

BLACK STUDIES

blackstudies.northwestern.edu

The Department of Black Studies offers courses that focus on populations, discourses, practices, movements, and contexts of African descent in the African diaspora (eg, the Americas, Africa, Europe, Asia).

Taking Black Studies courses provides excellent preparation for graduate work in the social sciences and the humanities, and also for careers in the professions across a variety of fields ranging from education, law, journalism, urban planning, healthcare, administration, business, social work, film/television, and politics.

Black Studies provides its students with the capacities to become leading citizens and responsive members of different communities; and to communicate to the world the importance of understanding Black experiences of economic inequalities and social injustices, cultural creativities, and political overcoming, at both national and international levels.

In short, Black Studies provides students with the historical and contemporary knowledge necessary to understand the diversities and futures of the world. For more information see the department website, and learning objectives in this catalog.

Program of Studies

- Black Studies Major (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/black-studies/black-studies-major/>)
- Black Studies Minor (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/black-studies/black-studies-minor/>)

Black Studies Learning Objectives

There are two objectives of an undergraduate education in Black Studies. The first is to develop an understanding of the colonial-racial development of the modern world, its history and contemporaneity, especially across Africa, the Americas, Europe, Asia and Oceania, by examining the enforced and voluntary, dispersed and diverse, identities, movements, formations, cultures and ideas of populations of African descent in and across different societies.

The second is to develop an understanding of Black Studies as an interdisciplinary approach, that spans the social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences, in conceptualizing and investigating the impact and meanings of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, culture, politics, nation, diaspora, philosophy and religion (etc.) in the experiences and societies of different Black populations. We can state these goals as follows:

Students in Black Studies will acquire breadth of **knowledge** through introductory courses and depth of **knowledge** through the flexible capacity to specialize in different disciplinary areas. Students completing a Black Studies major will have a strong understanding of:

- Black movements, identities, politics, arts and popular cultures
- Interrelationships of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation and religion in Black social life
- Histories and Geographies of the Black world
- Colonial-racial formations in the making of the modern world

Students in Black Studies will acquire **skills** in critical thinking, research, and written and oral communication. These skills developed from the

inter-discipline of Black Studies will be widely applicable in other fields of study. Upon completion of the Black Studies major/minor students will be able to:

- Critically evaluate information, positions, and arguments
- Access credible information using paper-based (primary, secondary, and tertiary), electronic, oral (oral histories, interviews), and material resources
- Plan, design, and execute an original piece of research using a variety of textual sources and/or research methodologies
- Formulate strong arguments supported by evidence
- Clearly communicate evaluation of information and research results in both oral and written forms.

Black Studies Courses

BLK_ST 101-7 College Seminar (1 Unit) Small, writing and discussion-oriented course exploring a specific topic or theme, and introducing skills necessary to thrive at Northwestern. Not eligible to be applied towards a WCAS major or minor except where specifically indicated.

BLK_ST 101-8 First-Year Writing Seminar (1 Unit) Small, writing and discussion-oriented course exploring a specific topic or theme, and focused on the fundamentals of effective, college-level written communication. Not eligible to be applied towards a WCAS major or minor except where specifically indicated.

BLK_ST 210-0 Introduction to African American Literature (1 Unit) Literature of Black people in the United States from slavery to freedom. Works of major writers and significant but unsung bards of the past. ENGLISH 266-0 and BLK_ST 210-0 are taught together; may receive credit for only 1 of these courses. Suitable for majors and non-majors. No prior knowledge of the field is expected. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area Literature and Arts Foundational Discipline U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

BLK_ST 211-0 Literatures of the Black World (1 Unit) Introductory survey of fiction, poetry, drama, folktales, and other literary forms of Africa and the African diaspora. Texts may span the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods and cover central themes, such as memory, trauma, spirituality, struggle, identity, freedom, and humor. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area Literature and Arts Foundational Discipline*

BLK_ST 212-1 Introduction to African-American History: Key concepts from 1700-1861 (1 Unit) African origins, the slave trade, origins of slavery and racism in the United States, life under slavery in the North and the South. BLK_ST and HISTORY 212-1 are taught together; may not receive credit for both courses. *Historical Studies Distro Area Historical Studies Foundational Discipline U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

