

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES, B.A.

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: University Park

Program Description

This major helps students achieve a critical understanding of the forms of knowledge, culture, and social organization that African-Americans have produced, and of the social conditions that have supported and constrained this work. Using interdisciplinary approaches as well as methods drawn from the traditional disciplines, the major exposes students to the ideas, institutions, movements, and practices that African-American peoples have used to survive and shape the modern world. The African American Studies curriculum promotes the critical faculties, cultural competencies, and historical sensibilities of its students, and thereby equips them for success in graduate school, professional school, and the workplace.

What is African American Studies?

African American Studies is an intellectual field of inquiry that examines the history of people of African descent from the colonial period through the present; how systems of racial inequality are produced through state policy, traditional western scholarly disciplines, and popular discourse; and the social, political and cultural movements that black people have developed to identify and resist the unequal material and political conditions that shape black social life in the African Diaspora. The undergraduate major and minor provide a strong foundation in the key theoretical concepts in the discipline, the historical formation of African American Studies as an interdisciplinary field of study, and prepares students to apply what they have learned in the classroom, in independent research and in internships with social justice/service organizations.

You Might Like This Program If...

- You are passionate about learning more about the history, cultures, and political struggles of people of African-descent in the West.
- You are interested in understanding how racism operates structurally and shapes the social experiences and life chances of black communities.
- You want to study social, cultural, and political movements throughout the African Diaspora.
- You are interested in pursuing independent research or internships with non-profit, research, and community-based organizations committed to racial equity and social justice.

Entrance to Major

In order to be eligible for entrance to this major, a student must:

1. attain at least a C (2.00) cumulative grade-point average for all courses taken at the University; and
2. have at least third-semester classification (<https://www.registrar.psu.edu/enrollment/semester-classification.cfm>).

READ SENATE POLICY 37-30: ENTRANCE TO AND CHANGES IN MAJOR PROGRAMS OF STUDY (<https://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/37-00-entrance-to-a-college-or-major/>)

Degree Requirements

For the Bachelor of Arts degree in African American Studies, a minimum of 120 credits is required:

Requirement	Credits
General Education	45
Electives	15-21
Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements	24
Requirements for the Major	36

0-6 of the 45 credits for General Education are included in the Requirements for the Major. This includes: 0-3 credits of GS courses; and 0-3 credits of GH courses.

3 of the 24 credits for Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements are included in the Requirements for the Major, General Education, or Electives and 0-12 credits are included in Electives if foreign language proficiency is demonstrated by examination.

Per Senate Policy 83-80.5, the college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of course work in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned. For more information, check the Suggested Academic Plan for your intended program.

Requirements for the Major

A grade of C or better is required for all courses in the major. To graduate, a student enrolled in the major must earn at least a C grade in each course designated by the major as a C-required course, as specified by Senate Policy 82-44 (<https://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/#82-44>).

Code	Title	Credits
Prescribed Courses		
<i>Prescribed Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
AFAM 100N	Black Freedom Struggles	3
AFAM 110N	Introduction to African American Studies	3
AFAM/HIST 152	African American History	3
Additional Courses		
<i>Additional Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
Select 3 credits from the following:		3
AFAM/ WMNST 101N	African American Women	
AFAM/ WMNST 102	Women of the African Diaspora	
AFAM 103	Racism and Sexism	
Select 3 credits from the following:		3
AFAM 197	Special Topics	
SOC 207	Research Methods in Sociology ¹	
Select 3 credits from the following:		3
AFAM 401	Afro-American Studies Seminar	
AFAM 494	Research Project	
AFAM 495	Internship	

Area of Concentration

Select 12 credits from one of the following four areas of concentration, and 6 more credits from any of the other areas. A minimum of 12 credits should be AFAM courses, and at least 12 of these credits must be at the 400-level or above.²

1. Gender and Sexuality

AFAM/ WMNST 101N	African American Women
AFAM/ WMNST 102	Women of the African Diaspora
AFAM/SOC/ WMNST 103	Racism and Sexism
AFAM 410	Spirit, Space, Survival: Contemporary Black Women
AFAM/THEA 412	African American Theatre
AFAM/STS 416	Race, Gender and Science
AFR/WMNST 202N	Women, Gender, and Feminisms in Africa

