st-Century Literature. Same as ENGL:3550.

AFAM:3555 Topics in African Cinema 3 s.h. English majors and English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the following area and/or period requirement. AREA: Transnational Literature and Postcolonial Studies. PERIOD: 20th/21st-Century Literature. Same as ENGL:3555.

AFAM:3710 African American Women Writers 3 s.h. Introduction to major African American women authors of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries; major debates of black feminist literary scholarship; analyze African American literary representations by reading novels, poetry, short stories, plays, relevant historical and critical texts. Same as GWSS:3710.

AFAM:3758 The Ancient African Past 3 s.h. Africa to 1880; oral tradition and other sources; political development, ecological change, slavery and slave trade. Same as HIST:3758.

AFAM:3760 The Making of Modern Africa 3 s.h. Africa in colonial and postcolonial period; economics, political structures of colonialism; social change, political life in the 20th century. Same as HIST:3760.

AFAM:3840 Free-Style Writing: Poetry, Plays, and Performances 3 s.h. Creative writing lab experience in reading, writing, and performing poetry and short plays; expansion of students' horizons of the self; arc of innovation in African American literature from Harlem Renaissance to present, with texts from Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston to Saul Williams and Jill Scott; role of the artist in society and as outsider and insider; shifting perspectives on race, gender, class; musical influences and models, from blues to house music; sensuality, spirituality; artistic reflections on the cultural moment; effects of these on literary form and performance style; students create and perform a work for an audience. Same as THTR:3403.

AFAM:3900 Topics in African American Studies arr. Different topic each semester.

AFAM:3925 African Americans and the Media 3 s.h. Same as JMC:3165.


AFAM:4195 African American History 1619-1865 3 s.h. Race and African American history, from the rise of racial slavery to the Civil War; advanced course. Same as HIST:4295.

AFAM:4298 African American History 1865-Present 3 s.h. African American history since Reconstruction; survey of African American politics and society from Reconstruction to present. Same as HIST:4296.

AFAM:4710 Midwest African American Literature and Culture 3 s.h. English majors and English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the following area and/or period requirement. AREA: American Literature and Culture. PERIOD: 20th/21st-Century Literature. English and Creative Writing majors may apply this course to the Multietnic American Literature and Culture requirement. Same as ENGL:4410.

AFAM:4910 Special Topics 3 s.h. Selected topics, issues, and debates about various components of African American culture including literature, sociology, psychology, media, history, rhetoric, theater, sports, health, and education.

AFAM:4980 Independent Study arr. Topics vary.

AFAM:4990 Honors Project arr. Independent research and writing on interdisciplinary topic.

AFAM:5900 Advanced Readings in African American Culture arr. Textual, social, political analyses of works by black authors.
AFAM:6500 Critical Readings in Cultural Studies: Stuart Hall’s Legacy and Influences  
3 s.h.
Exploration of the scholarship of Stuart Hall along with theories, methods, and history of cultural studies; focus on major areas of Hall’s work including Marxist thought and the political economy, diasporas and globalization, cultural production and popular culture, film and cinema studies, race, ethnicity, identity, and difference; key theorists that influenced Stuart Hall (e.g., Marx, Foucault, Fanon, Gramsci, Althusser) and scholars in cultural studies that have made appropriate use of Hall’s writings and theories in their own work; role of theory in everyday life and the critical role of public intellectuals. Same as AMST:6500.

AFAM:6635 Crossing Borders Seminar  
2-3 s.h.

AFAM:7130 Readings on Twentieth-Century Black Internationalism  
arr.
Complex dynamics of black internationalism during 20th century, focusing on the global visions, transnational activities, and transracial political alliances of people of African descent worldwide; readings will reflect geographical breadth of the African Diaspora including Africa, the Americas, and Europe. Same as HIST:7130.

AFAM:7205 Gender and Race in Nineteenth-Century U.S.  
arr.
Same as GWSS:7205, HIST:7205.

AFAM:7210 The Long Civil Rights Movement  
arr.
Exploration of the history and historiography of the modern black freedom struggle in the United States, with particular attention to how historians in recent years have reconsidered traditional framings of that struggle's chronology, geography, gender politics, political aspirations, and achievements. Same as HIST:7210.

AFAM:7214 Readings: African American Women’s History  
arr.
Same as GWSS:7214, HIST:7214.

AFAM:7710 Seminar: Interpreting Oral Histories  
arr.
Interpretations and methods applied by historians in various world regions to different forms of oral history, from old oral traditions to contemporary autobiographical testimony. Same as HIST:7710.