

AFRICAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES, B.A.

Seven Penn State campuses are scheduled for closure after Spring 2027: DuBois, Fayette, New Kensington, Mont Alto, Shenango, Wilkes-Barre, and York. New students are not being admitted at these campuses.

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: University Park

PROGRAM CURRENTLY ON HOLD; NOT ACCEPTING NEW STUDENTS

Begin Date of Enrollment Hold: May 30, 2012

Program Description

This interdisciplinary major is designed to give students an integrated and critical understanding of the experiences and contributions of peoples of African descent. Students are encouraged to do research and evaluate the relationship between the political, social, and economic developments in Africa and the African Diaspora. Two options are available within the major and are described here.

African American Studies Option

This option provides students with the opportunity to explore the experiences of African Americans using theories and methods originating in the field along with those adopted from the various disciplines. Students are also made aware of the potential to apply knowledge to discern better approaches for solving social, political, and economic problems. The curriculum also promotes greater understanding of the relationship between African American and other ethnic groups in the shaping of American society and culture.

Focus Areas

The African American Studies Option has three focus areas, which are described below.

1. **History Perspective:** While stressing the interdisciplinary nature of the field, this focus allows students to concentrate on the historical experience of the African Americans, including their political, social, and economic relations with other ethnic groups, as well as the shifting historical contexts in which they have contested and shaped the evolution of American society.
2. **Social Sciences and Community Development:** This focus area allows students to concentrate on contemporary political and economic experiences of African Americans as well as on public policy issues that pertain to the economic, political, and social engagement of African Americans in the search for equality in American society.
3. **Cultural and Gender Perspective:** This focus area allows students to concentrate on culture and gender in historical and contemporary terms.

African Studies Option

This option provides students with the opportunity to examine the geographical, cultural, historical, political, and economic aspects of Africa.

Focus Areas

This option has two focus areas as described below.

1. **Humanities Perspective:** This focus area enables students to concentrate on the history and culture of African societies and the evolution of Africa in world history.
2. **Social Science Perspective:** This focus area enables students to concentrate on political and economic developments, including state building and ethnic relations, development strategies, and Africa's position in the global system.

Law and Social Justice Option

This multi-disciplinary program would provide students with the opportunity to study the politics, culture, economics, and history of African Americans in our society and link this understanding with an in depth study of criminal justice and the legal system. Issues that students will focus on will be areas such as, Are African Americans discriminated against in criminal justice decision-making? What is the historic connection between race and punishment in the US legal system? How do issues of class, race and gender impact policy decisions about crime and punishment? What is the socioeconomic impact of high incarceration rates on the African American community? The program is designed to encourage students to think systematically about the relationship among public policy, the criminal justice system, and shifting notions of social justice that have characterized debates over the workings and goals of the prison system in American life and thought.