Select 3 credits at the 400-level in consultation with your adviser

2. Humanities

AFAM/RLST 145	African Diaspora Religions and Spiritualities
AFAM/RLST 146	The Life and Thought of Martin Luther King, Jr.
AFAM/RLST 147	The Life and Thought of Malcolm X
AFAM/THEA 208	Workshop: Theatre in Diverse Cultures
AFAM/HIST 210	Freedom's First Generation: African American Life and Work, from the Civil War to World War II
AFAM 212	African Americans in the New Jim Crow Era, 1968-present
AFAM/ENGL 235	From Folk Shouts and Songs to Hip Hop Poetry
AFAM/THEA 412	African American Theatre
AFAM/CAS 422	Contemporary African American Communication
AFAM/PHIL 460	African American Philosophy
AFAM/HIST 465	The Post-World War II Civil Rights Movement
AFAM/ENGL 469	Slavery and the Literary Imagination

3. Social Sciences and Community Development

AFAM/BBH 302	Diversity and Health
AFAM/SOC 409	Racial and Ethnic Inequality in America
AFAM/HIST 431	Black Liberation and American Foreign Policy
AFAM/HIST 432	Between Nation and Empire: The Caribbean in the 20th Century
AFAM/PLSC/ LER 445Y	Politics of Affirmative Action

AFR/PLSC 459

ECON 436W	
EDTHP/SOC 447	Ethnic Minorities and Schools in the United States
PLSC 223N	Ethnic and Racial Politics
PLSC 490	Policy Making and Evaluation
SOC 119N	Race, Ethnicity and Culture

4. Migration and Diaspora

AFAM/ WMNST 102	Women of the African Diaspora
AFAM/SPAN/ AFR 132	Afro-Hispanic Civilization
AFAM/HIST 211	Slavery and Freedom in the Black Atlantic
AFAM/HIST 250	Introduction to the Caribbean
AFAM/HIST 431	Black Liberation and American Foreign Policy
AFAM/HIST 432	Between Nation and Empire: The Caribbean in the 20th Century
AFR 110N	Introduction to Contemporary Africa
AFR/HIST 192	Modern African History
AFR/IB/PLSC 440	Globalization and Its Implications
AFR 497	Special Topics
PLSC 453	Political Processes in Underdeveloped Systems

¹ SOC 207 is recommended for Political Science, Sociology and HHD-related double majors.

² If you wish to receive credit for courses other than the ones listed, you must seek permission from the AFAM undergraduate director.

General Education

Connecting career and curiosity, the General Education curriculum provides the opportunity for students to acquire transferable skills necessary to be successful in the future and to thrive while living in interconnected contexts. General Education aids students in developing intellectual curiosity, a strengthened ability to think, and a deeper sense of aesthetic appreciation. These are requirements for all baccalaureate students and are often partially incorporated into the requirements of a program. For additional information, see the General Education Requirements (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/baccalaureate-degree-general-education-program/>) section of the Bulletin and consult your academic adviser.

The keystone symbol appears next to the title of any course that is designated as a General Education course. Program requirements may also satisfy General Education requirements and vary for each program.

Foundations (grade of C or better is required and Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- Quantification (GQ): 6 credits
- Writing and Speaking (GWS): 9 credits

Breadth in the Knowledge Domains (Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- Arts (GA): 3 credits
- Health and Wellness (GHW): 3 credits

- **Humanities (GH):** 3 credits
- **Social and Behavioral Sciences (GS):** 3 credits
- **Natural Sciences (GN):** 3 credits

Integrative Studies

- **Inter-Domain Courses (Inter-Domain):** 6 credits

Exploration

- **GN**, may be completed with Inter-Domain courses: 3 credits
- **GA, GH, GN, GS, Inter-Domain courses.** This may include 3 credits of World Language course work beyond the 12th credit level or the requirements for the student's degree program, whichever is higher: 6 credits

University Degree Requirements

First Year Engagement

All students enrolled in a college or the Division of Undergraduate Studies at University Park, and the World Campus are required to take 1 to 3 credits of the First-Year Seminar, as specified by their college First-Year Engagement Plan.

Other Penn State colleges and campuses may require the First-Year Seminar; colleges and campuses that do not require a First-Year Seminar provide students with a first-year engagement experience.