BLK_ST 212-2 Introduction to African American History: Emancipation to Civil Rights Movement (1 Unit) Emancipation to the civil rights era. Reconstruction, rise of legal segregation, strategies of resistance, migration, and urbanization. BLK_ST 212-2 and HISTORY 212-2 are taught together; may not receive credit for both courses. *Historical Studies Distro Area Historical Studies Foundational Discipline U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

BLK_ST 213-0 History of the Black World (1 Unit) Introductory survey of the history of Africans and their descendants across the globe. African civilizations prior to European colonialism, encounters between Africa and Europe, movements of "Africans" to the Americas and elsewhere, and development of Black Introductory survey of the history of Africans and their descendants across the globe. African civilizations prior to European colonialism, encounters between Africa

and Europe, movements of "Africans" to the Americas and elsewhere, and development of Black communities in and outside Africa. *Global Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity Historical Studies Distro Area Historical Studies Foundational Discipline*

BLK_ST 214-0 Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies (1 Unit) Problems and experiences of racialized minorities: Blacks, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Latina/o peoples. Comparison of their relationships with each other and with the majority society. Historical Studies Distro Area Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area Social and Behavioral Science. *Historical Studies Distro Area Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area Social and Behavioral Science Foundational Discipline U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

BLK_ST 215-0 Introduction to Black Social & Political Life (1 Unit) Analysis of class, gender, sexuality, immigrant status, and ethnic origin in Black society and politics. Focus on demographic trends, lived experiences, and ideological debates. *Ethics Values Distro Area Historical Studies Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro* - See Rules (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area Social and Behavioral Science Foundational Discipline U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

BLK_ST 218-0 Asian/Black Historical Relations in the U.S. (1 Unit) Comparative historical analysis of relations of these groups in the United States, including racialized and sexualized discourses structuring interracial relations and social, political, and economic location. Slavery, immigration, model minority myth, cross-racial politics. BLK_ST 218-0 and ASIAN_AM 218-0 are taught together; may not receive credit for both courses. *Historical Studies Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro* - See Rules (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area Social and Behavioral Science Foundational Discipline*

BLK_ST 220-0 Civil Rights and Black Liberation (1 Unit) The Northern and Southern Civil Rights Movements and the rise of Black nationalism and feminism, 1945-72. *Ethics Values Distro Area Historical Studies Distro Area Historical Studies Foundational Discipline Interdisciplinary Distro* - See Rules (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) *U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

BLK_ST 225-0 African-American Culture (1 Unit) Survey of African American culture from slavery to the present. Relation of African American culture to African and Euro-American cultures, the Black Atlantic as a unit of analysis, representations of Blackness in the public imagination. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

BLK_ST 236-0 Introduction to Black Studies (1 Unit) Introduction to the discipline of Black Studies using key historical and theoretical texts. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area Literature and Arts Foundational Discipline Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area Social and Behavioral Science Foundational Discipline U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

BLK_ST 245-0 The Black Diaspora and Transnationality (1 Unit) Examination of events, movements, theories, and texts that have shaped development of the African diaspora. Topics include slavery, abolitionism, pan-Africanism, the culture-politics nexus, hip-hop, AIDS, and linkages among gender, sexuality, and diasporic sensibilities. *Historical Studies Distro Area*

BLK_ST 247-0 Black Life. Trans Life. (1 Unit) This course will introduce students to the parameters and textures of Black life, Trans life, and Black Trans life. Popular discourse has either depicted Black Trans people as glamorous superstars or always and already predisposed to death. This

course, then, seeks to usefully complicate these narratives and focus on Black and Trans *life*. *U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

BLK_ST 250-0 Race, Class and Gender (1 Unit) Introduction to scholarship and key theories that treat race, class, and gender as intersecting social constructs. Race, class, and gender in work, family and reproduction, education, poverty, sexuality, and consumer culture. How race, class, and gender inform identity, ideology, and politics to incite social change. *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area*

BLK_ST 251-0 Introduction to Critical Mixed Race Studies (1 Unit) Exploration of demographic trends in interracial and interethnic marriages to highlight the complexity of the American experience. Special attention to mixed-race experiences portrayed in film and novels. BLK_ST 251-0 and ASIAN_AM 251-0 are taught together; students may not receive credit for both courses. *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area Social and Behavioral Science Foundational Discipline U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

