

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES MAJOR

MAJOR DESCRIPTION

The Major in African American Studies enables students to better understand the social structures and cultural traditions created by Africans in the diaspora, Western conceptualizations of race, the relationship between issues of race and identity, and the histories and influences of people of African descent. The major offers an interdisciplinary, comparative, and cross-cultural approach to studying the experiences of people of African descent in the Black Atlantic world, especially in the United States and the Caribbean.

Students will apply, critique, and reimagine the methodologies and insights of many disciplines through coursework in the humanities, social sciences, and the arts. Wesleyan's Center for African American Studies provides resources that deepen classroom and campus-wide conversations about contemporary and historical matters.

The African American Studies major is attractive to students from diverse backgrounds seeking a deeper understanding of African American experiences and perspectives. Students may have particular areas of interest, such as African American history's impact on contemporary society, social justice, and civil rights, the effects of systemic racism, or a desire to better understand one's own identity and heritage. Others want to explore the rich vibrancy of African American literature, art, music, and culture in depth.

Students who graduate with a major in African American Studies not only develop critical thinking skills and cultural competence, but also gain a competitive edge in their pursuit of advanced degrees and careers in fields such as law, medicine, literature, education, business, public policy, and the sciences.

ADMISSION TO THE MAJOR

Students usually declare their major in African American Studies in the second semester of their sophomore year. Students are admitted to the major if they have earned a grade of B- or better in AFAM 101 (https://owaprod-pub.wesleyan.edu/reg/!wesmaps_page.html?stuid=&facid=NONE&crse=015838&term=1209), or at the discretion of the Chair, if they have taken other courses in the Department.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

The African American Studies major consists of eleven semester courses. The two required courses are AFAM 101: Intro to Africana Studies and AFAM 301: Junior Colloquium. At least five other courses must be cross-listed with African American Studies: the three different area courses and the two elective courses (described below). All courses must be letter-graded and must be completed at Wesleyan. One individual tutorial can be counted toward the eleven required courses, as can two courses taken away from Wesleyan and used to fulfill the student's chosen area of concentration. The major program must include the following:

AFAM 101: Introduction to Africana Studies. This course will provide an overview of the field and locate African American Studies in the broader context of the

African Diaspora. Students must earn a B- or better in AFAM 101 in order to major.

One 200-level (or above) course in three different areas:

- African American History
- African American Literature
- Relevant Social Science course

AFAM 310: Junior Colloquium

Two elective courses that originate in or are cross-listed with AFAM. Majors will meet these requirements by selecting from a list of pre-approved and cross-listed courses. They may also bring another relevant course to the Chair's attention and request that it count. The Department encourages majors to take at least one course in the Arts.

Field of concentration (4 courses). Each major must take four courses that represent an area of concentration. Concentrations may be conceived either disciplinarily (with the four courses coming from a single department) or thematically (with courses selected from different disciplines but designed around a specific topic). Concentration courses do not necessarily have to be cross-listed with AFAM. One 100-level course can count for the concentration. None of the four courses taken in the field of concentration can count toward the AFAM core courses or the AFAM elective courses. We strongly recommend that students design their concentrations in consultation with their major advisor.

Code	Title	Hours
Required Courses		
AFAM101	Introduction to Africana Studies: Examining the Spatial Dynamics That Constitute Diasporic Life	1
AFAM301	Junior Colloquium: The Possibilities of Diaspora	1
Area Courses #		
	African American History	
	African American Literature	
	Relevant Social Science Course	
Field of Concentration Courses *		
Electives ^		
Total Hours		11

One 200-level (or above) course in three different areas

* Each major must take four courses that represent an area of concentration.

^ Two elective courses that originate in or are cross-listed with AFAM.

COURSES FOR NON-MAJORS

The African American Studies Department offers FYS courses especially designed for first-year students. First-year students also are admitted to many other courses, and students should review the individual course listings on WesMaps for details about enrollment.

GENERAL EDUCATION

Majors are encouraged to complete Gen Ed requirements.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

Our students are trained in cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, and critical approaches to the study of the experience of people of African descent in the Atlantic world, especially in the United States and the Caribbean. The major in African American Studies features an array of courses in the humanities, the social sciences, and the arts.

Students who major in African American Studies:

- will develop sophisticated critical reading, writing, and research skills and will apply these in their studies of the histories and influences of people of African descent.
- will demonstrate their familiarity with the foundational ideas, theories, and methodological approaches of African American Studies.
- will develop and apply analytical skills that are rooted in the discipline of African American Studies and that are informed by interdisciplinary approaches to research.
- will use their enhanced analytical skills to demonstrate their understanding, assessments, and critiques of Western conceptualizations of race, issues of race, and identity, African American intellectual traditions, cultural production, and political histories.
- will apply, critique, and reimagine the methodologies and insights of many disciplines to their understanding of the cultural, historical, political, and social development of people of African descent.

HONORS

The honors thesis is produced during a student's senior year and is a yearlong independent research project. Students are eligible to write an honors thesis if they have achieved at least a B+ average in all of their African American Studies courses. Eligible students who wish to write a thesis must apply to the program by the last day of classes in their junior year. A detailed description of the process for earning honors in African American Studies is available on the program website.

CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

Majors are required to undertake one substantial research or artistic project under faculty supervision. This may take the form of an honors thesis, a senior essay done through a yearlong individual tutorial, or a research paper of at least 15 pages in length that is generated in a 300-level African American Studies Department seminar. Any work done to fulfill the research requirement must receive a grade of B- or better.