

African American Studies

The African American Studies graduate program focuses on life, culture, and social organization (broadly defined) of persons of African descent. Africa, North America, and the Caribbean are central components of the program. Students are expected to apply a multidisciplinary approach to the study of the international and national divisions of race as they pertain to persons of African descent, wherever they may find themselves. Such an approach is to be employed for the study and understanding of development and underdevelopment, domination and power, self-determination, cooperation, and aesthetic and creative expression. Issues of identity construction, marginality, territoriality, and the universal role of race in the organization of political economy and in class formation are critical to the program's intellectual agenda.

Applications are accepted for the PhD program only.

Admission to the University Applying for Graduate Admission

Thank you for considering UC Berkeley for graduate study! UC Berkeley offers more than 120 graduate programs representing the breadth and depth of interdisciplinary scholarship. The Graduate Division hosts a complete list (<https://grad.berkeley.edu/admissions/choosing-your-program/list/>) of graduate academic programs, departments, degrees offered, and application deadlines can be found on the Graduate Division website.

Prospective students must submit an online application to be considered for admission, in addition to any supplemental materials specific to the program for which they are applying. The online application and steps to take to apply can be found on the Graduate Division website (<https://grad.berkeley.edu/admissions/steps-to-apply/>).

Admission Requirements

The minimum graduate admission requirements are:

1. A bachelor's degree or recognized equivalent from an accredited institution;
2. A satisfactory scholastic average, usually a minimum grade-point average (GPA) of 3.0 (B) on a 4.0 scale; and
3. Enough undergraduate training to do graduate work in your chosen field.

For a list of requirements to complete your graduate application, please see the Graduate Division's Admissions Requirements page (<https://grad.berkeley.edu/admissions/steps-to-apply/requirements/>). It is also important to check with the program or department of interest, as they may have additional requirements specific to their program of study and degree. Department contact information can be found here (<https://guide.berkeley.edu/archive/2024-25/graduate/degree-programs/>).

Where to apply?

Visit the Berkeley Graduate Division application page (<http://grad.berkeley.edu/admissions/apply/>).

Admission to the Program

Applicants must have completed an undergraduate degree and should demonstrate a general knowledge of African American history and an understanding of the disciplinary bases for the study of the African diaspora. Demonstrated knowledge in the field should include understanding relations among social, economic, and political structures and culture in African American life.

Students are admitted to graduate studies in the fall semester only. Applicants must file:

1. A University of California, Berkeley graduate application.
2. Two official transcripts from all colleges and universities attended.
3. Three letters of recommendation.
4. Writing sample (no more than 15 pages) that best reflects their program/research interests.
5. TOEFL (required for all international students).

Students who have been accepted to this program and have earned a master's degree in another program will be evaluated based on requirements for the pre-qualifying examinations.

Program Requirements

A minimum of two years or four semesters of academic residence is required by the university for all PhD programs. Academic residence is defined as enrollment in at least 12 units in the 200 series of courses. Thus, every graduate student must enroll in and complete a minimum of 12 units of graduate course work per required semester of academic residency. After successful completion of course work with a minimum GPA of 3.30, a pre-qualifying examination based upon general knowledge in the field of African American Studies will be administered by the department.

Academic Preparation

Applicants must have completed an undergraduate degree and should demonstrate a general knowledge of African American history and an understanding of the disciplinary bases for the study of the African diaspora. Demonstrated knowledge in the field should include understanding relations among social, economic, and political structures and culture in African American life. Applicant records must also demonstrate proficiency in a foreign language at the undergraduate level comparable to this university's language requirement.

Curriculum

Courses per individualized approved study list

Doctoral students are required to be a GSI (Graduate Student Instructor) at least once before they take their Qualifying Examination. However, most students serve as a GSI for a minimum of four semesters as part of a multi-year fellowship and departmental funding packages. We have many large lecture courses that students work with and the Department offers American Cultures courses that serve the larger campus community and create teaching opportunities for our students. Additionally, graduate students can apply to teach their own course in the Summer terms after they are advanced to candidacy. This allows graduate students to begin working with their own ideas and interests and create syllabi and lectures for future courses. Other opportunities after advancing to candidacy include teaching Reading and Composition courses (R1A and R1B) specializing in your own areas of expertise.