First-year baccalaureate students entering Penn State should consult their academic adviser for these requirements.

Cultures Requirement

6 credits are required and may satisfy other requirements

- United States Cultures: 3 credits
- International Cultures: 3 credits

Writing Across the Curriculum

3 credits required from the college of graduation and likely prescribed as part of major requirements.

Total Minimum Credits

A minimum of 120 degree credits must be earned for a baccalaureate degree. The requirements for some programs may exceed 120 credits. Students should consult with their college or department adviser for information on specific credit requirements.

Quality of Work

Candidates must complete the degree requirements for their major and earn at least a 2.00 grade-point average for all courses completed within their degree program.

Limitations on Source and Time for Credit Acquisition

The college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of course work in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned. Credit used toward degree programs may need to be earned from a particular source or within time constraints (see Senate Policy 83-80 (<https://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/#83-80>)). For more information, check the Suggested Academic Plan for your intended program.

B.A. Degree Requirements

Foreign Language (0-12 credits): Student must attain 12th credit level of proficiency in one foreign language. See the Placement Policy for Penn State Foreign Language Courses (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/advising->

[planning-degree-program/course-placements/placement-policy-world-language-courses/](https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/advising-)).

B.A. Fields (9 credits): Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Arts, Foreign Languages, Natural Sciences, Quantification (may not be taken in the area of the student's primary major; foreign language credits in this category must be in a second foreign language or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the first language)

Other Cultures (0-3 credits): Select 3 credits from approved list. Students may count courses in this category in order to meet other major, minor, elective, or General Education requirements, except for the General Education US/IL requirement.

Integrated B.A. in African American Studies and M.P.P. in Public Policy

Requirements for the Integrated B.A. in African American Studies and M.P.P. in Public Policy can be found in the Graduate Bulletin (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/majors/public-policy/#integratedundergradgradprogramstext>).

Program Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to critically reflect on and think about historical and contemporary materials and events throughout the African diaspora.
- Students will be able to identify and synthesize national and global influences on people of African descent.
- Students will be able to be sensitive to and appreciate the perspectives, cultures, institutions, and intellectual agency of people of African descent
- Students will be able to articulate clear and compelling perspectives using strong research, critical thinking, analytical skills, academic writing, and public speaking.
- Students will develop an intersectional analytical framework, understanding the connectedness between race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, nationality, and age.
- Students will engage with campus, local, national, and global events in ways that encourages service and promotes their ability to be scholar-activists.

Academic Advising

The objectives of the university's academic advising program are to help advisees identify and achieve their academic goals, to promote their intellectual discovery, and to encourage students to take advantage of both in-and out-of class educational opportunities in order that they become self-directed learners and decision makers.

Both advisers and advisees share responsibility for making the advising relationship succeed. By encouraging their advisees to become engaged in their education, to meet their educational goals, and to develop the habit of learning, advisers assume a significant educational role. The advisee's unit of enrollment will provide each advisee with a primary academic adviser, the information needed to plan the chosen program of study, and referrals to other specialized resources.

READ SENATE POLICY 32-00: ADVISING POLICY (<https://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/32-00-advising-policy/>)

University Park

Liberal Arts Academic Advising

814-865-2545

Use the Liberal Arts Meet the Academic Advisers web page (<https://la.psu.edu/student-services/academic-advising/meet-the-academic-advisers/>) to see the contact information for the specific adviser(s) of this program

Suggested Academic Plan

The suggested academic plan(s) listed on this page are the plan(s) that are in effect during the 2023-24 academic year. To access previous years' suggested academic plans, please visit the archive (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/archive/>) to view the appropriate Undergraduate Bulletin edition (Note: the archive only contains suggested academic plans beginning with the 2018-19 edition of the Undergraduate Bulletin).

African American Studies, B.A. at University Park Campus

The course series listed below provides **only one** of the many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. This plan should be used in conjunction with your degree audit (accessible in LionPATH as either an **Academic Requirements** or **What If** report). Please consult with a Penn State academic adviser on a regular basis to develop and refine an academic plan that is appropriate for you.

First Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
ENGL 15, 30H, ESL 15, ENGL 137H, or CAS 137H [†]	3	World Language Level 2	4
AFAM 152 or HIST 152 [*]	3	CAS 100, ENGL 138T, or CAS 138T [‡]	3
World Language Level 1	4	AFAM 101N, WMNST 101N, AFAM 102, WMNST 102, AFAM 103, WMNST 103, or SOC 103 [*]	3
General Education Course	3	AFAM 110N [*]	3
First Year Seminar	3	General Education Quantification Course [‡]	3
	16		16

Second Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
World Language Level 3	4	General Education Quantification Course [‡]	3
AFAM 100N [*]	3	SOC 207 [*]	3
Elective	3	General Education Course	3
General Education Course	3	General Education Course	3
General Education Course	3	BA Knowledge Domain Course	3
	16		15

Third Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
AFAM any or AFAM elective [*]	3	BA Knowledge Domain Course	3
AFAM 4XX [*]	3	AFAM 4XX [*]	3
BA Other Cultures	3	ENGL 202A, 202B, 202C, or 202D [‡]	3
General Education Course	3	General Education Course	3

Elective	3	Elective	3
	15		15

Fourth Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
BA Knowledge Domain Course	3	AFAM any or AFAM elective [*]	3
AFAM 4XX [*]	3	AFAM 401 [*]	3
AFAM 4XX [*]	3	General Education Course	3
General Education Health and Wellness (GHW)	1.5	General Education Health and Wellness (GHW)	1.5
Elective	6	General Education Course	3
		Elective	2
	16.5		15.5

Total Credits 125

* Course requires a grade of C or better for the major

‡ Course requires a grade of C or better for General Education

Course is an Entrance to Major requirement

† Course satisfies General Education and degree requirement

University Requirements and General Education Notes:

US and IL are abbreviations used to designate courses that satisfy Cultural Diversity Requirements (United States and International Cultures).

W, M, X, and Y are the suffixes at the end of a course number used to designate courses that satisfy University Writing Across the Curriculum requirement.

General Education includes Foundations (GWS and GQ), Knowledge Domains (GHW, GN, GA, GH, GS) and Integrative Studies (Inter-domain) requirements. N or Q (Honors) is the suffix at the end of a course number used to help identify an Inter-domain course, but the inter-domain attribute is used to fill audit requirements. Foundations courses (GWS and GQ) require a grade of 'C' or better.

All incoming Schreyer Honors College first-year students at University Park will take ENGL 137H/CAS 137H in the fall semester and ENGL 138T/CAS 138T in the spring semester. These courses carry the GWS designation and replace both ENGL 30H and CAS 100. Each course is 3 credits.

Bachelor of Arts Requirements:

Bachelor of Arts students must take 9 credits in Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Fields (Humanities; Social and Behavioral Sciences; Arts; World Languages [2nd language or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the 1st]; Natural Sciences; Quantification). The B.A. Fields courses may not be taken in the area of the student's primary major. See your adviser and the Degree Requirements section (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/>) of this Bulletin.

Bachelor of Arts students must take 3 credits in Other Cultures. See your adviser and the full list of courses approved as Other Cultures courses (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/course-lists/ba-other-cultures/>).

Advising Note:

All incoming freshmen must take a First-Year Seminar (FYS) during Fall or Spring of their first year. Academic advisers can provide a list of FYS being offered and help the student enroll. Most FYS in the College of the Liberal Arts are worth 3 cr. and count as a General Humanities (GH) or General Social Sciences (GS) course. For this reason, the FYS is not listed separately on this eight-semester plan; most students will be able to fulfill the FYS requirement while also fulfilling a GH or GS requirement.

Career Paths

Careers

Graduates in African American Studies go on to pursue a wide-range of career paths including public policy, the law, medicine, public health, social work, criminal justice, social justice advocacy, transnational human rights, community-based organizing, higher education, environmental justice, arts/entertainment, or scholarly research in the social sciences and the humanities.

Opportunities for Graduate Studies

Many students opt to pursue graduate degrees in African American Studies because they want to teach in African American Studies programs at the college or university-level or they want to teach from a critical race theory perspective in traditional disciplines in the social sciences, humanities, law, medicine or other professional programs.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRADUATE STUDIES
(<https://afam.la.psu.edu/graduate/>)

Professional Resources

- National Council of Black Studies (NCBS) (<https://ncbsonline.org>)
- Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) (<https://asalh.org/>)
- Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD) (<https://www.aswadiaspora.org>)

Contact

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