Africana Studies

Olufemi Vaughan, Program Director
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Professor: Olufemi Vaughan (History)
Assistant Professors: Judith S. Casselberry, Tess Chakkalakal (English)
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Contributing Faculty: Ericka A. Albaugh, Peter Coviello*, Keona K. Ervin, Guy Mark Foster†, David Gordon, David Hecht, Aaron Kitch, Karen Lindo, Scott MacEachern, James W. McCalla, Dhiraj Murthy, Elizabeth Muther, Evans Mwangi, H. Roy Partridge, Anthony Perman, Patrick J. Rael, Jennifer R. Scanlon, Margaret Hanétha Vété-Congolo, Anthony Walton

Africana Studies is an interdisciplinary program designed to bring the scholarly approaches and perspectives of several traditional disciplines to bear on an understanding of black life. Emphasis is placed on the examination of the rich and varied cultures, literature, and history of black people in Africa and in the African diaspora, including the United States, the Caribbean, and Latin America. Such a systematic interdisciplinary approach captures the historic, multifaceted quality of African American scholarship and allows the student to integrate effectively the perspectives of several academic departments at the College.

Requirements for the Major in Africana Studies

The major in Africana studies consists of five required core courses, a concentration of four additional courses, and a one-semester research project, for a total of ten courses. The core courses—Africana Studies 101; Sociology 208 or Anthropology 233; English 260, 261, 263, or 275; History 236, 237, or 243; and History 262 or 264—have been chosen to give the student a thorough background for the study of the black experience and to provide an introduction to the varied disciplines of Africana studies. The four-course concentration is intended to bring the methodologies and insights of several disciplines to a single problem or theme. Suggested concentrations are Race and Class in American Society, Cultures of the African Diaspora, Political Economy of Blacks in the Third World, and the Arts of Black America. Appropriate courses to be taken should be worked out by the student and the director of the Africana Studies Program. No more than one sub-100-level course may count toward the major. Neither courses taken Credit/D/Fail nor courses in which the student receives a grade of D are accepted for the major.

In addition, the research project, normally completed in the senior year, allows students to conduct research into a particular aspect of the black experience. Students may complete their research project as part of a 300-level course, or as an independent study under the direction of one of the program’s faculty. Students should consult with the director concerning courses offered in previous years that may satisfy the program requirements.

Requirements for the Minor in Africana Studies

The minor in Africana studies consists of five courses in the Africana Studies Program, one of which will be an introductory course (one of Africana Studies 101, 102, or 103) and one of which will be a research course (either a 300-level seminar or an independent study) as a capstone course. In order to ensure that the minor will be multidisciplinary, no more than three of the courses can be from the same department. Neither courses taken Credit/D/Fail nor courses in which the student receives a grade of D are accepted for the minor.
First-Year Seminars
For a full description of first-year seminars, see pages 149–60.

(See also Sociology 10.)

(See also English 11.)

(See also Gender and Women's Studies 25 and History 23.)

(See also History 25.)

Introductory, Intermediate, and Advanced Courses

Introduction to the interdisciplinary field of Africana studies, with a particular focus on African American history, politics, sociology, literature, and culture; course materials also cover the experiences of the peoples of African ancestry in the Atlantic world, especially since the expansion of Europe in the five centuries. Material is covered chronologically and thematically, building historically centered accounts of African American, African, and African diasporic experiences. The goals of this course include the following: (1) to introduce students considering the Africana studies major or minor to the intellectually engaging field of Africana studies; (2) to provide a broad sweep of the field in terms of methodological, theoretical, and ideological perspectives; and (3) to provide contexts for the critical analyses of the African American experience in United States history, and the dynamic interplay of African and African diaspora experiences in the modern world.

108c. Introduction to Black Women’s Literature. (See also English 108 and Gender and Women’s Studies 104.)

[113c - VPA. African Dance and Music. (See also Dance 113 and Music 113.)]

