The Africana Studies Program is an interdisciplinary field that brings together the humanities and social sciences to study the world from African American and African perspectives. The aim of the program is to introduce students to analytical and critical skills through multiple methodological approaches drawn from anthropology, art history, history, literature, music, political economy, and theater.

The Major

The Africana studies major consists of nine interdisciplinary and disciplinary courses in African American, African diaspora, and African studies. There are two tracks or concentrations: 1. African American—on the national black experience in the United States; and 2. African and African Diaspora—on African regional, trans-regional, and African diaspora themes. The following three courses are required, regardless of track: Introduction to Africana Studies (AFRS-1101), a 2000-level Intermediate Seminar in Africana Studies; and a 3000-level Advanced Senior Seminar in Africana Studies. Of the six additional courses, five must be at the 2000- or 3000-level, and students are required to take at least one course from the track that is not their primary concentration. For example, one course from the African American track will be required of students in the African and African Diaspora track, and vice versa. A first-year seminar in Africana studies can count toward the courses required. Up to two courses can count for the major.

The Minor

The minor in Africana studies consists of five disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses in African American, African, and African diaspora studies. The course requirements for the minor in Africana studies are outlined in the following categories: Introduction to Africana Studies (1101), and four Africana studies elective courses from any of the two tracks. Three of these courses must be at the 2000 and 3000 levels. Only one of these four electives can be an independent study course or a course taken at other colleges/universities. A first-year seminar in Africana studies will count toward the minor in Africana studies.

Honors Project and Independent Study

The honors project requirement is adapted from the Bowdoin College honors project policy. A degree with departmental or program honors is awarded to students who distinguish themselves through advanced scholarship in the discipline. In Africana studies, the successful honors project uses the intellectual and interdisciplinary tools of Africana studies to produce an exemplary project based on systematic reading, research, questioning, and reflection. The project can emerge from questions raised in a course, in an independent study project, or through a non-academic experience. The project will culminate in a substantial paper or creative presentation. The writing of an honors thesis does not automatically lead to the granting of honors. Honors will be conferred by the Africana Studies Program Committee when the final project demonstrates a significant degree of original research and/or theoretical creativity.

Facilities

The Africana Studies Program is housed on the third floor of Adams Hall, named for Seth Adams of Boston, who received an honorary degree from Bowdoin in 1858.

Russwurm House

Also known as the John Brown Russwurm African American Center, it was named in honor of Bowdoin’s first African American graduate (Class of 1826) and was opened in 1970. It was originally built in 1827 for Professor Alpheus Spring Packard, professor of ancient language and classical literature, who in 1836 sold half to William Smyth, professor of mathematics. For the next thirty-five years the house was known as the Packard-Smyth House. The house has also been known as the Mitchell-Little House (after subsequent owners). The rumors concerning the house as an Underground Railroad Station in the middle of the nineteenth century are not documented and cannot be positively proven. However, it is well documented that Professor William Smyth was an avid abolitionist. In an unpublished work, Smyth’s son does reminisce on the many fugitives that visited their home in the night and were gone by morning’s light.
Faculty
The Africana Studies Program is administered by its core faculty and affiliate faculty, while courses are taught by members of various departments.

Core Faculty
Judith Cassellberry, assistant professor of Africana studies, B.Mus. (Berklee), M.Phil., M.A., Ph.D. (Yale), teaches a course on Black Women, Politics, Music, and the Divine. Her research and teaching interests include African American culture and the construction and performance of raced, gendered, and religious identities.

Tess Chakalakal, associate professor of Africana studies and English, B.A. (Toronto), M.A., Ph.D. (York), is the director of the program. She specializes in African American literature.

Brian Purcell, assistant professor of Africana studies, B.A. (Fordham), M.A., Ph.D. (New York University), specializes in twentieth-century African American urban history.


Affiliated Faculty

Dana Byrd, CFD Post-doctoral Fellow in Art History, B.A. (Yale); M.A. (Delaware); Ph.D. (Yale).

Guy Mark Foster, assistant professor of English, B.A. (Wheaton), M.A., Ph.D. (Brown), specializes in twentieth-century American literature, African American literature, lesbian and gay literature, interracial narratives, literary memoirs, queer theory, and psychoanalytic theory.


Scott MacEachem, professor of anthropology, B.A. (Prince Edward Island), M.A., Ph.D. (Calgary), teaches about the peoples and cultures of Africa.

Tracy McMullen, assistant professor of music, B.A. (Stanford), M.M., M.A. (North Texas), Ph.D. (California-San Diego), specializes in African music and culture, jazz, popular music, musical performance, and identity.

Elizabeth Muther, associate professor of English, B.A. (Wellesley), Ph.D. (California–Berkeley), specializes in African American literature and culture.

H. Roy Partridge Jr., visiting assistant professor of sociology and special assistant to the president for multicultural affairs, B.A. (Oberlin), M.S.W., M.A., Ph.D. (Michigan), M.Div. (Harvard), teaches courses on racism.

Patrick Raet, associate professor of history, B.A. (Maryland–College Park), M.A., Ph.D. (California–Berkeley), teaches African American history, focusing on slavery and emancipation and the Civil War era in particular.

Jennifer Scanlon, professor of gender and women’s studies, B.S. (SUNY–Oneonta), M.S. (Delaware), M.A., Ph.D. (Binghamton), specializes in gender, race, and ethnicity in the United States.

Hanétha Vété-Congolo, associate professor of Romance languages, B.A., M.A., Ph.D. (Université des Antilles et de la Guayane), teaches courses on Francophone cultures, Caribbean history, and sociology.

Anthony Walton, writer in residence, B.A. (Notre Dame), M.F.A. (Brown). His research interests include modern and contemporary poetry, postcolonial literature and theory, African American literature, Irish literature, and Ralph Ellison.

Africana Studies

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Bowdoin
For more information about Bowdoin, please write or call: Dean of Admissions Bowdoin College, 5000 College Station Brunswick, ME 04011-8441 207-725-3100 bowdoin.edu admissions@bowdoin.edu

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For more information, visit: bowdoin.edu/africana-studies/

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