BLK_ST 259-0 Introduction to African-American Drama (1 Unit) Thematic and historical survey of African American drama. Sociopolitical context, the aesthetic reflected in the work, impact on African American and general theater audiences. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

BLK_ST 261-0 Queer Literatures in the African Diaspora (1 Unit) Advanced introduction to critical theories of race, gender, and sexuality in the African diaspora from the 19th century to today. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

BLK_ST 262-0 Introduction to Black Religions: The North American Experience (1 Unit) Introduces students to the variety of Black religions that developed during and after the Atlantic slave trade up to the present. Explores these traditions as continuities/changes of West African religious cosmologies. Examines the interplay between religion, politics, and the constructions of racial identities within various forms of Christianity, Islam, and other expressive cultures. RELIGION 262-0 and BLK_ST 262-0 are taught together; may not receive credit for both. *Historical Studies Distro Area Historical Studies Foundational Discipline U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

BLK_ST 275-0 Africans and African Americans: Cultural Entanglements (1 Unit) Students will explore how the afterlives of colonialism and slavery have shaped the contemporary relationships between Africans and African Americans. Students will explore how writers, musicians, performers, and scholars excavate the ongoing intimacies between the continent and the African diaspora, in a post-Civil Rights U.S. and in contemporary Africa. *Global Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity Literature Fine Arts Distro Area Literature and Arts Foundational Discipline*

BLK_ST 310-0 Contemporary Asian Black Relations (1 Unit) Divides between these groups, as well as areas of positive cross-cultural collaboration. Historical analysis of reparations, the 1992 Los Angeles riots, and affirmative action. Cross-racial exchange in youth expressions, popular culture, hip-hop. BLK_ST 310-0 and ASIAN_AM 310-0 are taught together; may not receive credit for both courses. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

BLK_ST 315-0 Religion in the Black Atlantic (1 Unit) Afro-Atlantic religions since the 1400s; traditions of Orisa devotion and monotheisms; religion and revolution in African slave religion; racialization and empire; theories of religion, materialities, and diaspora. *Ethics Values Distro Area Historical Studies Distro Area Historical Studies Foundational Discipline Interdisciplinary Distro* - See Rules (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area Literature and Arts Foundational Discipline*

BLK_ST 317-0 Black Political Thought (1 Unit) Black protest, Black radical politics and Black-led demonstrations are nothing new. How

should we understand the motivations and ideas involved in Black radical politics? This course seeks to introduce students to the historical and political underpinnings of issues and questions raised by what Cedric Robinson famously referred to as the "Black Radical Tradition." *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area Social and Behavioral Science Foundational Discipl U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

BLK_ST 320-0 Social Meaning of Race (1 Unit) Race as a social concept and recurrent cause of differentiation in multiracial societies. Impact of race on social, cultural, economic, and political institutions. Discussion of prejudice, racism, and discrimination. *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area Social and Behavioral Science Foundational Discipl U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

BLK_ST 325-0 Education for Black Liberation (1 Unit) This class considers what it means to conceptualize, articulate, and actualize a liberatory Black educational project within U.S. public schools structured by anti-Blackness. The course treats historical and contemporary manifestations of anti-Blackness in schools, as well as the ways Black students, educators, administrators, community and family members, and scholars have worked towards liberation. *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area Social and Behavioral Science Foundational Discipl U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

BLK_ST 327-0 Politics of Black Popular Culture (1 Unit) Examination of the debates within Black communities about the proper role and function of Black art and artists in relation to Black politics. *Interdisciplinary Distro* - See Rules (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area Social and Behavioral Science Foundational Discipl*

BLK_ST 330-0 Black Women in the 20th Century (1 Unit) Experiences and leadership of African American women in major events in recent history, including anti-lynching, women's suffrage, civil rights movements, and World War II. *Historical Studies Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro* - See Rules (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area*

BLK_ST 331-0 The African American Novel (1 Unit) Readings in classic Black American fiction. The author as creator and participant. Works of Wright, Ellison, Baldwin, and others. Prerequisite: sophomore standing. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

BLK_ST 334-0 Gender and Black Masculinity (1 Unit) Perceptions and constructions of Black masculinity within African American and "American" cultures in the United States; readings in gender and sexuality studies, feminist theory, African American studies, and cultural studies. *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area Social and Behavioral Science Foundational Discipl U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

BLK_ST 335-0 Race and Literature in 19th Century America (1 Unit) Examination of the evolution and persistence of the notion of "race" in 19th century America, with attention to the origins of the idea of race in the West. Focus on the multiracial character of 19th century America.