The Department of African American Studies offers numerous Professional Development opportunities for our graduate students. For example, each year, graduate students in residence are required to take part in departmental service work that helps create professional development skills. Some students plan our annual symposium, others mentor undergraduates in our research institute, others help with admissions and recruiting, and some choose to help with our colloquium series and other public talks that bring out conversations and dialogue about new research and ideas in our field. In addition to service work that mirror what faculty do, we also offer workshops on topics such as writing cover letters, putting together panels for conferences, how to write a lecture, how to apply for external grants, putting together a job talk, and other topics that are critical to students' success on the market and with obtaining funding.

African American Studies

AFRICAM 201A Interdisciplinary Research Methods 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2021, Fall 2020, Fall 2019

This seminar will provide a detailed introduction and working knowledge of the various methodological techniques appropriate for interdisciplinary research on the African Diaspora.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

AFRICAM 201B Qualitative Research Methods for African American Studies 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Fall 2023, Fall 2018

A review of competing epistemologies in qualitative research of African Americans.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 4 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

Instructor: Small

AFRICAM 201D Theories of the African Diaspora 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2024, Fall 2017, Fall 2016

This course is intended to provide students with an initial background for the composition of the position paper discussing the concept and study of African Diaspora necessary for passing department qualifying exams. It will introduce some of the theoretical frameworks for, and approaches to, scholarship concerning the African Diaspora.

Rules & Requirements

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

Instructor: Scott

AFRICAM 240 Special Topics in Cultural Studies of the Diaspora 1 - 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Spring 2025, Fall 2024

One hour of lecture per week per unit. Topics will vary from term to term depending on student demand and faculty availability.

Rules & Requirements

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 1-4 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate

Grading: The grading option will be decided by the instructor when the class is offered.

AFRICAM 241 Special Topics in Development Studies of the Diaspora 1 - 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2025, Spring 2024, Spring 2023

One hour of lecture per week per unit. Topics will vary from term to term depending on student demand and faculty availability.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 1-4 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

AFRICAM 242 Special Topics in African Linguistics 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2015, Fall 2014, Spring 2012

Topics will vary to suit student demand or interest. The seminar will require solid grounding in linguistic theory.

Rules & Requirements

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

Instructor: Mchombo

AFRICAM 250 Black Intellectuals: Social and Cultural Roles 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2025, Spring 2023, Spring 2021

The course will examine the development of an intellectual group in African American life from the 18th century to the present. Implicit in the examination is consideration of the social and cultural roles, writers, scholars, artists, and other thinkers have played in American and African American culture.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

AFRICAM 252 Researching Race, Gender and Justice 4 Units

Terms offered: Prior to 2007

This course is designed to encourage the development of an intersectional sensibility among scholars working in the area of race, gender and justice, broadly defined. In addition to providing a theoretical and methodological introduction to sociological literature on the practice of intersectionality in research and writing, we will also use a cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary set of readings, along with discussions and assignments, to examine historical and contemporary trends in how Black women and girls experience institutional and interpersonal threats of violence, policing and punishment; from the convict lease system to the crisis of mass incarceration and ending with a consideration of the experiences of Black women and girls.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

AFRICAM 256B Diaspora, Citizenship, and Transnationality 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2010, Spring 2010, Fall 2008

This seminar analyzes the social construction and reproduction of diasporic communities in the U.S., Canada, and Europe. It examines the relations of the diaspora to the homeland in the context of the globalization process. The role of transnational migration and deterritorialization in the production of bipolar, fragmented, and multiple identities will be analyzed. Postnational models of citizenship--differentiated, transnational, and multicultural--will be assessed in light of poststructuralist theories.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

Instructor: Laguerre

AFRICAM 257A Identity Politics in the Caribbean and Africa 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2010, Spring 2008, Spring 2006

An exhaustive examination of the conditions under which identity constructs (race, ethnicity, nation, religion, language, region, etc.) come to occupy the symbolic center in the organization of mass political movements in non-industrialized Third World societies. The course will be comparative in scope using case histories from Africa and the Caribbean. It will focus on the relationship between the "politics of identity," national economic decision making, and the distribution of economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

Instructor: Hintzen

AFRICAM 257B Power, Domination, and Ideology 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2012, Spring 2011, Spring 2009

