African American Studies Courses (American Studies) (AFAM)

AFAM Courses

This is a list of courses with the subject code AFAM. For more information, visit American Studies (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences) in the catalog.

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: Understanding Cultural Perspectives. Same as AMST:1030.

AFAM:1030 Introduction to African American Society 3 s.h.
History of African Americans in the United States from colonial times to the present; studies Black political, religious, social, and educational institutions in relation to the African diaspora and how various forces of modernity have shaped African American society across the centuries; students will come away with the complexities of Black life in the U.S. through explorations of important scholarship. GE: Understanding Cultural Perspectives.

AFAM:1041 African American Religion and Popular Culture 3 s.h.
Examination of the role African American religions play in shaping 20th century and contemporary popular culture in the United States; students explore recent histories of Black Christianity, American Islam, and African diaspora religions; gender and race; cultural production in hip hop, jazz, rhythm and blues, literature, poetry, film, sports, cuisine, visual art, and style. Same as RELS:1041.

AFAM:1130 The History of African American Film 3 s.h.
History of African American cinema; examination of various cycles of Black movie fare between 1912-1999. GE: Understanding Cultural Perspectives.

AFAM:1140 Introduction to Contemporary Black Art: Painting, Performance, and Process 3 s.h.
Introduction to African American art in the United States; exploration of major art events (i.e., Harlem Renaissance, Black Arts Movement); study of specific African American artists and their work; influence of race on artistic expression. Same as ARTS:1140.

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. GE: Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts. Same as MUS:1740.

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). GE: Understanding Cultural Perspectives. Same as MUS:1741.

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

AFAM:1900 Diverse Topics in African American Studies 3 s.h.
Examination of African American experience based on a range of topics covering history and contemporary themes; significant contributions by African Americans to American society and around the world in the arts, literature, politics, music, religion, science, and other areas; evolution of African American culture and critical evaluation of issues, including intersectionality and inequality within specific subjects; social, cultural, and historical resources that challenge assumptions and biases when it comes to racial backgrounds and perspectives; key elements within each selected environment, along with meaningful events and individuals. GE: Understanding Cultural Perspectives.

AFAM:2064 African American Families: Urban and Suburban 3 s.h.
Racial inequality and experiences of African American families in the United States during the 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. GE: Understanding Cultural Perspectives. 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. GE: Understanding Cultural Perspectives. Same as COMM:2069.

AFAM:2072 African American Popular Culture 3 s.h.
Examination of global popularity and impact of African American popular culture. Same as COMM:2072.

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.
160 years later, what can we learn about American history from studying a war that both killed and liberated 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 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: Understanding Cultural Perspectives. Same as HIST:2267.

AFAM:2268 African American History Since the Civil War 3 s.h.
Exploration of racial oppression of African Americans and multiracial struggles against that oppression since the Civil War era; students examine the history of racism at individualized and systematic levels; historical efforts made by individuals and collective movements in service of the long Black freedom struggle; and the ways these twinned histories have shaped modern America. GE: Understanding Cultural Perspectives. Same as HIST:2268.

AFAM:2463 Topics in African American Literature 3 s.h.
Selected topics in African American literature. Same as ENGL:2463.

AFAM:2465 Selected African American Authors 3 s.h.
Literary works by selected African American authors. 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: Understanding Cultural Perspectives.

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:2770 Environmental Racism: Black and White Community Politics 3 s.h.
Students study the movement for environmental justice within the broader context of U.S. land use and development to understand environmental racism's prevalence and how it can be addressed; topics include pollution, health, food access, transportation and agricultural practice to land loss, public space, and infrastructure; exploration of perspectives on the environment and environmentalism. Same as GHS:2770, SOC:2770.

AFAM:3053 The Civil Rights Movement 3 s.h.
History of the American civil rights movement. Same as AMST:3053, HIST:3253.

AFAM:3100 Critical Race Theory: Culture, Power, and Society 3 s.h.
Examination of the historical context of race and racism in U.S. history; focus on how social structures perpetuate longstanding patterns of racial inequality. Same as AMST:3100, SOC:3100.

AFAM:3110 Race, Organizations, and Workplace 3 s.h.
Examination of racial discrimination in the American workplace and organizations; historical context for development of complex organizations; various forms of racial discrimination; longstanding patterns of racial inequality central to American organizations. Same as SOC:3110.

AFAM:3245 Twentieth- and Twenty-first Century African American Religion 3 s.h.
Twentieth- and twenty-first-century African American religious history; major political and cultural movements including civil rights, Black power, Black feminism/womanism, hip hop, and Black Lives Matter; their impact on Black Christianity and Islam in the United States. Same as RELS:3745.

AFAM:3256 The Great Migration(s) in the Midwest 3 s.h.
Investigation of African American migration to and within the Midwest; first and second Great Migrations (1910–1940, 1940–1970); focus on reaction to and social, cultural, political, and economic impact of newcomers arrival; class time devoted to actual practice of historical research; students work on a collaborative project focused on the history of racial discrimination, housing segregation, and resistance to that oppression in Iowa's six metropolitan areas. Same as HIST:3256.

