

## **MSU's African American and African Studies (AAAS) The AAAS Graduate Studies Core Curriculum**

### ***THE BLACK STUDIES DISCIPLINE***

MSU's African American and African Studies (AAAS) PhD and MA Degree majors, as well as, its Undergraduate Specialization, are intellectually formulated upon the interdisciplinary Black Studies discipline. The Black Studies discipline is regarded as both an interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary, theoretical and methodological academic study, consisting of an existing- but nascent- body of systematically and critically-derived knowledge about the political, economic and socio-culturally lived experiences of African descendent and African peoples and communities around the world.

AAAS has drawn on the Black Studies discipline to derive its graduate studies core curriculum. The AAAS core curriculum serves to guide its students in advanced knowledge production in the critical examination of these peoples' human lived experiences trans-generationally, comparatively, globally and universally in the context of three discrete regions (US African-Americans, continental Africans, and peoples and communities in the Caribbean/Afro-Latin African Diaspora). We also examine the relationships among these peoples, communities, nations and regions in a way that underscores the global dynamics of the Black Studies discipline.

Our goal serves to foster undiscovered and alternative knowledge production about these peoples, nations, and regions in a way that facilitates graduate-faculty and students' intellectual contribution to the academic inclusiveness of a previously marginalized study of African descendent and African peoples. We hope to contribute to a process in which Black studies becomes understood as a component and integral academic study of the American and global academy.

Three important elements define our core curriculum graduate study of African American and African Studies at MSU: a) a discrete set of interconnected, required core seminar courses based in African-American studies, African studies and African Diaspora studies b) two required internship courses (domestic and international) and one required teaching mentoring/pedagogy professional development course, c) a required Africana language immersion program.

These core attributes of guide our graduate study participant learners to conduct dissertation research that navigates the emerging complexities of Black Studies disciplinary scholarship and intellectual inquiry in ways that ensure that this discipline itself faces continuous scrutiny, updating and revisions as dictated

by findings and breakthroughs of primary and secondary research, debates and dialogue<sup>1</sup>.

**REQUIRED CORE SEMINAR COURSES: INTRODUCTION TO  
AFRICAN AMERICAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES  
I, II & III**

AAAS currently requires its graduate students to take three graduate seminar courses in *Introduction to African American and African Studies I, II, and III* (AAAS 829, 830, 831). Each course serves as an important scholarly delivery of our disciplinary academic model to graduate students that introduces AAAS students to the core tenets of the Black Studies discipline. These courses include;

AAAS 829 examines these tenets from a Black Studies African continental perspective

AAAS 830 examines these tenets from a Black Studies African-American US perspective

AAAS 831 examines these tenets from a Black Studies African Diaspora perspective

Courses will tend to cover the following nine broad topical themes in their specificity; these themes will be applied in an in-depth way to the aforementioned regions. Participating teaching faculty will attempt to select a broad representation of these criteria using them as a flexible, rubric guide for the development of their core curriculum course.

As well, each year, the African American and African Studies Graduate Affairs Committee will furnish a reading list that include the most current and classic, prominent and relevant scholarly works that reflect the course readings and themes of the AAAS core curriculum below.

- a) **Courses are interdisciplinary and/or multi-disciplinary and/or issue-thematic** but are not taught exclusively from a single academic disciplinary perspective (history, political science, English, anthropology, sociology).
- b) **Courses explore Black Studies disciplinary orientation** (explore the contested terminology – African American Studies, African Studies, Africana Studies, Pan-African Studies, Afro-American Studies, Africology, Black Studies- but agree that discipline is a legitimate, institutionalized and worthwhile inquiry of scholarship and education )
- c) **Courses trace the historical development of Black Studies**; its history and evolution and debates from the US civil rights era – first black studies programs in 1968 San Francisco State and 1988 PhD at Temple, OR African Studies' offshoot or separate trajectory (see Dar' vs Ibadan schools) OR Black Diaspora Studies' offshoot or separate trajectory (Ruth Hamilton school/Atlanticist school)
- d) **Courses define/map out Black Studies approaches/ideologies** (expose students to many different approaches to Black Studies: from Black nationalists, to Afrocentric,