121c - VPA. History of Jazz I. Every other year. Fall 2009. James McAlla.  
A survey of jazz’s development from its African American roots in the late nineteenth century through the Swing Era of the 1930s and 1940s, and following the great Swing artists—e.g., Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, and Benny Goodman—through their later careers. Emphasis is on musical elements, but includes much attention to cultural and historical context through readings and videos. (See also Music 121.)

122c - VPA. History of Jazz II. Every other year. Fall 2010. James McAlla.  
A survey of jazz’s development from the creation of bebop in the 1940s through the present day, e.g., from Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie through such artists as Joshua Redman, James Carter, and the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Emphasis is on musical elements, but includes much attention to cultural and historical context through readings and videos. (See also Music 122.)

Examines the coming of the Civil War and the war itself in all its aspects. Considers the impact of changes in American society, the sectional crisis and breakdown of the party system, the practice of Civil War warfare, and social ramifications of the conflict. Includes readings of novels and viewing of films. Students are expected to enter with a basic knowledge of American history, and a commitment to participating in large class discussions. (See also History 139.)

Introduction to a broad range of musical styles from throughout Africa. Explores how music is used in religious contexts, within nationalist movements, and in social life more generally, with special attention given to popular music and transnational influences on these forms. Students read a range of ethnographic writings on African music, as well as popular press to address issues of colonialism, capitalism, and commercialization in post-colonial Africa. (Same as Music 144.)


Examines the convergence of politics and spirituality in the musical work of contemporary Black women singer-songwriters in the United States. Analyzes material that interrogates and articulates the intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality, generated across a range of religious and spiritual terrains with African diasporic/Black Atlantic spiritual moorings, including Christianity, Islam, and Yoruba. Focuses on material that reveals a womanist (Black feminist) perspective by considering the ways resistant identities shape and are shaped by artistic production. Employs an interdisciplinary approach by incorporating ethnomusicology, anthropology, literature, history, and performance and social theory. Explores the work of Shirley Caesar, The Clark Sisters, Me’shell Ndegeocello, Abby Lincoln, Sweet Honey in the Rock, and Dianne Reeves, among others. (Same as Anthropology 211 and Gender and Women’s Studies 207.)


Seminar. Explores how Christianity, Islam, and indigenous religious beliefs shaped the formation of modern West African states and societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Discusses the role of these world and indigenous religious institutions and movements in the transformation of major West African societies in the following important historical themes: (1) religion and state formation in the turbulent nineteenth century; (2) religion and colonialism; (3) religion and decolonization; (4) religion and the post-colonial state; (5) religion and politics in the era of globalization. (Same as History 203.)

Note: This course fulfills the pre-modern requirement for history majors.


An examination of the biodiversity crisis facing Africa and methods for slowing down or reversing the rapid loss of species and ecosystems that Africa is experiencing. Explores the social, cultural, historical, economic and political contexts of the relationship between African peoples and the continent’s living natural resources, as well as the past, present and future of biodiversity. (Same as Environmental Studies 206.)

[206b - ESD. The Archaeology of Gender and Ethnicity. (Same as Anthropology 206.)]


An introduction to the cultures of various French-speaking regions outside of France. Examines the history, politics, customs, cinema, literature, and arts of the Francophone world, principally Africa and the Caribbean. Readings include newspaper and magazine articles, short stories, and a novel. Students see and discuss television news, documentaries, and feature films. Conducted in French. (Same as French 207 and Latin American Studies 206.)

Prerequisite: French 205 or permission of the instructor.

[208b. Race and Ethnicity. (Same as Sociology 208.)]

Seminar. Drawing on key readings on the historical sociology of transnationalism since World War II, examines how postcolonial African migrations transformed African states and their new transnational populations in Western countries. Discusses what concepts such as the nation state, communal identity, global relations, and security mean in the African context to critically explore complex African transnational experiences and globalization. These dynamic African transnational encounters encourage discussions on homeland and diaspora, tradition and modernity, gender and generation. (Same as History 213.)