BLK_ST 339-0 Unsettling Whiteness (1 Unit) Making the historical, political, and cultural formation of whiteness in Western modernity visible and narratable for commentary and analysis. Particular reference to contemporary culture. *Historical Studies Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro* - See Rules (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area*

BLK_ST 342-0 Comparative Slavery (1 Unit) Traces slavery across historical epochs and geographic contexts, with an emphasis on Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States. *Ethics Values Distro Area Historical Studies Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro* - See Rules

(<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area*

BLK_ST 345-0 Afro-Latin America (1 Unit) Exploration of Afro-Latin communities, cultures, and identities throughout Latin America and the Hispanic diaspora after 1800. Emergence of race and nation in modern Latin America, migration, gender, Afro-Latin spiritual systems and religion, family, and politics. *Historical Studies Distro Area*

BLK_ST 350-0 Theorizing Blackness (1 Unit) Advanced introduction to critical theories of race and racialization. Investigation of Blackness as a category of critical analysis for analyzing Afro-diasporic formations. Consideration of how Blackness is shaped by gender, class, sexuality, and nationality. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area Literature and Arts Foundational Discipline U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

BLK_ST 355-0 Diaspora Studies (1 Unit) Interdisciplinary examination of the significance of diasporas, their histories, and common dynamics, illustrated with examples drawn from a wide range of cases. *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area*

BLK_ST 360-0 Major Authors (1 Unit) In-depth examination of a selected author's body of work. Choice of author varies. May be repeated for credit with change of author. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area Literature and Arts Foundational Discipline U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

BLK_ST 363-0 Racism in Western Modernity (1 Unit) Impact of racism in the formation of Western modernity. Critical conceptual and historical analyses of the social formation of "race" and the historical implications of racism in the contemporary West.

BLK_ST 365-0 Black Chicago (1 Unit) Surveys the social, cultural, and political history of African Americans in Chicago, including the Great Migration, the Black political machine, Black Chicago music, racial segregation, internal class stratification, and the role of Black churches. *Social Behavioral Sciences Distro Area Social and Behavioral Science Foundational Discipl U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

BLK_ST 375-0 Political Blackness Across the Americas (1 Unit) Development of critical approaches to African American studies from the perspectives of postcolonial analysis. In particular, examination of the meaning of the colonial in the formation of African American experiences and the significance of modernity, race, and Black politics in the historical contexts of the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

BLK_ST 378-0 Harlem Renaissance (1 Unit) African American political and social movements and cultural production in theater, music, visual arts, and literature from 1915 to 1930. Prerequisite: BLK_ST 210-0 or another African American literature course. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

BLK_ST 379-0 Black Women Writers (1 Unit) Intensive, multi-genre examination of the contribution of Black women to African American, women's, and American literature, with consideration of the factors and figures that have influenced the reception of Black women's writings across time. *Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

BLK_ST 380-0 Topics in African-American Studies (1 Unit) Advanced work on social, cultural, or historical topics. May be repeated for credit with different topic. Prerequisite: advanced student or senior standing.

BLK_ST 381-0 Topics in Transnational Black Studies (1 Unit) Examination of texts such as novels, poetry, film, drama, slave narratives, political manifestos, and historical texts in order to compare how people from across the African diaspora have approached issues of identity, culture, and community. Prerequisite: advanced student or senior standing.

BLK_ST 390-0 Research Seminar (1 Unit) Methods of researching the Black experience. Identification of research problems; location, selection,

and critique of relevant literature; data gathering and analysis; report writing. Topics vary. Prerequisite: advanced student or senior standing. .

BLK_ST 396-0 Internship in Black Studies (1 Unit) Analysis of social and cultural institutions through field study and participant observation. Entails a final submission overseen by a Northwestern faculty member. Prerequisite: advanced student or senior standing.

BLK_ST 399-0 Independent Study (1 Unit) Open to advanced students with consent of instructor. Prerequisite: advanced student or senior standing.