

African American Studies

Interim Chair

Rene R. Rocha

Undergraduate major: African American studies (BA)

Undergraduate minor: African American studies

Graduate certificate: African American studies

Faculty: <https://africanamericanstudies.uiowa.edu/people>

Website: <https://africanamericanstudies.uiowa.edu/>

African American studies (AFAM) examines the unique experiences of African-descended people throughout the diaspora, drawing on a rich tradition of civic engagement, scholarship, and teaching. The faculty introduce students to the foundations of African American studies and collaborate with them to understand new intellectual perspectives. Courses and research revolve around three core areas of study: history, religion, and the diaspora; literature and performing arts; and media, politics, and society. Within these areas, students carefully consider the construction of race, ethnicity, and identity and the performance of class, gender, and sexuality. Students who take courses in African American studies acquire a special skill set that enables them to critically interrogate their own culture and other cultures in the world around them.

Cocurricular Activities

Afro-American Cultural Center

African American studies encourages students to use the Afro-American Cultural Center (Afro House). The center serves as a museum housing educational artifacts. Offering enrichment for the University of Iowa and promoting diversity among all members of the Iowa City community, the center also provides a cultural hub for African American students.

African American Studies Student Association

The African American Studies Student Association aims to promote knowledge about Black life in the United States by hosting speakers, publicizing artistic performances, and sponsoring relevant programs with various campus collaborators. The association is primarily designed for AFAM majors and minors; however, any University of Iowa student interested in African American studies is eligible to become a member.

Seminar and Lecture Series

The African American Studies Seminar Series and the Darwin Turner Lecture bring important scholars and creative artists to the University of Iowa campus. Guests of the lecture and seminar series have included Amiri Baraka, Trudier Harris, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Michelle Wallace, Mary Patillo, J. Lorand Matory, Paul Butler, Gabrielle Forman, and Valerie Smith.

African American Studies Annual Awards Program

Each spring, the African American Studies Program honors AFAM majors and minors, along with exceptional University of

Iowa students and organizations. Scholarships are awarded by the Marie Nesbitt Foundation, the African American Studies Program, the National Association of Black Journalists, and the Iowa Black Alumni Association. Awards are offered that recognize student efforts in community service, leadership, creative arts, graduate research, cultural appreciation, and academic achievement.

Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising

The African American Studies Program sponsors several intellectual and social gatherings for graduate students across multiple disciplines. During these events, the Society of Black Graduate and Professional Students (BGAPS) and other graduate students connect with others interested in African American studies and receive advice about becoming faculty members, being productive members of the academic profession, and career options outside of academia.

Iowa Black Alumni Association

The Iowa Black Alumni Association (IBAA) promotes the general mission of the University of Iowa. The group enhances the career connections of prospective, current, and former Black University of Iowa students. It also recognizes these individuals for their service. The IBAA also supports the African American Studies Program in various ways, such as with fundraising and the advisory board.