

AFRICANA STUDIES, PHD

The past twenty years have witnessed two dominant but opposing approaches to the study of the interconnections between Africa and the African Diaspora. Both seek to provide alternatives to traditional models of Africana Studies. The Afrocentric model has tended to focus on historical Africa, particularly the great civilizations of the African past. It has given little attention to the Diaspora, except to those aspects of black culture that reflect a continuum or retention of elements of certain African (specifically West African) cultures. The second model may best be described as a Black Atlantic approach; it has given little attention to the African continent, but has focused on persons of African descent throughout the Western world. This approach is especially concerned with identity formation, hybridity, syncretism, and creolization. Our pedagogical focus neither romanticizes nor ignores historical and contemporary Africa. It seeks to break current conceptualizations of the African Diaspora that only consider West Africa, Europe, North America, the Caribbean, and Brazil. While these areas will continue to be important, we hope to expand an understanding of Diaspora that includes all of Spanish speaking Latin America, East Africa, Asia, and the South Pacific as well.

This program insists that African peoples, as they have moved into different geopolitical circumstances, have developed and maintained a plurality of political strategies which cut across (but are also influenced by) a variety of religious, national, and cultural boundaries. By working to complicate and particularize what we know as "African identity," we hope to re-imagine the ways that African and African descendant peoples have worked to establish and maintain a coherent set of cultural and symbolic practices.

Our approach is in conversation with disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, but differs from them in the conceptualization of an interdisciplinary methodology. In other words, while we encourage in-depth knowledge of and training in traditional disciplines, one of the major intellectual goals of the program is the development of an interdisciplinary method and vocabulary for the study of the interconnections between Africa and peoples of African descent around the globe.

For more information: <https://africana.sas.upenn.edu/department/graduate/phd-program> (<https://africana.sas.upenn.edu/department/graduate/phd-program/>)

View the University's Academic Rules for PhD Programs (<http://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/academic-rules-phd/>).

Curriculum

The total course units required for graduation is 14.

Three Track Approach

The three tracks of concentration in African Studies, African American Studies, or Diaspora Studies will allow students to select both a topical and an area studies sub-field. Hence, for example, a student who wishes to study public policy can do so while focusing attention on the experiences of African peoples in specific locations in the United States, South America, Africa, or the Caribbean. Prospective students must identify which track they will pursue during the first year of study; however, double track concentrations are welcomed and encouraged.

Code	Title	Course Units
Required Courses		
<i>Core Courses</i>		
AFRC 6400	Proseminar in Africana Studies (Fall)	1
AFRC 6400	Proseminar in Africana Studies (Spring)	1
AFRC 7080	Cultural and Literary Theory of Africa and the African Diaspora	1
AFRC 7060	Introduction to Africa and African Diaspora Thought	1
AFRC 7100	Political Economy and Social History of Africa and the African Diaspora	1
<i>Second Tier Courses</i>		
Select two course units in methodology from the following:		2
Ethnographic Methods		
Quantitative Methods		
Methods course specific to an existing graduate group		

Program Milestones

- Complete the Core Program
- Pass an examination in a language of library research by October of the second year (for students pursuing research in a language other than English)
- Complete 14 course units (includes five Core and two Second-Tier Courses)
- Complete two years introduction to an African language (for students who select the African Studies track)
- Complete a 30-book exam by the end of the second year (for PhD students only)
- Pass the Final Oral Examination, based on a draft proposal for doctoral research and written statements on four related fields of specialization (two major and two minor)
- Submit a Dissertation that is acceptable to both the graduate group and the Graduate Council of the Faculties

The degree and major requirements displayed are intended as a guide for students entering in the Fall of 2024 and later. Students should consult with their academic program regarding final certifications and requirements for graduation.