

OVERVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES

The Department of Afro-American Studies offers a B.A. with emphases in Culture (sub-fields in Literature, and The Arts), History, and Society (sub-fields in Black Women's Studies, and Intergroup Relations). We offer M.A. degrees with programs tailored to fit the specific needs of our students, and participate in "Bridge" programs which allow M.A. students to move directly into Ph.D. programs in the Departments of English and History. During the Fall semester of both the 2005 and 2006 years, 65 students had declared majors in Afro-American Studies. Over the past five years, we have averaged just less than 7 M.A. degrees per year.

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The B.A. in Afro-American Studies is designed to familiarize students with the historical, cultural and social experiences of African Americans in the United States, with particular attention to the way these experiences relate to the broader African diaspora. Students who complete the major will be in a position to engage issues related to race in a variety of career paths: education, public policy, social services, curatorial work, youth intervention programs, journalism, etc. The M.A. program has similar goals, but places a stronger emphasis on preparation for careers involving research. A primary concern of the M.A. program is preparing students to move on to doctoral programs in the humanities and social sciences. Students enrolled in "bridge" programs with the Departments of English and History are prepared to move directly into Ph.D. programs without being required to do additional preparatory work.

EVALUATION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

There are two tiers of assessment procedures for students in Afro-American Studies.

Tier One

The first tier focuses on surveying majors in intermediate and advanced level courses. We will conduct these assessments during the Spring semester of each year. The assessment will consist of a series of questions which will be given to students at the time of the regular course evaluations. Responses will be confidential, but students will be asked to identify themselves as majors or non-majors. The first set of questions will be answered on a 1-5 scale.

1. How well have your courses in the Department of Afro-American Studies familiarized you with the basic facts concerning African American history?
2. How well have these courses prepared you to participate in public discussions of issues regarding race?
3. How well have these courses prepared you to meet the communications (writing and speaking) needs of your future career or educational goals?

A second section of the spring assessment instrument will allow students to provide narrative commentary on their experience in the Department of Afro-American Studies. Because the specific focus of students in the three areas of concentration is so different,

we will simply ask the students to assess the quality of their educational experience and to make suggestions for improving the program for future students.

Tier Two

The second tier will involve a comprehensive assessment of the overall educational experience of a randomly selected group of majors. The assessment will be carried out by a committee appointed by the Chair of the Department. During the fall semester, the committee will assemble a list of current majors and majors who have graduated during the past two years. The committee will select a group of these students at random. It will then do the following.

1. Compile a list of courses taken by each student in the major.
2. Collect and examine syllabi, exams and handout materials from each course.
3. Collect a sample of student work submitted in each class being offered during the period of assessment.

REPORTING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The assessment committee will present its report on its findings at the second faculty meeting of the fall semester of the year following the assessment. The committee will be asked to submit specific recommendations as needed. These recommendations will be approved or amended by the faculty. The Chair will then report these recommendations to the Dean, along with specific plans for implementing changes as needed.