Africana Studies (MA)

In the spring of 1968, the Black Student Union occupied the Student Center for a two-day period and presented a list of demands to the University administration. These demands included an increase in the number of black faculty members and the establishment of an Africana Studies Program.  The lobbying of the black students for a program of studies devoted to the black American experience was intended not only to fill a gap in the curriculum (reflecting a history of institutionalized racism) but also to end their feeling of isolation on a campus which remained overwhelmingly white and unwelcoming.   In April of 1969, President Trabant instructed Provost John Shirley to appoint an Africana Studies Program Committee charged with “implementing an appropriate Africana Studies Program…leading eventually to a major in that area.”  In 1971, the University created the Black American Studies Program (now Africana Studies) in the College of Arts and Science.  The program would eventually offer students an 18-credit hour minor, but not the major that the students demanded and the University Committees recommended. The program was not given departmental status until the fall of 2006, and never had more than three core faculty members until 2014. In recent years, the Department of Africana Studies has secured 9 active faculty members whose scholarship and service affirms the College’s Strategic Plan’s stated values of excellence in teaching and research, diversity, and social responsibility.

The graduate program of the Department of Africana Studies provides students with critical exposure to the multidisciplinary study of people and cultures of African descent in the United States, Caribbean, Latin America, Africa and Europe. The Africana Studies M.A. Program, provides a balance of a foundation in Africana Studies, and multidisciplinary research methods in Africana Studies, with advanced study in the four pillars of the Department: Pan African consciousness, public humanities, gender and sexuality studies and visual and material culture. The graduate program also offers interested students the opportunity to continue in Africana Studies, History, Art History, English or other related fields at the advanced graduate level.

The Department of Africana Studies can offer a regionally and nationally competitive graduate program. There are fewer than twenty-five (25) master’s degree programs in Africana/ Black/ African American Studies in the United States, with only three of these programs in mid-Atlantic states. Best practices among these programs include both graduate certificate and BA/MA (4 + 1) options in addition to the MA. As the number of undergraduate majors increases, the Department often recommends study at other universities for our graduates. Graduate programming in Africana Studies will serve to increase the number of underrepresented minorities in the Graduate College, in alignment with the University’s Strategic Plan efforts. Students will be attracted to the graduate program in Africana Studies by (1) UD’s strong Africana Studies faculty; (2) the University’s existing resources in historical studies, gender and Black Women’s Studies, museum studies and material culture studies, the Paul R. Jones Collection and the Biden Institute; and (3) the opportunity for greater marketability with knowledge of the history and status of African heritage communities; and (4) a strong portfolio for entering doctoral programs at UD thus diversifying the professoriate – including the existing African American Public Humanities Initiative (AAPHI). We anticipate five students in each entering M.A. cohort, with a tenure-stream faculty member serving as an advisor and mentor.

Students completing the M.A. degree in Africana Studies, will be able to:

* + Discuss foundational theories of Africana Studies
  + Articulate multidisciplinary research methods in Africana Studies
  + Analyze historic and contemporary issues through a Pan African lens
  + Develop Africana Studies content for public scholarship, community engagement, collections-based research and/or social justice efforts
  + Apply gender and sexuality intersectional analysis to the study of black life and culture
  + Explore the study of black life through visual and material culture
  + Design an original research project that synthesizes knowledge and skills from Africana Studies to a concrete issue or context

Courses:

AFRA 600: Foundations in Africana Studies

AFRA 601: Research Methods in Africana Studies

AFRA 869: MA Thesis (Being built outside of curriculog)

AFRA 879: MA Project

AFRA 695: Thesis/ Project Seminar (0 credit)

AFRA 630: Expressive Cultures in the African Diaspora

AFRA 642: The Black Portrait

AFRA 628: Modern African American History

AFRA 695: Thesis Seminar

Courses outside: of AFRA:

HIST 640 and SOCI 661