



WAKE FOREST

U N I V E R S I T Y

African American Studies Proposal
Committee on Academic Planning
November 2020

African American Studies Proposal

Overview

During the 2016-2017 academic year, the Provost's Office convened a group of university faculty and staff to examine the history of Wake Forest University, particularly with respect to correcting historical inaccuracies and acknowledging the University's dealings with slavery and its legacies. In the summer of 2019, President Nathan Hatch established the President's Commission on Race, Equity and Community. As one part of a larger institutional effort, the President's Commission is "charged with assessing the current realities of our community and the present condition of our institutional policies and practices to develop specific and actionable recommendations that will cultivate a more diverse, equitable and welcoming learning community."¹

Three principles guide the work of the Commission:

- Every member of our community has infinite dignity. It is the privilege and responsibility of the Wake Forest community to accept everyone on those terms.
- The power of education can heighten awareness, encourage empathy, bring healing and understanding, promote conversation and dialogue and free us from prejudice.
- Wake Forest needs to be authentic and honest about its past, present and future. Facing reality, however sobering, is essential if we are to build a genuinely pluralistic community.

Recent faculty discussions and planning for African American Studies at Wake Forest University have occurred within this institutional context.² However, the substance and direction of faculty discussions and planning for African American Studies were not solely determined by these institutional circumstances. Rather, the faculty commitment to African American Studies represents a broad sentiment that African American Studies is integral to a liberal arts education and enables the University to fully realize its mission "to educate the whole person, graduating students who seek purpose-filled lives while building a community dedicated to serving humanity in the spirit of our motto, *Pro Humanitate*."

African American Studies at Wake Forest University is grounded in a robust vision of a liberal arts education, providing significant teaching and research opportunities in the discipline and thus expanding the boundaries of human knowledge and understanding. Wake Forest University joins other leading national institutions that offer undergraduate and graduate degree programs in the discipline. Indeed, in the most recent rankings of the nation's top universities, over ninety percent of the top thirty national universities have degree programs in the discipline while 18 of the top 27 schools have full academic departments in African American Studies.³ In North Carolina, both Duke University and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill have full academic departments in African American Studies.

¹ See President's Commission on Race, Equity and Community available at <https://community.wfu.edu/presidents-commission/>.

² See "President Hatch: Q&A – Campus Climate," *Minutes of Wake Forest University Faculty Senate Meeting February 19, 2020*, Tribble Hall, DeTamble Auditorium, Wake Forest University.

³ National Universities, *U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges 2021*.

Brief History of African American Studies at Wake Forest University

The first discussions of African American Studies at Wake Forest University were initiated by students organized in the Afro-American Society in the late 1960s. In the March 18, 1969 edition of the *Old Gold and Black*, John Minter shared the five major aims of the new student organization including the “enrichment of Afro-American studies.”⁴ As a member of the Piedmont University Center, a consortium of colleges and universities located in and around the Triad region, the University hosted lectures by such leading figures in the discipline as Mary Frances Berry in 1971, Joseph R. Washington in 1972, and Charles V. Hamilton in 1973.⁵ In a 1987 letter to the editor, a writer called on the University to examine its racial attitudes in light of the infamous Howard Beach incident and World Series riot on the campus of University of Massachusetts at Amherst writing, “We could begin by showing support for a strong Black Studies department. . . .”⁶

A faculty committee on American Studies was convened in 1991 “out of an original request by students a few years ago that the university implement a minor in African American studies.” The committee opted for an American Studies minor arguing that it “would be a broader based approach to examining elements that have come together to make this country what it is today.”⁷ In 1996, Wake Forest University launched an academic program in American Ethnic Studies. This interdisciplinary program “was established as a result of a reawakened interest in understanding and accepting the ethnic identity and heritage of all the people of the United States.”⁸

On January 31, 2020, Dean Franco, Winifred W. Palmer Professor of Literature and Director of the Wake Forest University Humanities Institute, invited a group of faculty to meet periodically over the spring semester to discuss creating an African American Studies program at Wake Forest University. The conversations were designed to “identify interests and share ideas” about a vision and design of “what such a program could look like at Wake Forest” and “identify leadership that is clear on process and mechanics of proposing a program.” At the initial faculty meeting on February 5, 2020, attending faculty affirmed that there was considerable support for establishing African American Studies and discussed the “need to deliver something substantial for students.” The group also discussed the need to consider other issues including:

- What model would make the most sense for our faculty and students?
- What model reflects the faculty contributing to it, as well as the direction those faculty would like to take it?

