AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES MAJOR

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 one of the three required African American studies core courses: AFAM202, AFAM203, or AFAM204.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

The African American studies major consists of eleven semester courses. At least seven of these courses must be cross-listed with African American studies: the three required core courses, the required junior colloquium, and the three elective courses. All courses must be letter-graded and must be completed at Wesleyan. One research 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:

Required core courses (3 courses). Students are required to take and successfully complete all three of the core courses. Students may not substitute or transfer any other course to meet these requirements.

- AFAM202 Introduction to African American Literature 1
- AFAM203 African American History, 1444-1877 1
- AFAM204 Introduction to Modern African American History 1

Junior colloquium (AFAM301). This course is required of all majors and should be taken in the first semester of the junior year.

Elective courses in African American studies (3 courses). Majors must complete one elective course in each of the following three areas:

- Literature and literary theory
- Social and behavioral sciences (any AFAM SBS course except history)
- The arts (art, art history, dance, film, creative writing, music, theater)

The three elective courses must be 200-level or higher. These courses should be cross-listed with African American studies, although in special circumstances students can petition to use a course that is not formally cross-listed with AFAM as one of their electives.

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 in 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.

COURSES FOR NON-MAJORS

The African American studies program 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.

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.

STUDY ABROAD

In an increasingly interdependent world, understanding of other societies is an essential aspect of one’s education. Through the opportunity to study in another country and culture, Wesleyan offers its students access to a wealth of knowledge and experience that can enrich the personal, academic, and professional lives of participants. African American studies majors have completed semester-abroad and study-abroad programs in cities such as Paris, Johannesburg, Mexico City, and London. For more information please view the Office of Study Abroad website at www.wesleyan.edu/CGS/OSA (http://www.wesleyan.edu/cgs/osa).

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

There is no foreign language requirement for African American studies majors. We do encourage our students, however, to learn at least one additional language.

PRIZES

W. E. B. Du Bois Prize: The W. E. B. Du Bois Prize is awarded each year to a graduating African American studies major. The prize recognizes academic excellence on three major criteria: a range of courses within the African American studies major, coursework outside the major, and evidence of independent research. The faculty of the program select the recipient of the prize.

John G. Monroe Prize: The Center for African American Studies inaugurated the Monroe Prize in 1985 in honor of former Wesleyan professor John G. Monroe. The Monroe Prize is awarded to the sophomore or junior in the University who submits the best essay on
any subject in African American studies. Essays should be submitted for consideration to the program office by April 1.

**Vanguard Prize:** The Vanguard Prize was established by black alumni in tribute to the black members of the Class of 1969, whose perseverance and pioneering leadership earned them designation as the Vanguard Class. The prize is awarded annually to a graduating senior who has achieved academic excellence and contributed to maintaining Wesleyan’s racial diversity. The faculty of the program select the recipient of the prize.

**Brody Prize:** The Erness Bright Brody Prize was established by Ann duCille in 2002 in honor of former Chair of the African American Studies Program, Erness Bright Brody. The prize is awarded annually to a senior African American studies major. The award is based on the program faculty’s familiarity with and assessment of students’ proficiency in written expression, especially exposition, although creative writing may also be considered. Essays should be submitted for consideration to the program office by April 1. The faculty of the program chooses the recipient of the prize.

**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 program seminar. Any work done to fulfill the research requirement must receive a grade of B- or better.