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<sup>1</sup> (sourced from Black Studies texts - Anderson, Karenga, Norment, Hare, and Okafor)

- African-centered, to radical democratic multicultural and integrationist perspectives) Be specific to relevant geographical scope (US African American, African continental pan-Africanism, non-US Diaspora)
- e) **Courses cover Black Studies' core conceptual variables** that inform a Black Studies disciplinary impetus (Race and Racism, Exclusion, Oppression and Violence, Identity crisis, Hybridity and the Black condition as well as Representation themes)
  - f) **Courses explore the main issues that define Black peoples history and socio-cultural relations of African heritage peoples** (slave trade, segregation, civil rights, colonialism, apartheid, post-colonialism, Diaspora migrations and displacement, gender difference/black feminisms)
  - g) **Courses underscore the cultural expression of African heritage peoples** (sports, musical arts-from blues, jazz to hip hop, include African soukous, WA highlife, Afro-pop and Latin-African music –rumba, meringue, salsa, film/documentary, African American and African literature, fine art)
  - h) **Courses underscore the main issues that constitute African heritage peoples contemporary public policy** - affirmative action, discriminatory constitutionalism and political representation, and political participation, underdevelopment, poverty and inequality (domestic and global)
  - i) **Courses profile African heritage peoples main agents and actors who have shaped the discipline and its subject histories** up to the present – including activists, artists, scholars and political elite (public figures – Blyden, Williams, DuBois, Carter G Woodson, Tubman, Truth, Garvey, King, X, Obama, Nkrumah, Lumumba, Mandela, & Winnie, Bob Marley, Jean-Bertrand Baptiste, Toussant Oveture- Schomburg and other Black Latin and contemporary Caribbean figures).

### ***REQUIRED INTERNSHIPS, EXTERNSHIPS AND PEDAGOGY/MENTORING COURSES***

Alternative knowledge production of the experiences of African Americans, Diaporas and continental Africans requires tools of analysis that focus on alternative ways of knowing that will generate broader and richer interpretations of these experiences. That is why through our two required internship courses (AAAS 893a and AAAS 893c), the AAAS core curriculum utilizes a methodology that embraces community and indigenous cultural knowledge attained through visual and oral accounts as well as experiential engagement in the development of African American, African and Afro-Caribbean and Latin communities. This way, in concert with the Black Studies disciplinary tradition of socio-political activism and engagement, AAAS's core curriculum prepares its graduates to impart knowledge while learning. It prepares graduate students to effect social reform, social improvement and economic development for disadvantaged African American, African and Caribbean and Afro-Latin communities (AAAS 832).

AAAS 893a Internship in African American and African Studies \* (must be performed in an African American community). Student is expected to submit a research paper and/or make a research presentation to AAAS before a grade can be submitted.

AAAS 893c Internship in African American and African Studies\* (must be performed in a Black community outside of the United States). Student is expected to submit a research paper or make a research presentation to AAAS before a grade can be submitted.

AAAS 832 Multi-Cultural Pedagogy and Methods Seminar in African American and African Studies (Methods, leadership and mentoring for graduate students of undergraduate students of color)

### ***REQUIRED AFRICANA LANGUAGES***

Black Studies is a global inquiry given the attention to peoples of African descent who have shaped the national histories of countries all over the world – significantly in Africa, the United States and the broader North American continent, including the Caribbean. Most of these peoples are descendents of the continent of Africa. Learning about the languages and cultures of Africans and African heritage communities constitutes an important part of the AAAS core curriculum.

That is why our AAAS graduate students are required to select a language used in Africa, the U.S. or elsewhere in the African Diaspora, other than the Language of Wider Communication of the United States and England. This may include, but is not limited to, the following; Igbo, Hausa, Shona, Twi, isiZulu, KiSwahili, Yoruba Caribbean Creoles, African- American Languages, Gullah, and West African Pidgin English. Languages spoken in Africa and the non-US African Diaspora such as Arabic, French, Spanish and Portuguese are encouraged when such languages have been creolized in Africana cultural communities and contexts.

Students must attain spoken and written second-year proficiency in their selected language. Second-year proficiency will be measured by completion of two years of university-level course work in the language or by passing oral and written examinations equivalent to those given at the end of the second-year course work.