⁴ John Minter, “Black Society Looks to the Future,” *Old Gold and Black*, March 18, 1969. See also Anthony S. Parent, Jr., “Weathering Wake: The African-American Experience,” Founders’ Day Convocation, February 26, 2009 available at <https://news.wfu.edu/2009/02/26/weathering-wake-the-african-american-experience/> and Edwin Graves Wilson, *The History of Wake Forest University Volume V 1967-1983* (Winston-Salem, Wake Forest University, 2010), 32, 49, 73-74, 86-87, 125 and 130.

⁵ See February 19, 1971, September 15, 1972 and March 23, 1973 issues of the *Old Gold and Black*.

⁶ Mark Cave, “Examine Racial Attitudes,” *Old Gold and Black*, January 16, 1987. A letter in the same issue apologized for the racial epithet targeting African Americans in a men’s restroom. See Peter Shankland, “Graffiti Offends All,” *Old Gold and Black*, January 16, 1987.

⁷ Eric Williams, “Committee Examines American Studies Minor,” *Old Gold and Black*, February 8, 1991.

⁸ “American Ethnic Studies (Interdisciplinary Minor),” 1996, Box 6, American Ethnic Studies (undated), Vertical Files Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Z. Smith Reynolds Library, Wake Forest University.

- How would a new program exist in relation to other programs and centers?
- What would be an appropriate leadership model (e.g., director, advisory committee, etc.)?

On May 22, 2020, Corey D. B. Walker, recently hired as the Wake Forest Professor of the Humanities and inaugural chair of African American Studies, and Derek Hicks, Associate Professor of Religion and Culture in the School of Divinity and inaugural director of the Center for Research, Engagement, and Collaboration in African American Life, convened a distinguished group of scholars to discuss African American Studies and the Center for Research, Engagement, and Collaboration in African American Life at Wake Forest University.

The group included Greg Carr (Howard University), Eddie S. Glaude, Jr. (Princeton University), Claudrena N. Harold (University of Virginia), John L. Jackson, Jr. (University of Pennsylvania), Sylvester Johnson (Virginia Tech), Mark Gabriel Little (University of North Carolina Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise), Keisha-Khan Y. Perry (Brown University), Josef Sorett (Columbia University), and Dana Williams (Howard University). The conversation engaged a number of strategic issues including:

- What are key questions/issues that must be considered as we launch a new center and academic program?
- What are the critical institutional requirements for creating a dynamic center and leading academic program at Wake Forest University?
- How might we structure research, teaching, and programming in a signature and sustainable manner?
- What should the new center and academic program offer students and the larger Wake Forest University community?
- How might we structure and plan our work within a dynamic and changing fiscal environment of the University?

Despite a brief interruption of faculty conversations in the spring of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, faculty have continued to discuss and plan African American Studies at Wake Forest University.

African American Studies at Wake Forest University

Formally institutionalized in the American academy in the last half of the twentieth century, African American Studies is a vibrant and dynamic discipline that creates new knowledge about the world and human existence through the critical and comprehensive study of the peoples, cultures, and ideas of Africa and the African diaspora. African American Studies at Wake Forest University distinguishes its approach to the discipline by its unique focus on the cultures, knowledges, and expressions of African descended people in the southern United States and their global reverberations. In all, African American Studies at Wake Forest University is a broad theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical project that retrieves, reconstructs, and reexamines the diversity of Africana thought, culture, and expression thereby creating and advancing knowledge about human experience and existence.

African American Studies at Wake Forest University is a signature academic program that leverages the unique intellectual and institutional strengths of the University in advancing

teaching and research in the discipline. The program leverages the University's distinctive commitment "to the pursuit of excellence in the liberal arts" while educating a new generation of scholars and citizens committed to serving humanity. Leveraging a broad humanistic framework consistent with the original aims and goals of African American Studies, the program offers novel space for students and scholars to develop new knowledge in their attempt "to ask and answer the fundamental questions of human existence" by creating a more adequate formulation of the study of human experience.⁹

African American Studies at Wake Forest University will attract undergraduate students with intellectual interests in the discipline, interdisciplinary scholarship, and a broad humanistic education that bridges classroom, campus, and community. African American Studies promises to attract a diverse group of students as majors and minors from across the College while complementing existing academic programs. The General Education Curriculum at Wake Forest University will be enhanced with the addition of African American Studies courses that may satisfy particular curricular requirements.

