2017-2018 ANNUAL REPORT
DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES
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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

The Department of African American Studies crossed an important threshold in the 2017-2018 academic year. We graduated our first ten concentrators. One of our students, Nicholas Steidel was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and graduated from AAS with highest honors. In addition, he was one of two recipients of the Ruth J. Simmons Thesis prize in African American Studies. Another student, Imani Ford, graduated with high honors and was the recipient of the Simmons prize, and was awarded the Lucas Award in Visual Arts. Wilglory Tanjong, who graduated with honors, was awarded the senior thesis prize in African Studies. We also awarded a prize for the most distinguished Junior Paper to Rosed Serrano.

Eighteen graduating seniors completed a certificate in African American Studies. Our certificate students likewise distinguished themselves both inside the classroom and beyond. Jordan David Thomas is a recipient of the Rhodes Scholarship. Brandon McGhee, President of the Class of 2018, was the recipient of the W. Sanderson Detwiler 1903 Prize, and Myesha Jemison was awarded the Class of 1901 medal. Adetobi Moses was the recipient of the thesis prize in the Department of English.

Four Ph.D. students also completed graduate certificates in African American Studies.

The achievements of our students, we believe, is a testament to their drive and excellence, and to the commitment of our faculty to teaching. This endeavor is a collective one. As a result of our recent departmentalization, we have created a junior seminar and a senior thesis workshop. These provide opportunities for students to develop research, analytical and writing skills, and to receive regular feedback from peers as well as faculty. We continue to think hard about how to develop the department pedagogically.

Our faculty continued to produce excellent and impactful work. Wallace Best published *Langston’s Salvation: American Religion and the Bard of Harlem,* and in the fall of 2017, we hosted a well-attended conference connected to the book’s publication which brought scholars of Hughes together from across the country. Tera Hunter’s *Bound in Wedlock: Slave and Free Marriage in the 19th Century* has been widely acclaimed and was a finalist for the Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize. And in the fall of 2017, a conference was held in Professor Hunter’s honor at the University of Maryland to celebrate her transformative work in 19th century African American history. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor was the recipient of a 2018 Lambda Literary Award in non-fiction for *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective.*

As a department, we continue to put resources and energy into faculty development. This includes manuscript workshops for our junior faculty, support in the process of bringing writing to publication generally, and more informally in sharing our work with one another.
We continued to have robust and exciting events throughout the year through our Conversations, Graduate Affairs, Inequality and Science series and more. Our podcast, hosted by department chair Eddie S. Glaude Jr., provides a platform for people outside of the university to learn about our research and scholarship.

AAS faculty reach beyond the Department in numerous ways, but we also seek to invite scholars from other parts of the university to participate in African American Studies. To that end, in the spring 2018, we invited Brian Herrera, an associate professor of Theater Studies, to deliver the James Baldwin Lecture. Professor Herrera’s lecture was titled “The Dramatist’s Call to Action: Recognizing the Provocative Prescience of James Baldwin and María Irene Fornés.” It was a brilliant and probing look at two artists who, from quite different vantage points, made similarly challenging interventions to the ideas underlying theatrical production and the politics of representation.

This year, while serving as interim chair, I had the benefit of seeing in even greater detail the operation of the department. Our extraordinary and dedicated staff work as a unit with remarkable efficiency to sustain and further develop what is currently regarded as the most exciting Department of African American Studies in the nation.

Sincerely,

Imani Perry
Acting Chair

Photo by Sameer A. Khan
ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

African American Studies is American history. It is the true story of how America was built. It is the history of politics, marginalization, capitalism, art, appropriation, striving, and perseverance; it is the history that has not been made clean.

—Asanni York, Class of 2017

The Department of African American Studies at Princeton University provides an exciting and innovative model for teaching and research about African-descended people, with a central focus on their experiences in the United States. We embody this mission in a curriculum that reflects the complex interplay between the political, economic, and cultural forces that shape our understanding of the historic achievements and struggles of African-descended people in this country and around the world. The department offers a graduate certificate, an undergraduate certificate, and an undergraduate concentration. The course of study in the department is directed in three distinct subfields: African American Culture and Life, Race and Public Policy, and Global Race and Ethnicity.