Seminar. Will critically discuss some seminal works in African diaspora and African political thought in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Organized around global and national currents that will allow students to explore intersections in pan-African, African American, and African political thought in the context of Atlantic and global histories. Seminar topics are divided into three major historic moments. The first will explore major themes on Atlantic slavery and Western thought, notably slavery and racial representation; slavery and capitalism; slavery and democracy. The second will focus on the struggle of African Americans, Africans, and West Indians for freedom in post-Abolition and colonial contexts. Topics discussed within twentieth-century national, regional, and global currents include reconstruction and industrialization; pan-Africanism; new negro; negritude; colonialism; nationalism. Finally, explores pan-African and African encounters in the context of dominant postcolonial themes, namely decolonization; Cold War; state formation; imperialism; African diaspora feminist thought; globalism. Discusses these foundational texts and the political thoughts of major African, African American, and Caribbean intellectuals and activists in their appropriate historical context. (Same as History 216.)

[217b - ESD. Overcoming Racism. (Same as Sociology 217.)]


Surveys societies and politics in sub-Saharan Africa, seeking to understand the sources of current conditions and the prospects for political stability and economic growth. Looks briefly at pre-colonial society and colonial influence on state-construction in Africa, and concentrates on three broad phases in Africa’s contemporary political development: (1) independence and consolidation of authoritarian rule; (2) economic decline and challenges to authoritarianism; (3) democratization and civil conflict. Presumes no prior knowledge of the region. (Same as Government 222.)


Reconsiders the notoriously “white” English Renaissance in light of recent literary and cultural scholarship on race and cultural difference. Explores key strategies of authors from Philip Sidney to Aphra Behn in representing ethnic, religious, and cultural otherness, as well as an emergent discourse of racial identity. Topics include England’s role in the nascent African slave trade, the poetic fetishization of the exotic, and transnational discourses of “discovery” that raised new questions about modes of English writing. Authors include Sidney, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Aphra Behn, Kim Hall, Gary Taylor, and bell hooks. (Same as English 225.)

Prerequisite: One first-year seminar or 100-level course in English or Africana studies. Note: This course fulfills the pre-1800 literature requirement for English majors.
Examines globally mediated formations of ethnic and racial identities, including the ways in which transnational communities are shaped through contact with “homelands” (physically and virtually) and vice versa. Particular attention given to “Black” and “South Asian” diasporic communities based in London and the transnational cultural networks in Africa, the Indian Subcontinent, and the Caribbean that they help maintain. Readings include works by Paul Gilroy, Arjun Appadurai, Les Back, Stuart Hall, Jayne Ifekwunigwe, Ian Ang, and the Delhi-based sarai school. (Same as Asian Studies 263 and Sociology 227.)
Prerequisite: Sociology 101 or Anthropology 101.

Explores the history and politics of evolution in the United States since Darwin. Evolution has been central to American politics and culture in myriad ways. Examines explicit controversies, such as the Scopes Trial of 1925 and more recent debates over intelligent design, as well as the many ways that it has implicitly but profoundly influenced American culture, most notably in connection with lending credence to ideas of “natural” or “normal” in terms of human behavior, racial classification, or gender and sexual norms. Also explores changing ideas of evolution, in both scientific investigation and popular culture. (Same as History 230.)

Introduction to the traditional patterns of livelihood and social institutions of African peoples. Following a brief overview of African geography, habitat, and cultural history, lectures and readings cover a representative range of types of economy, polity, and social organization, from the smallest hunting and gathering societies to the most complex states and empires. Emphasis upon understanding the nature of traditional social forms. Changes in African societies in the colonial and post-colonial periods examined, but are not the principal focus. (Same as Anthropology 233.)
Prerequisite: One course in anthropology or Africana Studies 101.

