African American Studies Courses

AAST201 Intro African Amer Study
S8
Hours 3

A basic outline of the diversity and complexity of the African-American experience in the United States: the early academic and social concerns of Black Studies advocates; the changes in the field’s objectives that arise from its connections to contemporary social movements for Black Power, women’s liberation and multiculturalism; and its major theoretical and critical debates.

Social and Behavioral Sciences

AAST202 African American Lives
Hours 3

A cultural approach to African American lives, exploring the role of the individual, biography, and narrative in African American history and culture.

AAST221 Contemporary In(que)ries
Hours 3

In her essay “Queer and Now,” Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick offers a rumination on the political, epistemological and pedagogical imports of “queer” at that moment. “That’s one of the things that ‘queer’ can refer to: the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically.” This 3 credit hour course, takes up Sedgwick’s suggestion of the possibilities of “queer” to consider the development of queer theory, queer studies, and queer politics. Although this course is organized thematically across a number of disciplines, it also resists a kind of stringent categorization or segmentation—mirroring the energy that has characterized this interdisciplinary field. While paying attention to the seemingly endless possibilities associated with queer theory, this course is profoundly committed to as Sedgwick argues to keep “same-sex sexual expression at “the terms definitional center,” as not to “dematerialize any possibility of queerness itself.”

AAST222 LGBTQ Histories
Hours 3

During the past decade, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) Americans have achieved various forms of empowerment and visibility in the nation’s political, legal, social, and cultural arenas. However, LGBTQ persons continue to face various barriers to full equality and well-being including employment discrimination, high rates of homelessness among teens, violence, and inadequate access to healthcare. This 3 credit hour course places will focus on the events emergence of the last decade into a longer history of LGBTQQ communities, visibility and politics that begins LGBTQQ community in the late nineteenth century and ends in the early twenty-first century. American Culture. During the semester, we will explore the historical development of LGBTQ identities, communities, politics, and cultural production. Together, we will analyze an array of materials including scholarly texts, oral histories, newspapers, films, photographs, art and political ephemera.

AAST225 Black Women’s Experiences in the South
Hours 3

Southern/Black/Woman. This demographic descriptor encompasses notable figures - Ida B. Wells, Bessie Smith, Condoleezza Rice, Beyoncé – and millions whose names and individual stories are often marginal to American memory and public policy. This course examines various aspects of Southern Black Women’s lives and labors, pain and pleasures, adventures and adversities from the nineteenth century to the present day. Students will analyze an array of materials including: memoirs/autobiographies, oral histories, secondary scholarship, census data, paintings, photographs, film, television and music. Using in-class activities, discussion and writing assignments, this course addresses one central question: What can the academic study of Black Women’s experiences in the South reveal about gender, race, class, and sexuality in the United States (past and present)?

AAST249 African American Literature
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Hours 3

Survey of African American literature from its earliest expressions to the present. In order to identify the aesthetics of the African American literary tradition, the course material includes spirituals, slave narratives, poetry, drama, autobiography, fiction, and nonfiction.

Prerequisite(s): (Undergraduate level EN 101 with minimum Grade of C-) OR (Undergraduate level EN 102 with minimum Grade of C-) OR (Undergraduate level EN 103 with minimum Grade of C-) OR (Undergraduate level EN 104 with minimum Grade of C-) OR (Undergraduate level EN 120 with minimum Grade of C- and Undergraduate level EN 121 with minimum Grade of C)

Humanities, Literature

AAST302 The Black Church
Hours 3

A survey of mainstream Christian expressions of black spirituality as well as other forms of sacred collective consciousness. Study of local churches and theology is encouraged.

AAST303 Education Of Southern Blacks
Hours 3

A study of the “miseducation” of Africans in America. The course explores education for blacks from West Africa at the middle of the second millennium and early American society to the emergence of the separate school system of the 19th and 20th centuries.

