

African American and African Studies: The Ohio State University



The Ohio State University Department of African American and African Studies Community Extension Center (established in 1972). The Ohio General Assembly in 1981 allocated state capital improvements funds to build the Community Extension Center, which is now a single story brick building of about 7,000 square feet, located in the near east side at southeast corner of Monroe Avenue and Mount Vernon Avenue in Columbus, Ohio.

The Department of African American and African Studies at The Ohio State University is a product of the 1960's Black freedom movement. Originally established as an academic division in October 1969 as Black Studies, it achieved formal department status in 1972 and today enjoys the reputation of being one of the strongest African American and African Studies programs in the nation. The primary mission of the department is to stimulate teaching and research about the Black experience in the United States, Africa and throughout the African Diaspora, and to encourage students and others to assess various strategies for advancing human progress through the examination of the global struggle for Black freedom.

The Department offers courses leading to the degrees of Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts (established in 1975), and a PhD (established in 2012) in African American and African Studies via a comprehensive multidisciplinary curriculum includes courses in literature, music, history, psychology, sociology, political science, community development and the most extensive offering of African languages (Swahili, Zulu, Twi, Somali and Yoruba) found at any university in the U.S. The purpose of the PhD program is to provide advanced training to graduate students who are able to demonstrate theoretical knowledge and the critical, analytical, argumentative, and writing skills necessary to design, conduct, elaborate, and disseminate research in the fields of African American, African, and African Diaspora studies.

The Department expects its PhD graduates to accomplish the following learning goals:

- Demonstrate theoretical knowledge and the critical, analytical, argumentative, and writing skills necessary to design, conduct, elaborate, and disseminate research in the fields of African American, African, and African Diaspora studies.
- Articulate, through a combination of empirical research, conceptual work, and theoretical reflection, the interconnections shaping the African and African-descended world in the commonality of its transnational processes and the specificity of its histories, cultures, identities, and experiences.
- Acquire skills to design and teach courses in African American, African, and African Diaspora studies through the development of interdisciplinary approaches and methodologies encompassing historical, social, political, cultural, literary, and philosophical perspectives.

- Demonstrate in-depth knowledge and mastery of substantive information relevant to one area of concentration (African American, African or Diaspora) as a way to understand its social connections and modes of intercultural communication in an interdependent black world and in global realities.

- Explore at a theoretical as well practical level, intersections between race, gender, class, nationality, ethnicity, and sexuality.

- Demonstrate understanding of the historical processes, forces, and dynamics shaping the present conditions and everyday lives of African peoples and peoples of African descent.

- Exhibit the ability to design research projects, formulate hypotheses, document and illustrate complex findings, for employment in fields connected to social and human development, community organizing and activism, media, and nongovernmental organizations, especially in relation to African American, African, and African-descended communities.
- Gain analytical, critical, oral, and writing skills relevant to public service and policy advice and advocacy, with a focus on the complex relations of social, political, and cultural factors impacting on African, African American and African-descended communities.

- Develop the skills to conduct original research in their field of specialization.

Students at the university have an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the Black experience from a range of perspectives, which include opportunities to participate in Study Abroad programs to South Africa, Tanzania and Ghana. Our courses are taught by more than 18 full-time faculty members who each hold the doctoral degree in their respective disciplines.

The African American and African Studies Department also has a Community Extension Center which serves as both our outreach arm into the large Black community in the city of Columbus as well as a significant resource for faculty and student research and community engagement.

For more than twenty years, the Department has also been the home of *Research in African Literature*, one of the most prestigious journals in African Studies. In 2012 the Department introduced a second journal, *Spectrum: a Journal on Black Men*. As a part of the Diversity and Identity Studies project at The Ohio State University, Department courses and faculty research reflect our longstanding interest in diversity and identity studies.

The mission of the Department is to produce and disseminate knowledge and understanding about African peoples globally. The Department offers students from all communities the opportunity to acquire the theories, practices, methodologies, critical thinking, and communication skills necessary to master an interdisciplinary approach to the historical, cultural, social, psychological, political and economic experiences of people of African descent throughout the world. To foster and maintain an intellectual environment in the community on and off campus, assisting students and community members in their development as lifelong learners and informed citizens, seeking to better the community, nation, and world.