While African American Studies will be a new academic program at Wake Forest University, it is an established discipline with a significant profile in the academy and in American public life.¹⁰ Wake Forest University students will become part of a national and international intellectual community pursuing undergraduate degrees in the discipline. African American Studies at Wake Forest University is designed to build capacity over time in developing a signature program consistent with its mission and commensurate with the standing of the University. Similar to trends in other academic programs in the College, African American Studies should attract between 15-20 minors and majors by academic year 2025-2026 and between 25-30 minors and majors by academic year 2030-2031.¹¹ Curriculum development, course offerings, faculty support, and departmental collaboration support this developmental design for African American Studies.

In his 1973 lecture at the Wake Forest University, Columbia University political scientist Charles V. Hamilton offered this prescient remark, "Whites as well as black students have been damaged by educational parochialism [of] traditional liberal arts education. . . . If black studies means anything at all, then [it] should enthuse the entire community and not be an entity . . . left to flourish or fail."¹² Hamilton's statement captures an essential aspect of the scholarly and institutional ambition of African American Studies at Wake Forest University.

⁹ Greg Carr, "What Black Studies Is Not: Moving from Crisis to Liberation in Africana Intellectual Work," *Socialism and Democracy*, 25.1 (March 2011), 178-191.

¹⁰ See *Inclusive Scholarship: Developing Black Studies in the United States* (New York: Ford Foundation, 2007) available at https://www.fordfoundation.org/media/1748/2007-inclusive_scholarship.pdf.

¹¹ Based on a review of Undergraduate Degree Recipients by Double Major and Minor for academic years 2015-2016 through 2018-2019 in African Studies, American Ethnic Studies, Anthropology, Art History, English, History, Interdisciplinary Humanities, Philosophy, Politics and International Affairs, Religion, Sociology, Theatre, and Women's & Gender Studies available in Wake Forest University Office of Institutional Research *Fact Book*.

¹² "Colleges 'Blind' Students, Black Educator Charges," *Old Gold and Black*, March 23, 1973.

Mission of African American Studies at Wake Forest University

The mission of African American Studies at Wake Forest University is to cultivate, nurture, and support signature intellectual contributions to the discipline of African American Studies, critical interdisciplinary scholarship, and human knowledge and understanding through the critical and comprehensive study of the cultures, experiences, expressions, and ideas of African descended people in the United States and in the African diaspora.

Undergraduate Program in African American Studies

The undergraduate major in African American Studies is designed to provide students with a solid disciplinary understanding of African American Studies and critical interdisciplinary scholarship. The major features three distinctive areas of curricular emphasis: 1) *Arts, Aesthetics, and Expressive Culture* focuses on the forms, frames, theories, and traditions of African American and African diasporic artistic and cultural productions; 2) *Ethics, Politics, and Society* focuses on the normative, ideological, and institutional dimensions that form and inform experiences and expressions of individual and collective life of African Americans and of people of African descent in the diaspora; and 3) *History, Culture, and Theory* focuses on the intellectual, material and theoretical expressions and (self) representations of the experiences of people of African descent in the United States and in the diaspora across space and time. This curricular feature offers students the opportunity to develop distinct competence in a particular area of concentration in African American Studies.

The African American Studies Atelier is the capstone experience for African American Studies majors. The Atelier enables African American Studies majors to develop a significant capstone project. The Atelier brings together students, faculty, artists, writers, and activists to create new knowledge grounded in the critical and comprehensive study of African and African diasporic peoples, cultures, and ideas across space and time. The Atelier is also a space for faculty to rethink their conception and approach to their research and teaching in a unique space underwritten by an ethics of community, creativity, and collaboration.

Requirements for the Major in African American Studies

The undergraduate major requires the completion of a minimum of ten (10) courses including the following four required courses:

- AAS 100: An Introduction to African American Studies
- AAS 200: Theories and Methods in African American Studies
- An intermediate level AAS course or course offered in another department or program which substantially engages the history, culture, or ideas of slavery and race in the making of the modern world
- AAS 399: African American Studies Atelier

Students must complete three (3) advanced level courses within or among the following areas:

1. Arts, Aesthetics, and Expressive Culture
2. Ethics, Politics, and Society

3. History, Culture, and Theory

Students must also complete (3) elective courses two of which can be at the intermediate level and one at the advanced level. Course number designations vary by department. Please check with your African American Studies advisor to ensure a specific course meets the requirement.

