

Proposal to the Senate Committee on Educational Policy

Title

Creation of an Undergraduate Major in the Sciences and Letters Curriculum in African American Studies, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Sponsor

The African American Studies & Research Program
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College Sponsor

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Brief Description

The African American Studies & Research Program proposes to offer an undergraduate major in African American Studies.

Justification

African American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign

The African American Studies & Research Program (AASRP) began in 1969 as the Academic Committee of the Committee on Afro-American Concerns. In 1974, it became the Afro-American Studies & Research Program and in 2004 acquired its current nomenclature. In 1979, AASRP established an Undergraduate Minor and followed by a Graduate Minor and Graduate Concentration in 2006.

Over the past five years AASRP has grown tremendously in terms of faculty, course offerings, and student enrollment. At this moment, AASRP is larger than most African American and ethnic studies departments or programs in the state, the CIC institutions and the nation. AASRP consist of 20 faculty members with budgeted appointments constituting 11.25 FTE (including three at 100 percent, two at 75 percent, 14 at 50 percent, and 1 at 25 percent), an Associate Director/Teaching Associate and an Afro-Americana Bibliographer who teach three courses a year between them. Over half of the faculty are either full ($n = 3$) or associate ($n = 7$) professors. Thus, African American Studies has ample faculty resources to offer a comprehensive undergraduate major. Additionally, AASRP has nearly 40 faculty affiliates (zero-time appointments) distributed across seven colleges and schools. AASRP also hosts two postdoctoral fellows each year through the Chancellor's Postdoctoral Program. Each Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellow teaches one course during their appointment in the Program.

With the addition of new faculty, AASRP has expanded its course offerings and student enrollment. In the last five years, AASRP has created 43 new courses to round out the curriculum. AASRP currently offers 56 primary and cross-listed courses and we have another 20 courses in various stages of development.. AASRP has creatively sought ways to increase student enrollment in our courses. These efforts have been successful resulting in a tripling of our student enrollment since the fall of 2000. In the fall of 2000 and the 2000-2001 academic year, AASRP taught 296 and 706 students. By the fall of 2004 and the 2004-2005 academic year student enrollment had increased to 1015 and 2084 and continued to rise, reaching 2529 for the 2005-06 academic year. Additionally, AASRP graduates approximately 13 of its nearly 50 minors each year and has graduated at least one student who has enrolled in the Individual Plan of Study option (IPS). There are currently 5 or 6 students actively pursuing an IPS degree in African American Studies.

The Major in African American Studies Proposal

The goal of the proposed major is to prepare critically informed students who possess analytical capabilities and substantive knowledge that will allow them to reach their potential. African American Studies majors will obtain a comprehensive knowledge of the Black experience in its varied dimensions, and will be extremely well informed of the centrality of race in the development of the United States and its continued significance for contemporary society.

The undergraduate major in African American Studies will provide students with both depth and breadth in the “transdiscipline” of African American Studies. As a transdiscipline, African American Studies is similar to traditional disciplines in that it has a distinctive scholarship and epistemology, and has built scholarly communities in the form of professional associations, academic scholarly journals, and intellectual networks. Although, African American Studies has its autonomous institutional structures and research itineraries, it is not an insular area of study, but rather intersects with several other disciplines and interdisciplinary programs to provide a platform for integrating diverse knowledge into a coherent area of research, teaching/learning, public policy and civic engagement.

The African American Studies major accentuates the centrality of the African American experience. It provides a historical, social, economic, and cultural study and understanding of African descended people. Further, it serves to ground student’s comparative and Diasporic studies and explorations. Theory and methodology are also integral elements of the curriculum. The proposed program’s interdisciplinary course of study is organized into 5 broad thematic areas: Comparative Racism, Racialized Communities and Identities; Cultural Production and Cultural Movements; Political Economy, Public Policy and Contemporary Issues; Global Interconnections: Black Transnationalisms and the African Diaspora; and Black Women and Gender Studies.

Comparative Racism, Racial Formation and Identities interrogates the historical development of the race concept, the historical processes and discursive strategies in the construction of U.S. racial formations and racial oppression, resistance to racial oppression, for African Americans and other racialized groups.