AFAM:3257 Civil Rights and Racial Justice: A Tour Through the South 1-3 s.h.
Exploration of the history of modern civil rights movement through lectures, shared readings, videos, and discussion; includes preparation and two-week tour of civil rights sites in the South. Prerequisites: SJUS:1001 or SJUS:2250 or GWSS:1002 or CCCC:2220 or AFAM:1030 or HIST:2268 or HIST:2268 or HIST:3253 or HIST:3253 or HIST:3253 or HIST:3232 or AFAM:3100 or AFAM:3500 or AFAM:3260 or AFAM:3260 or HIST:3282 or HIST:3282 or HIST:4130. Same as GWSS:3257, HIST:3257, SJUS:3257.

AFAM:3260 Violence in Black America 3 s.h.
Examination of violence—physical, structural, gendered, and psychological—and its impact of shaping Black American experience through resistance, cultural production, and community development. Same as HIST:3260.

AFAM:3262 The Black Midwest: History, Literature, and Culture 3 s.h.
Exploration of history, culture, and art of the Black Midwest using literature and scholarly readings, poems, music, and film; modern issues impacting Black Midwesterners; cultural, social, and political contributions of Black Midwesterners to the region and nation. Same as HIST:3262.

AFAM:3275 History of Slavery in North America 3 s.h.
Examines the origin, evolution, and patchwork abolition of Black chattel slavery in the parts of North America that became the United States; emphasizes the ways that slavery was not a static institution, but rather changed over time and space; centers the enslaved as historical actors with their own politics, economics, and culture; wrestles with historical memory and popular representations of slavery. Same as HIST:3275.

AFAM:3459 African American Literature Before 1900 3 s.h.
African American literature before 1900. Same as ENGL:3459.

AFAM:3460 African American Literature After 1900 3 s.h.
African American literature after 1900. Same as ENGL:3460.

AFAM:3461 Twenty-First Century African American Literature 3 s.h.
African American literature from 20th- and 21st-century writers; African American experience(s) of race, sexuality, gender, class, and privilege in contemporary era; various ways poets, rappers, authors tackle these themes within literary forms (i.e., fiction, creative nonfiction, autobiography, poems, songs); societal structures of power. Same as ENGL:3461.

AFAM:3462 African American Drama 3 s.h.
African American dramatic literature. Same as ENGL:3462, THTR:3462.

AFAM:3465 African American Autobiography 3 s.h.
The autobiography by African American writers. 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 HIST:3160, RELS:3808.

AFAM:3550 African Literature 3 s.h.
Literature by African writers. Same as ENGL:3550.

AFAM:3600 Digitizing Blackness 3 s.h.
Examination of Black cultural experiences in digital spheres, including digital humanities and new information technologies; focus on Afrofuturism, gaming, augmented reality, digital mapping, podcasting, social media, and digital cultures; exposure to digital tools and methods. Same as AMST:3600.

AFAM:3630 The Racial Wealth Gap: Black Debt, White Debt 3 s.h.
Exploration of extent, historical origins, and contemporary factors of the racial wealth gap with special attention to role of debt in U.S. race relations; potential topics include education debt, monetary sanctions in criminal justice, redlining, recession, bankruptcy, and reparations. Same as SOC:3630.

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

AFAM:3925 African Americans and the Media 3 s.h.
Exploration of the theoretical notion of racialism in various genres of mass communication (i.e., music, print media, television/cable, film, social media); analysis and discussion of contemporary images and messages in media related to African American culture with close attention to impact of stereotypes, historical myths, stigmas, problematic representations, biased framing, and traditional racism. Same as JMC:3165.

AFAM:4250 Education In Black America 3 s.h.
Introduction to various educational policies and events germane to the history of African American education from 1900 through the mid-1980s; read works and watch documentaries that examine those policies, concepts, strategies, and events surrounding Black education; analyze and synthesize this information through small and large class discussions, reading responses, quizzes, a debate, a book review, a short essay, and related presentation. GE: Historical Perspectives. Same as EPLS:4250.

AFAM:4770 Environmental Justice 3 s.h.
Introduction to the field of environmental justice; understanding and addressing the processes that lead poor and marginalized communities to face a disproportionate degree of environmental risks and hazards. Same as GHS:4770, SEES:4770.

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 Studies: Historic and Contemporary Debates arr.
Weekly readings and discussions of scholarly book chapters and articles related to key topics; students synthesize, debate, and critically evaluate all course material; topic areas include African American history, culture, politics, Black feminist criticism, critical race theory, intersectionality, and more; introduction to current research of African American studies faculty members; for students interested in conducting research about African American culture.

AFAM:6300 Seminar: African American Religious History 3 s.h.
History of Black religions in the United States from the colonial times to the present, in relation to the African diaspora and how various forces of modernity have shaped Black religions and the cultures of Black people across centuries. Same as HIST:6200, RELS:6300.

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 differánce; 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, ENGL:6050.

AFAM:6580 Seminar: Religion and Society 3 s.h.
Same as RELS:6580.

AFAM:6610 Studies in African American Literature 3 s.h.
Same as ENGL:6610.

AFAM:7205 New Histories: U.S. Slavery arr.
Our approach to study of slavery and discipline of history have been upended by recent works by and about women; exploration of that scholarship and consideration of where it takes us in grappling with systems and subjectivity of slavery. Same as GWSS:7205, HIST:7205.

AFAM:7207 American Emancipations 3 s.h.
Sample the historiography of slavery, abolition, and emancipation in the Western Hemisphere. Focus on the movements to abolish Black chattel slavery in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century United States; engage related histories throughout the Atlantic world. Same as HIST:7207.

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.