This course will focus on theories and realities of power, domination, and ideology as they pertain to issues of identity in the post-World War II political economies of Africa and the African diaspora.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

Instructor: Hintzen

AFRICAM 262 Black Feminist Criticism 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2009, Fall 2007, Fall 2006

This course will focus on the development of a black feminist criticism(s). We will be specifically concerned with the writings of significant black women critics of the 19th and 20th centuries who have used intersections of class, race, and gender to analyze major issues of their time.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

AFRICAM C265 Research Advances in Race, Diversity, and Educational Policy 3 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2020, Fall 2019, Fall 2018

This introductory graduate seminar will engage the research literature on race, diversity, and educational policy to provide a foundation for examining contemporary issues in American public schooling. We will examine research on race, culture, and learning alongside more policy driven research on school structures, governance, finance, politics, and policy. In doing so, we will blend micro level examinations of teaching and learning with macro level considerations of politics and policy.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

Instructors: Nasir, Perry, Scott, J.

Also listed as: EDUC C265C

AFRICAM C286 The Education of African-American Students 3 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2012, Fall 2010, Spring 2010

This seminar will examine a wide range of perspectives on the education of African American children and adolescents in the United States. Readings will support students in understanding some of the key issues and tensions in African American education and school achievement, including the roles that culture, identity, parents, families, and communities play in the education and schooling of African American students; systemic issues in educational improvement and the perpetuation of "achievement gaps"; and language and power.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

Instructor: Suad-Bakari

Also listed as: EDUC C286

AFRICAM 296 Directed Dissertation Research 1 - 13 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Fall 2024, Spring 2024

Open to qualified students who have been advanced to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree and are directly engaged in doctoral dissertation research.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Advancement to Ph.D. candidacy

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 1-8 hours of independent study per week

Summer: 6 weeks - 2.5-20 hours of independent study per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate

Grading: Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.

AFRICAM 298 Master's Examination Preparation Course 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2020, Spring 2019, Spring 2017

This class is designed to prepare second year graduate students for the spring Master's Examination in African Diaspora Studies. Basing our syllabus upon the established reading list, we will meet weekly to discuss individual texts, methods of interpreting and critiquing works across disciplines, strategies for reading, studying, and ultimately taking the exam itself.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 4 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

AFRICAM 299 Individual Study or Research 1 - 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2024, Summer 2023 First 6 Week Session, Fall 2022

Individual study or research program to be worked out with sponsoring faculty before approval by department chair. Regular meetings arranged with faculty sponsor.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Consent of instructor

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 1-4 hours of independent study per week

Summer:

6 weeks - 2.5-10 hours of independent study per week

10 weeks - 1.5-6 hours of independent study per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

AFRICAM C375 Critical Pedagogy: Instructor Training 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Fall 2023, Fall 2022

The seminar provides a systemic approach to theories and practices of critical pedagogy at the university level. Examines the arts of teaching and learning and current disciplinary and cross-disciplinary issues in African/diaspora and Ethnic Studies. Participation two hours per week as practicum in 39, "Introduction to the University: African American Perspectives" is mandatory. The course is required for students expecting to serve as graduate student instructors in the department.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 2 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Professional course for teachers or prospective teachers

Grading: Letter grade.

Formerly known as: Ethnic Studies Graduate Group C375/African American Studies C375

Also listed as: ETH STD C375

AFRICAM 601 Individual Study for Master's Students 1 - 8 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2025, Spring 2024, Spring 2023

Individual study for the master's requirements in consultation with the adviser. Units may not be used to meet either unit or residency requirements for the master's degree.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Consent of instructor

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 0-0 hours of independent study per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate examination preparation

Grading: Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.

AFRICAM 602 Individual Study for Doctoral Students 2 - 12 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Spring 2025, Fall 2024

Individual study, in consultation with group faculty, to prepare students for the doctoral oral examinations. A student will be permitted to accumulate a maximum of 8 units toward examination preparation. Units earned in this course may not be used to meet academic residence or unit requirements for the master's or doctoral degree.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: 201A-201B

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 2-8 hours of independent study per week

Summer:

6 weeks - 5-20 hours of independent study per week

8 weeks - 3.5-15 hours of independent study per week

10 weeks - 3-12 hours of independent study per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: African American Studies/Graduate examination preparation

Grading: Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.