AAST304 Civil War Still Lives: Race, Memory, and the Politics of Reunion
Hours 3

For over 150 years, the Civil War occupies a prominent place in our national memory and has served to both unite and divide Americans. This course will explore the various ways in which Americans have chosen to remember their civil war through reunions, monuments and memorials, histories, literature, film, museums as well as other forms of popular culture. We will examine how memory of the war changed over time as well as the political implications for Civil War memory, the nation, and identity in understanding both historical and contemporary debates.

Prerequisite(s): None
AAST319 19th Century Black History
Hours 3
Role of black Americans in American life from the 17th century to the
time of the 20th century, with emphasis on the institutions and
events of the 1800s.

AAST333 Black Family Studies
Hours 3
The field of Black Family Studies is an area that has received very little
attention in the last decade. This course will use historical literature to
address issues that have impacted Black families in America. Throughout
this course, we investigate the various reasons why the majority of
Black families are not the traditional units that were prevalent before the
turn of the 20th century. A broad perspective will be taken to provide a
balanced understanding of gender and the challenges men and women
face from patriarchy, racism, mass incarceration, poverty, and economic
exploitation. Students will be responsible for reading the assigned text
and actively engage in class discussion.

AAST336 Concepts of Race and Racism
Hours 3
This course offers a critical introduction to the conditions of possibility
for modern racial thinking, with particular emphasis on racial slavery and
anti-blackness. We will begin with the working assumption that slavery is
at the root of the problem of race and racism. In order to excavate this
assumption, we will survey debates on 1) the origin and history of race
and racism (from the Ancients to the early moderns); 2) the deployment
of categories in contested proximity to race (from class to gender); and
3) the development of different conceptual paradigms (from double
consciousness to political ontology) to parse the relationship between
race and the world. Instead of resolving these debates, our problem-
based approach will emphasize that texts are intellectual and political
acts whose scope and framing bear on present problematics. In doing so,
we will learn to mobilize our readings as theoretical and historical tools in
interpreting the contemporary and interrogating our responsibility toward
the themes of the class.

AAST350 Topics African American Lit
Hours 3
A cross-genre survey of African American literature, historical events,
and critical movements. Authors may include Frederick Douglass, Harriet
Jacobs, Richard Wright, Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larson, Langston
Hughes, and Toni Morrison.

AAST352 Social Inequality
Hours 3
Analysis of inequities of wealth, power, and prestige; major theories of
racial and cultural minorities; behavioral correlates of stratification; social
mobility.

AAST395 Special Topics
Hours 3
An examination of selected African American topics. May be repeated for
a maximum of 18 hours.

AAST401 Black Intellectual Thought
Hours 3
An upper level seminar designed to provide students with an in-depth
study of major intellectual debates and movements that have shaped
the politics, history and identities of the people of African descent in
the United States and the African diaspora. The course will combine
methodologies and concepts from multiple disciplines including, history,
political theory, literature, women's studies, sociology, psychology and
philosophy.
Prerequisite(s): AAST 201 and AMS 201

AAST402 Special Topics
Hours 3-9
An examination of selected African American topics. May be repeated for
a maximum of 9 hours.

AAST413 Communication & Diversity
W
Hours 3
Study and analysis of issues of diversity as they relate to groups in
society and in communication fields. Emphasis is on the media's
treatment of various groups in society. Writing proficiency within this
discipline is required for a passing grade in this course.

Writing

AAST415 African American Rhetoric
W
Hours 3
A historical-critical investigation of African American public discourse
from the Revolutionary era to the present, exploring rhetorical strategies
for social change and building community. Writing proficiency within this
discipline is required for a passing grade in this course.

Writing

AAST434 Race, Ethnicity and Health Disparities
Hours 3
This course is designed to provide the student with an overview of race
and ethnicity as it relates to health as well as major issues facing the
overall health status of our society. This class will provide examples
for the application of minority health basic competencies in the field
of community health and medical sociology. Topics to be covered
include: mental health and individual behavior access to health care,
socioeconomic status and racial differences, racial/ethnic group specific
health issues. The health care system covers the physician-patient
relationship and increasing commercialization in the health care system.