Examines the history of African Americans from the origins of slavery in America through the death of slavery during the Civil War. Explores a wide range of topics, including the establishment of slavery in colonial America, the emergence of plantation society, control and resistance on the plantation, the culture and family structure of enslaved African Americans, free black communities, and the coming of the Civil War and the death of slavery. (Same as History 236.)

Explores the history of African Americans from the end of the Civil War to the present. Issues include the promises and failures of Reconstruction, the Jim Crow era, black leadership and protest institutions, African American cultural styles, industrialization and urbanization, the world wars, the Civil Rights Movement, and conservative retrenchment. (Same as History 237.)

Seminar. Close examination of the decade following the Civil War. Explores the events and scholarship of the Union attempt to create a biracial democracy in the South following the war, and the sources of its failure. Topics include wartime Reconstruction, the Ku Klux Klan, Republican politics, and Democratic Redemption. Special attention paid to the deeply conflicted ways historians have approached this period over the years. (Same as History 238.)
Prerequisite: One course in history.
Explores how gender and sexuality function within African American communities in
the United States using historical and contemporary case studies. Examines connections
between constructions of Black femininity and masculinity, racial identity formation and
social inequality against the backdrop of slavery and emancipation, segregation, the Great
Depression and World War II, the black freedom struggle, and what many have called the
post-civil rights era. Materials include interdisciplinary scholarly texts and articles, films,
novels, and music. (Same as Gay and Lesbian Studies 242, Gender and Women’s Studies
242, and History 243.)

[245c - ESD. Bearing the Untold Story: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States.
(Same as Gender and Women’s Studies 245 and History 245.)]

[249c - ESD. IP. African Philosophy. (Same as Philosophy 249.)]

[256b. African Archaeology: The Roots of Humanity. (Same as Anthropology 256.)]

258c - ESD. Reconstructing the Nation. Every other year. Spring 2010. Tess
Chakkalakal.
Introduces students to American literature written between 1865 and 1910. Exploring
a period marked by the end of the Civil War, Reconstruction, the “New” South, and Jim
Crow, students engage with these historical developments through a reading of a wide range
of novels, short stories, poems, and plays that take up political tensions between the North
and South as well as questions of regional, racial, and national identity. Works by George
Washington Cable, Charles Chesnutt, Lydia Maria Child, Sarah Orne Jewett, Mark Twain,
Sutton E. Griggs, Emily Dickinson, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Henry James, Theodore Dreiser,
and Frank Norris constitute the “major” literary voices of the period, but also examines a
number of “minor” works that are similarly, but perhaps more narrowly, concerned with
questions of race and nation. (Same as English 258.)
Prerequisite: One first-year seminar or 100-level course in English or Africana studies.
Note: This course fulfills the literature of the Americas requirement for English majors.

[260c. African American Fiction: (Re)Writing Black Masculinities. (Same as English
260 and Gender and Women’s Studies 260.)]

African American poetry as counter-memory—from Wheatley to the present—with a
focus on oral traditions, activist literary discourses, trauma and healing, and productive
communities. Special emphasis on the past century: dialect and masking; the Harlem
Renaissance; Brown, Brooks, and Hayden at mid-century; the Black Arts Movement; black
feminism; and contemporary voices. (Same as English 261.)
Prerequisite: One first-year seminar or 100-level course in English or Africana studies.
Note: This course fulfills the literature of the Americas requirement for English majors.

A survey of historical developments before conquest by European powers, with a focus on
west and central Africa. Explores the political, social, and cultural changes that accompanied
the intensification of Atlantic Ocean trade and revolves around a controversy in the study of
Africa and the Atlantic World: What influence did Africans have on the making of the
Atlantic World, and in what ways did Africans participate in the slave trade? How were African
identities shaped by the Atlantic World and by the slave plantations of the Americas? Ends
by considering the contradictory effects of Abolition on Africa. (Same as History 262.)
Note: This course fulfills the pre-modern requirement for history majors.
Courses of Instruction

[263c. Staging Blackness. (Same as English 263.)]