HISTORY OF AAS DIRECTORS AND CHAIRS

Sheldon Hackney  

Cornel R. West  
1988–1994

Colin A. Palmer  
2001–2002 Acting

Wallace Best  
2012 – 2013 Acting

Advisory Council

Dennis Brownlee ’74
Donna Beverly Ford ’82
Brent Henry ’69
William B. King Jr. ’67
Claudia Mitchell-Kernan ’94
Wes Moore
Laurence Morse ’80
Phylicia Rashad
Ruth J. Simmons
Henry Von Kohorn ’66

Ruth J. Simmons  
1985–1988 Acting

Noliwe M. Rooks  
2000–2001 Acting

Eddie S. Glaude Jr.  
2009 – Present

Undergraduate Board of Advisors

Adetobi Moses ’18
Tamia Goodman ’19
Cierra Robson ’19
Nathan Poland ’20

Howard F. Taylor  
1970–1973

Nell I. Painter  
1990–1991 Acting

Valerie A. Smith  
2002–2005

Nell I. Painter  
1997–2000

Valerie A. Smith  
2006 – 2009

Eddie S. Glaude Jr.  
2005–2006 Acting

Arnold Rampersad  
1994–1997

Eddie S. Glaude Jr.  
2009 – Present

Nell I. Painter  
1990–1991 Acting

Valerie A. Smith  
2002–2005

Valerie A. Smith  
2006 – 2009

Eddie S. Glaude Jr.  
2005–2006 Acting

Valerie A. Smith  
2006 – 2009

Colin A. Palmer  
2001–2002 Acting

Imani Perry  
2017 – 2018 Acting

Department Staff

Allison Bland, Media Specialist
Jana Johnson, Department Assistant
Elio Lleo, Technical Specialist
April Peters, Department Manager
Dionne Worthy, Assistant to Chair and Events Coordinator
AAS FACULTY

AAS CORE FACULTY

Anna Arabindan-Kesson
Assistant Professor
Art & Archaeology, African American Studies

Wendy Laura Belcher
Associate Professor
Comparative Literature, African American Studies

Ruha Benjamin
Associate Professor
African American Studies

Wallace Best
Professor
Religion, African American Studies

Eddie S. Glaude Jr.
Chair
William S. Tod Professor of Religion and African American Studies

Reena Goldthree
Assistant Professor
African American Studies

Joshua Guild
Associate Professor
Director of Graduate Affairs
History, African American Studies

Tera Hunter
Professor
History, African American Studies

Naomi Murakawa
Associate Professor
Director of Undergraduate Studies
African American Studies

Kinohi Nishikawa
Assistant Professor
English, African American Studies

Chika Okeke-Agulu
Professor
Art & Archaeology, African American Studies

Imani Perry
Interim Chair
Hughes-Rogers Professor of African American Studies

Keaanga-Yamahtta Taylor
Assistant Professor
African American Studies

Autumn Womack
Assistant Professor
African American Studies, English

ASSOCIATED FACULTY

Bruno Carvalho
Spanish & Portuguese

Jacob Dlamini
History

Paul Frymer
Politics

Simon Gikandi
English

William Gleason
English

Dannelle Gutierrez Cordero
Princeton Writing Program

Desmond Jagmohan
Politics

J. Nicole Shelton
Psychology

Stacey Sinclair
Psychology, Public Affairs

Dara Strolovitch
Gender and Sexuality Studies

Keith Wailoo
History, Public Affairs

Leonard Wantchekon
Politics

Judith Weisenfeld
Religion

Monica Youn
Creative Writing

FELLOWS

Nijah Cunningham
Cotsen Postdoctoral Fellow
Council of the Humanities

Leslie Wingard
The College of Wooster
African American Studies
A HISTORY OF AAS
PRINCETON BEFORE AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

In early 20th century correspondence between a Princeton University administrator and W.E.B. Du Bois, the administrator wrote, “We have never had any colored students here, though there is nothing in the University statutes to prevent their admission. It is possible, however, in our proximity to the South and the large number of Southern students here, that Negro students would find Princeton less comfortable than some other institutions.” Unsurprisingly, African American students in the 1930’s and 1940’s who attempted to earn educations at Princeton University found varying levels of success.