AAST435 Black Feminism
Hours 3
This upper level undergraduate and graduate course exposes students to
the key figures, texts and concepts that constitute black feminist thought.
Prerequisite(s): AAST 201 or WS 200

AAST488 Adv Study African American Lit
Hours 3
A special topics course that focuses on issues in African American
literature.
Courses for Gender and Race Studies

AAST490 AAST Independent Study
Hours 1-6
Independent study on any subject pertaining to African-American studies, under the supervision of a professor in the chosen field and/or Director of the program.

AAST495 Special Topics
Hours 3
An examination of selected African American topics. May be repeated for a maximum of 18 hours.

Women’s Studies Courses

WS200 Intro To Women Studies

Hours 3
An interdisciplinary course examining the roles of women in patriarchal society, with emphasis on how factors such as race, class, gender, and sexuality contribute to the oppression of women and ways they can be challenged through feminist critical practices.

Humanities

WS205 Women’s Autobiographies

Hours 3
Through an examination of women’s autobiographical writings, the roles women have assumed in different cultures and periods are considered. Analytical techniques from the study of art, literature and psychology are used to discover issues inherent in women’s experiences.

WS220 Mothers And Daughters

Hours 3
Investigation of the institution of motherhood, the forces shaping it, and the significance of mother-daughter relationships.

WS310 Special Topics

Hours 3
Changing topics: for example, women and work, women in the world, social inequality.

WS329 Social Movements through Social Media

Hours 3
This course explores contemporary U.S social movements around gender and racial justice through the lens of social media activism. The multi-faceted online forums that activists have at their disposal today marks a significant break with the past and yet, “using” the media has long been a central tactic for many U.S. justice movements of the late 20th century. Students will be guided through data collection exercises and discursive analysis of the information gathered in order to interrogate the knowledge produced by select social movements through their use of social media overtime. Employing theoretical, historical, and ethnographic arguments at the center of feminist and anti-racist struggles, students will explore the opportunities and constraints of relying on social media and its particular import for what the academy refers to as a “public intellectualism”.

WS340 Women And Law

Hours 3
This seminar’s major focus is the impact of law on the status and lives of women.

WS342 Women in the South

W

Hours 3
Examination of the cultural concepts, myths, and experiences of black and white Southern women from a variety of economic and social backgrounds. Special attention is given to the interaction of race, class, and gender in Southern women’s lives. Texts include historical studies, autobiographies, biographies, oral histories and novels written by and about women in the 19th and 20th-century South. Writing proficiency within this discipline is required for a passing grade in this course.

Writing

WS352 Social Inequality

Hours 3
Analysis of inequities of wealth, power, and prestige; major theories of racial and cultural minorities; behavioral correlates of stratification; social mobility.

WS410 Essential Readings & Writings in Women's Studies

W

Hours 3
This course explores texts and themes central to the interdisciplinary field of Women’s and Gender Studies. Course texts may include theoretical, expository, autobiographical, and fictional writings from early feminism as well as contemporary selections. Writing proficiency is required for a passing grade in this course.

Writing

WS420 Women On Screen

Hours 3
This course wrestles with concerns and key debates that surround the place of women in film and television and the questions that gender studies raises about representation, consumption, authorship, and spectatorship. To enter these debates, we will examine the role of women both in front of and behind the camera predominantly through U.S. media history, although notable developments in global cinema (particularly in terms of female directing) will be addressed. While film history and criticism will be the background for course discussions, the main objective is to consider more broadly how women have acted as consumers and viewers of popular media including television, how they have been portrayed in mainstream U.S. culture, and how they have created their own representations of gendered experience. Particular attention will be paid to how other identities such as those based in race, class, sexuality, and age have intersected with gender to inform both consumers and creators of visual media.
WS425 Monsters in Popular Culture  
Hours 3