264c - ESD. IP. Conquest, Colonialism, and Independence: Africa since 1880. Spring 2010. DAVID GORDON.

Focuses on conquest, colonialism, and its legacies in sub-Saharan Africa; the violent process of colonial pacification, examined from European and African perspectives; the different ways of consolidating colonial rule and African resistance to colonial rule, from Maji Maji to Mau Mau; and African nationalism and independence, as experienced by Africa's nationalist leaders, from Kwame Nkrumah to Jomo Kenyatta, and their critics. Concludes with the limits of independence, mass disenchantment, the rise of the predatory post-colonial state, genocide in the Great Lakes, and the wars of Central Africa. (Same as History 264.)

265c. Black Women and Slavery in Diasporic Perspective. Spring 2010. JESSICA JOHNSON.

Examines the history of women of African descent during the second period of slavery and slave trading between Africa, the Caribbean, and mainland North America (roughly 1650 to 1888). Focuses on the everyday experiences of women's labor, reproduction, and kinship-building on the plantations and in the cities, of these slaveholding societies and on women's roles in the (re)creation of Afro-Atlantic religious and political culture. Investigates the participation of women in abolition and emancipation movements of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A range of issues addressed: How did women of African descent experience life under slavery in contrast to men or women of European, Amerindian, and East Indian descent? How did the lives of enslaved women differ from free women of color in different slave holding societies of the Atlantic world? How did the experience of migration, forced and voluntary, impact the lives of black women and the growth of black societies across the Atlantic African diaspora? Assignments include work by contemporary historians and literary figures, primary source analysis, and student projects on the representation and presentation of women and slavery. (Same as Gender and Women's Studies 273 and History 273.)

[266c. Topics in African American Literature: The Harlem Renaissance. (Same as English 266.)]

[267c - IP. African Environmental History. (Same as Environmental Studies 268 and History 267.)]

269c - ESD. IP. After Apartheid: South African History and Historiography. Fall 2009. DAVID GORDON.

Seminar. Investigates the diverse representations and uses of the past in South Africa. Begins with the difficulties in developing a critical and conciliatory version of the past in post-apartheid South Africa during and after the much-discussed Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Then turns to diverse historical episodes and sites of memory from the Great Trek to the inauguration of Nelson Mandela to explore issues of identity and memory from the perspectives of South Africa's various peoples. (Same as History 269.)

270c. African American Fiction: Childhood and Adolescence. Spring 2010. ELIZABETH MUTHER.

A century of short stories, novels, and graphic narratives by African American writers that engage the lives of children and adolescents, as well as narratives written explicitly for young readers. Theorizes historical constructions of African American childhood from the Harlem Renaissance era to the present. Examines the strong tradition of child-narrated fiction for teens and adults from the 1960s and 1970s by such writers as Ernest Gaines, Toni
Morrison, Toni Cade Bambara, Louise Meriwether, and Ann Petry. Considers the emergence of a conscious Black Arts aesthetic in children’s literature and its relationship to the flowering of multicultural children’s literature in recent decades. (Same as English 270 [formerly English 275 (same as Africana Studies 275)].)

Prerequisite: One first-year seminar or 100-level course in English or Africana studes.

Note: This course fulfills the literature of the Americas requirement for English majors.


Seminar. The slavery that emerged with the expansion of European powers in the New World was historically unique—a form more exploitative and capitalistic than any seen before. Paradoxically, it was this same Atlantic world that bred the ideas of universal human liberty that led to slavery’s demise. Explores this conundrum and examines the movements in the Atlantic world dedicated to abolishing slavery in the Atlantic basin in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Considers the foundations of antislavery thought, the abolition of the slave trade, the relationship between capitalism and abolitionism, the role of African American protest, the emergence of immediatism in America, the progress of Atlantic emancipations, and the historical memory of antislavery. Intensive engagement with historical arguments on this topic. (Same as History 270.)