Cultural Production and Cultural Movements examines Black expressive culture, the institutional matrix of African American civil society and the wide array of political thought and social practices of the Black Freedom Movement from slavery to the present.

Political Economy, Public Policy and Contemporary Issues investigates the shifting place of black people within broad macro-level structures and their agency in a changing political economy.

Global Interconnections: Black Transnationalisms and the African Diaspora examines the historical and contemporary examination of the interconnections between the experiences and perspectives of African Americans and the growing transnational Black populations in the United States and the study of Africa and the African Diaspora.


Black Women and Gender Studies

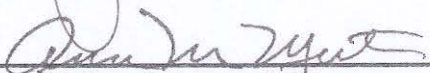
explores the experiences of black women and black men; sexuality in black communities; black feminisms and black masculinities utilizing black women and queer studies paradigms, theories, and methods. Overall, the program will be distinctive because it will situate the study of Black women, gender and sexualities centrally in the analysis of the African American experience, and do so from diverse disciplinary perspectives.

Budgetary and Staff Implications

1. Additional Staff and Dollars Needed: The major will not require additional staff or significant outlays of additional monies. Nor will the proposed program require a change in class size.
2. Internal reallocations (e.g., change in class size, teaching loads, student-faculty ratio, etc.): None
3. Effect on course enrollment in other departments and explanations of discussions with representatives of those departments: The coursework for this degree will be taught by our faculty as their contribution to their teaching within AASRP. The supporting coursework requirement will have minimal impact on other units, as students will have a wide array of courses in many departments from which to choose their 12 hours.
4. Impact on library, computer use, laboratory use, equipment, etc.: None, we have one of the strongest collections of African American materials, books, scholarly journals, microfilm and on-line collections in the country.

GUIDELINES FOR UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION:


African American Studies and Research Program
Date Sept 10, 2007


College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Date 10/5/07

Office of the Provost
Date

PROPOSED EFFECTIVE DATE: Fall 2008

Statement for the Program of Study:

African American Studies

African American Studies and Research Program
 Acting Director of Program: Jennifer F. Hamer
 Program Office: 1201 West Nevada, Urbana, 333-7781

African American Studies
www.aasrp.uiuc.edu

Major in Sciences and Letters Curriculum

E-mail: jhamer@uiuc.edu

Degree title: Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences

Minimum required major and supporting course work equates to 48 hours.

General Education: The LAS General Education requirements are set up so students automatically complete the Campus General Education requirements.

Minimum hours required for graduation: 120 hours

Departmental distinction:

To graduate with distinction, students must complete the following:

1. 3.3 overall G.P.A
2. 3.6 program G.P.A
3. Complete AFRO: 495 Senior Thesis Seminar with a grade of 3.3 or better

Hours	Requirements
12	I. Core Course Requirements
	AFRO 100: Intro to African American St
	AFRO 220: Intro to Research Methods AfAm
	AFRO 490: Theory in African American St
	AFRO 495: Senior Thesis Seminar
6	II. Theory Requirement
	At least one theory and one methods course beyond the core. These courses must be selected from a list maintained at the AASRP office.
21	III. Thematic Areas
	Students must take at least one course each from the following five areas. At least 6 of the remaining hours must be taken from only one of any of the five areas. A list of courses is maintained in the AASRP advising office.
	A. Comparative Race, Racialized Communities and Identities
	B. Cultural Production and Cultural Movements
	C. Political Economy, Public Policy and Contemporary Issues

	D. Global Interconnections: Black Transnationalism and the African Diaspora
	E. Black Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies
9	IV. Cognate or Supporting Coursework Students must complete 9 hours of supporting coursework. Supporting coursework consists of a set of courses which are logically grouped, and which reflect or support a student's interests outside of the African American Studies major. Supporting coursework courses must be approved by the AASRP undergraduate advisor.
48	Total Required Hours

Twelve hours of 300- and 400-level African American Studies courses must be taken on this campus.

All foreign language requirements must be satisfied.

A Major Plan of Study Form must be completed and submitted to the LAS Student Affairs Office before the end of the fifth semester (60-75 hours). Please see your adviser.

Interdisciplinary Minor in African American Studies

No change.