This interdisciplinary seminar will critically engage with the concept of the monstrous "Other" from the perspectives of gender and race studies. Examining a variety of texts—from films, television, and works of literature to police reports, psychology texts, and medieval manuscripts—this course will explore how the monster has been constructed historically and culturally as a defining opposition, the Other against which the dominant or privileged defines itself. What lies outside of, what must be expelled from, what needs to be repressed in dominant culture is figured in or inconveniently rises up as the "monster." He/she both haunts and polices the boundaries of normative sexuality, the gender binary, and racial privilege. In this course, we will read critical, historical, and theoretical material as a lens through which to critique primary texts, or what one might call our monstrous examples (from American Horror Story to Edgar Allen Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher"). As a seminar, this highly interactive course enables students to critically engage with content in responsible ways and is designed to explore interdisciplinary approaches to a particular issue, theme, or problem. Within this format, students can expect a reading- and discussion-intensive course with opportunities for self-directed inquiry as well as collaborative work.

Writing

WS430 Contemporary Issues: Feminist Theory  
W

Hours 3

Through the study of key feminist political and theoretical texts on an issue central to contemporary feminism, students in this seminar will develop advanced undergraduate research skills and gain a substantive foundation for further study, including graduate work in this area. Writing proficiency is required for completing this course.

Prerequisite(s): WS 200 or permission from the instructor.

Writing

WS435 Black Feminism  

Hours 3

This upper level undergraduate and graduate course exposes students to the key figures, texts and concepts that constitute black feminist thought.

Prerequisite(s): AAST 201 or WS 200

WS440 Seminar in Women's Studies  
W

Hours 3-9

Courses under this rubric are designed to investigate a particular subject supplemental to regular course offerings. Students in this senior seminar will develop advanced undergraduate research skills and gain a substantial foundation for further study, including graduate work in this area. Writing proficiency is required for a passing grade in this course.

Prerequisite(s): WS 200 or permission of the instructor.

Writing

WS442 Writings in Women's Studies  

Hours 3

This course will provide students with a writing course in topics important to contemporary feminist theory. Among the topics will be a study of classical texts, such as Antigone, for gender politics, the development of student training in areas of feminist analysis from within the fields of natural science, political science, English, anthropology, rhetoric, art, economics, and American Studies. Demonstrated writing proficiency is a requirement for successful completion of the course. Students will complete at a minimum 5 short papers of from 1-3 pages each, essays derived from course readings and topical assignments, as well as a longer paper of from 7-10 pages. Instructor assessment of student writing and constant feedback is an important part of the course, and students will be asked to develop their own writing through in class assignments as well. Students will read a considerable amount of material in feminist analysis, comment upon this, and engage in classroom discussions on a regular basis.

Prerequisite(s): None

WS450 Independent Study in Women's Studies  

Hours 1-6

Independent study on any subject pertaining to Women's and Gender Studies conducted under the supervision of a professor in the chosen field.

Prerequisite(s): Permission of the supervisor and arrangement in advance of the semester in which enrollment is planned.

WS452 Contemporary Women's Studies  

Hours 3

What is the “essence” of Women’s Studies? Is it feminist? What does it mean for a text to be identified as "essential" to the field of Women's and Gender Studies, an interdisciplinary field? This course considers these and other questions as it locates key texts and themes that are, among many, “essential” to the field of Women's and Gender Studies, as well as central to feminist scholarship across disciplines and to feminist praxis. Course readings include “classic,” visionary texts, by authors such as Stephanie Coontz and Barbara Ehrenreich; new and groundbreaking writings by authors such as Jennifer Baumgardner and Angela Davis, as well as literary texts by Margaret Atwood and Octavia Butler. Students will read and reflect on assigned readings, discuss them, write regular responses to them, and prepare three formal essays on the texts and issues central to this course.

Writing

WS470 Gender, Race, and Class  

Hours 3

Emphasis is placed on theories and research on the intersectionality of gender, race, and class formations in various historical and geographical contexts. Students explore the interactions between forces of discrimination and domination and their manifestations in different sites, as well as the methods by which to defuse and work toward their elimination.

Prerequisite(s): WS 200 or permission of the instructor.