Requirements for the Minor in African American Studies

The undergraduate minor in African American Studies is designed for students interested in understanding the broad dimensions of the discipline of African American Studies and critical interdisciplinary scholarship. The undergraduate minor requires six (6) courses of which two are required:

- AAS 100: An Introduction to African American Studies
- AAS 200: Theories and Methods in African American Studies

Students enrolled in the undergraduate minor must complete four (4) courses, two of which must be at the advanced level, within or among the following areas

1. Arts, Aesthetics, and Expressive Culture
2. Ethics, Politics, and Society
3. History, Culture, and Theory

Sample Curriculum Pathway for African American Studies major

First Year

Introduction to African American Studies

Course which substantially engages the history, culture, or ideas of slavery and race in the making of the modern world

Second Year

Theories and Methods in African American Studies

Elective course

Third Year

Three courses within or among area(s) of concentration

Elective course

Fourth Year

Elective course

African American Studies Atelier

Required African American Studies Courses

AAS 100 **Introduction to African American Studies. (3h)** Introduces the history and evolution of the discipline, key scholars, ideas, and themes, and central disciplinary questions and debates in African American Studies.

- AAS 200** **Theories and Methods in African American Studies. (3h)** Examines the major analytical, conceptual, methodological, and theoretical frameworks in African American Studies and interdisciplinary approaches that inform the discipline.
- AAS 399** **African American Studies Atelier. (3h)** Capstone seminar for African American Studies majors to develop original research projects engaging key theoretical, methodological, and conceptual issues in the discipline.

African American Studies Undergraduate Courses

I. Arts, Aesthetics, and Expressive Culture

- AAS 220** **African American Cultural Criticism. (3h)** Examines the cultural criticism of significant African American cultural critics and development and evolution of distinctive forms of African American cultural criticism.
- AAS 207** **Black Popular Culture. (3h)** Explores the various forms of Black popular culture and the cultural and intellectual politics that inform its reception and representation by scholars and the general public.
- AAS 370** **Special Topics in Arts, Aesthetics, and Expressive Cultures in African American Studies. (3h)** African American Studies topics of special interest. May be repeated for credit if topic varies.
- HMN 223 African and Caribbean Literature
- ENG Introduction to African American Literature
- ENG 301 Toni Morrison
- ENG 302 Black is Beautiful: African American Poetics and Aesthetics 1919-2019
- ENG 356 Caribbean Literature and Culture
- ENG 381 The Black Atlantic
- ENG 381 Studies in African American Literature
- ENG 381 21st Century African American Literature
- ENG 381 African American Literature and Commensurability
- ENG 387 African American Fiction
- ENG 387 Madness and African American Literature
- ENG 389 African American Poetry

REL 376 Race, Religion, and Film

THE 376 Multicultural American Drama: African American Dramatic Literature

II. Ethics, Politics, and Society

AAS 340 Ethics of Black Power. (3h) Examines the ethical dimension of Black Power and the cultural, ideological, and political movements influenced by theories and politics of Black Power.

AAS 310 Organic Leadership: Lessons from the Black Freedom Struggle. (3h) Examines the ideas, models, and philosophies of leadership of select artists, activists, and intellectuals from the modern black freedom movement.

AAS 330 Politics of Black Religion. (3h) Examines the complex intersection of politics and Black religion with particular consideration to how political ideas, theories, and movements are influenced by the knowledges, rituals, traditions, and practices of Black religion.

AAS 350 Politics of Black Liberation. (3h) Explores the histories, concepts, and ideas of Black political movements that make explicit claim to enacting liberatory politics.

AAS 380 Special Topics in Ethics, Politics, and Society in African American Studies. (3h) African American Studies topics of special interest. May be repeated for credit if topic varies.

ANT 335 Social Stratification in the Built Environment

SOC 364 Power, Politics, and Protest

SOC 384 Race, Immigration, and Criminalization

SOC 384 Social Justice in the Social Sciences

POL 213 Economic Inequality and American Politics

POL 223 African American Politics

POL 224 Racial and Ethnic Politics

POL 226 American Constitutional Law: Civil Rights and Liberties

POL Race and Crime

POL 278 Politics and Identity

- REL 246 Religion and Race
- REL 338 Religion, Ethics, and Politics
- REL 374 Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms
- REL 375 Race, Myth, and the American Imagination
- WGS 364 Women of Color, Feminisms, and the Politics of Resistance in the U.S.
- WGS 383 Race, Gender, and the Courts