280b - ESD. Race, Biology, and Anthropology. Fall 2009. Scott Maceachern.

Critically examines the biological justifications used to partition humanity into racial groups. Investigates the nature of biological and genetic variability within and between human populations, as well as the characteristics of human biological races as they have traditionally been defined. Considers whether race models do a good job of describing how human populations vary across the earth. Critically appraises works by a variety of authors, including J. Phillippe Rushton, Charles Murray, and Michael Levin, who claim that racial identity and evolution work together to structure the history and the potentials of human groups in different parts of the world. (Same as Anthropology 280.)

Prerequisite: Anthropology 101, 102, or Sociology 101, or permission of the instructor.


Introduces students to the controversial history of reader responses to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s 1852 antislavery novel, Uncle Tom’s Cabin. Students engage with various theoretical approaches—reader response theory, feminist, African Americanist, and historicist—to the novel, then turn to the novel itself and produce their own literary interpretation. In order to do so, students examine the conditions of the novel’s original production. By visiting various historic locations, the Stowe House on Federal Street, the First Parish Church on Maine Street, Special Collections of the Hawthorne-Longfellow Library, students compare the novel’s original historical context to the history that the novel produced. Aside from reading Stowe’s antislavery fiction, students also read works produced with and against Uncle Tom’s Cabin. (Same as English 284.)

Prerequisite: One first-year seminar or 100-level course in English or Africana studies.


[305c. Critical Race Theory.]


Explores the semiotics of racial representation in African American literature and culture over the past century, focusing in particular on comics and graphic narratives. Considers the problems of minstrelsy, masking, and caricature—as well as instruments of militant image-
Courses of Instruction

making, in both literary and visual forms. Of special interest will be modernist resistance languages of the Harlem Renaissance; collage as a mid-century metaphor for invisibility and black subjectivity; and contemporary images—comics, narratives, and illustrations—that introduce alternative socio-political allegories. (Same as English 322.)

Prerequisite: One 200-level course in English or Africana studies, or permission of the instructor.

Note: This course fulfills the literature of the Americas requirement for English majors.

[324c. Empirical Africa: Exoticism, Race, and Gender. (Same as French 324 and Latin American Studies 324.)]


From their very beginnings, Black American newspapers have concerned themselves not only with resistance movements within the United States but also with revolts and revolutions throughout the Black Diaspora. Examines a short story, a novella, and a novel all published in important and popular Black papers. Interdisciplinary focus allows easy search of newspaper databases for African American coverage of the British and French Caribbean, Cuba and Latin America, West and East Africa, and the Italian invasion of the last remaining independent nation, Ethiopia, during its war against colonization—all while examining fiction serialized in the Black press. One-half credit. (Same as English 330.)

Note: This course will not count for credit toward the major.

[336c. Research in Nineteenth-Century United States History. (Same as History 336.)]


Explores African conceptions of politics from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Themes covered include African ancestral traditions, political movements during European colonialism, ethnic politics, alternative forms of sovereignty, religion and power, and debates over democratization. Students are required to write an original research paper. (Same as History 361.)


Art

Pamela M. Fletcher, Department Chair and Director, Art History Division
James Mullen, Director, Visual Arts Division
Elizabeth H. Palmer, Department Coordinator

Professor: Mark C. Wethli†
Associate Professors: Linda J. Docherty, Pamela M. Fletcher, Michael Kolster, James Mullen, Stephen Perkinson, Susan E. Wegner
Assistant Professors: De-nin Deanna Lee (Asian Studies), Carrie Scanga
Lecturer: John B. Bisbee
Visiting Faculty: Meggan Gould, Amer Kobaslija, Wiebke N. Theodore
Fellow: Nestor Gil

The Department of Art comprises two programs: art history and visual arts. Majors in the department are expected to elect one of these programs. The major in art history is devoted