III. History, Culture, and Theory

- AAS 210 African American Intellectual Traditions. (3h)** Explores significant figures and schools of thought in African American intellectual history.
- AAS 315 African American Social and Political Thought. (3h)** Examines significant figures, themes, and traditions in African American social and political thought.
- AAS 355 Africana Political Philosophy. (3h)** Critical examination of the political philosophy of significant Africana thinkers and traditions.
- AAS 110 Introduction to Africana Philosophy. (3h)** Introduces the history and development of Africana philosophy and explores significant issues, themes, and texts in the field.
- AAS 300 Black Feminist Theory. (3h)** Examines the history and evolution of Black Feminist theory with a focus on key questions, issues and thinkers that inform Black Feminist thought.
- AAS 205 Black Cultural Studies. (3h)** Interdisciplinary exploration of the conceptual, material, and theoretical dimensions of Black Cultural Studies and the key debates informing the politics and cultures of representation in African American and African diasporic cultural productions.
- AAS 387 Black Radical Tradition. (3h)** Examines the key concepts, texts, theories, and thinkers in the Black Radical Tradition. Also listed as **ENG 387**.
- AAS 322 Critical Theories of Race. (3h)** Explores conceptions of race informed by Critical Race Theory and other forms of critical thought.
- AAS 320 Philosophy and Race. (3h)** Examines how and in what ways race is interrogated by African American philosophers and philosophers of African descent with critical attention to issues of identity, ethics, and politics.

- AAS 324** **Race and the Modern World. (3h)** Interdisciplinary examination of the intersections of ideas, institutions, ideologies, and practices that have defined race and processes of racialization in the modern era.
- AAS 390** **Special Topics in History, Culture, and Theory in African American Studies. (3h)** African American Studies topics of special interest. May be repeated for credit if topic varies.
- AAS 391** **Themes in Africana Philosophy. (3h)** Select topics and themes in Africana philosophy.
- AAS 392** **Seminar in African American Studies. (3h)** Offered by members of the African American Studies faculty on a topic of their choice. May be repeated for credit if topic varies.
- AAS 396** **Independent Study in African American Studies (1-3h)** Independent research projects in African American Studies which extend study in a particular course or explores new areas of interest. A maximum of 3 hours may apply to the African American Studies major or minor. By prearrangement.
- AAS 397** **Directed Reading in African American Studies (1-3h)** Reading in an area of African American Studies not otherwise available. A maximum of 3 hours may apply to the African American Studies major or minor. By prearrangement.
- ANT 111 People and Cultures of the World
- ANT 325 Roots of Racism: Race and Ethnic Diversity in the U.S.
- ENG 387 Afrofuturism and Afropessimism
- ENG 387 The Black Radical Tradition
- ENG 387 Slavery, Freedom, and the Archive
- HMN 200 Introduction to the Humanities
- HST 105 Africa in World History
- HST 110 The Atlantic World since 1500
- HST 271 African American History to 1870
- HST 272 African American History since 1870
- HST 341 Africans in the Atlantic World, 1750-1815
- HST 375 Black Lives

HST 376	Civil Rights and Black Consciousness Movements
REL 107	Introduction to African Religions
REL 345	The African American Religious Experience
REL 348	Race, Memory, and Identity
REL 373	Special Topics in African American Religious Traditions
REL 393	Topics in Religions of Africa or African Diaspora
SOC 359	Race and Racism
WGS 322	Feminist, Womanist, Murjerista Theologies

IV. Expected/Potential AAS Courses

AAS	African American Art
AAS	Art and Criticism of Black Music
AAS	Arts and Social Change
AAS	Black Arts Movement
AAS	Black Music
AAS	Black Athletes
AAS	Black Film and Television
AAS	Black Visual Theory
AAS	Blackness and Media
AAS	Exhibiting Blackness
AAS	Film Blackness
AAS	Performing Blackness
AAS	Black Geographies
AAS	Global Black Feminisms
AAS	Poverty, Race, and Health in America

AAS Race and Environmental Justice

AAS Race and Public Policy

AAS Race, Policy, and the Law

AAS Race and the City

AAS Science, Race, and Technology Studies

AAS Prisons, Politics, and Punishment in America

AAS Black Feminist Theories of the Human

AAS Black Queer Theory

AAS Blackness, Freedom, and Imagination

AAS Memory, History, and the Archive

AAS Race and the Politics of Knowledge

African American Studies Faculty Planning Committee - 2020-2021

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Betina Cutaia Wilkinson, Associate Professor and Associate Chair, Department of Politics and International Affairs

William Mosley, Mellon Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Humanities Program

Appendix

- I. Statement from the Dean of the College
- II. Statement from the Dean of the Z. Smith Reynolds Library
- III. Statements from Collaborating Departments and Programs
 - Department of Anthropology
 - Department of English
 - Department of History
 - Department of Politics and International Affairs
 - Department of Sociology
 - Department for the Study of Religions
 - Department of Theatre and Dance
 - Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
 - Graduate Concentration in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
 - Interdisciplinary Humanities Program