In 1955, Professor Charles T. Davis joined the faculty of Princeton as an Assistant Professor of English, and this historic appointment of the first African American professor in the humanities was the beginning of a Princeton University that was able to be shaped by the intellectual contributions of African Americans.

President Robert Goheen’s presidency, spanning from 1956 to 1972, would usher in a greater amount of racial diversity among the student body, faculty, and staff, but it still would be years before the intellectual contributions of African American people were taught or studied at Princeton.

A conference in 1962, however, made progress in this regard. Organized by the Roger Williams Strauss Council on Human Relations, a “Race Relations Conference” welcomed professors and novelists to present papers on the historical, political, psychological, and cultural aspects of Black life in America since World War II. The 24 participants, including Ralph Ellison, Benjamin Quarles, Donald Matthews, and Thomas Pettigrew, discussed an agenda for the next two years of study of African American Culture and Life. Indeed, a faculty Center for Afro-American Studies existed for exactly one year, before disbanding in 1966.

The efforts that followed at Princeton looked more towards increasing participation of Black and African American people as students, staff, and faculty than with engaging with African American Studies.

In 1967, Princeton President Goheen welcomed a conference, “The Future of the Negro Undergraduate,” which attracted undergraduate students from across the country. Unfortunately, without African American intellectual thought at the core, the conference topics (such as “barriers for the ghetto dweller”) and proposals (“whereby collegiate tutors would go into the ghetto and befriend a child before teaching him the advantages of a cultural education”) mimicked political talking points of the day, instead of newer advancements in Black study.

Just six months later, undergraduate student Bob Durkee ’69 wrote a lengthy piece in The Daily Princetonian decrying how life for African American undergraduates at Princeton still left much to be desired, writing, “Princeton’s colors: ‘the Black refers to Tiger stripes—not to people.’”
THE PROGRAM IN AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

A faculty steering committee was established on the heels of a major conference on the “Future of the Negro Undergraduate”, and a subsequent report released at the end of July 1969. The Baumol Report (named after economist William Baumol, who was a member of the steering committee) recommended that the establishment of a program of research and teaching in Afro American culture be given the highest priority.

Princeton’s African American Studies Program was among dozens of Black studies programs established in United States colleges and universities in 1969. The committee hoped to “create a program that would be relevant to the lives and real-world issues of some 170 Black students on campus.”

“Though the program will be open to all students, one of its advantages will be to make this campus more hospitable for the Black students who are arriving in increasing numbers,” the committee’s report noted.

By the end of the 1970-71 academic year, the Program had a total of twenty-eight certificate students and six graduate certificate students. In 1973-1974, the program recruited Professor Howard Taylor from Syracuse University to bring new life to the five-year-old program, which had four directors in four years. Furthermore, with the stellar appointments of John Jemmott, Toni Morrison, Cornel West, and Nell Painter, the Program took on a new life. Professor Painter and Morrison were the first female African American faculty and among the first of any women to teach at Princeton.

Perhaps differences over time will strike you more forcefully than similitude. But for my part, I heard alumni/ae sounding two familiar themes across the decades: In the Program in African-American Studies, they found people who shared their intellectual interests; in the Program in African-American Studies, they found people who valued their thought. We in PAAS trust that as the years pass, you will remember us similarly.

—Professor Emerita Nell Painter, 2000
Sheldon Hackney to Nell Painter on The Formation of AAS
Memories of the 1960’s, Recorded in 2000

I remember walking across the campus one day in the late 1960’s, it may well have been in the spring of 1968, when I encountered President Goheen heading back toward Nassau Hall. He stopped me and said that he had been trying to reach me because he wanted to talk to me. I was startled to think that he knew who I was. Furthermore, I was young enough to think that when the principal sent for you that it wasn’t going to be good.

On the other hand, a summons from the President might mean anything because remarkable things were happening. The revolution at Princeton was already in full cry. The Patterson Committee was fashioning its report on the likely impact of coeducation. Stan Kelly and his committee were working on a report that would make the governance of Princeton much more consultative.

The system of selective eating clubs was under attack from within the student body. Various “impolite” voices disrupted the collegial calm from time to time about the war in Vietnam and racial justice at home. It was a great time to be alive and to be at Princeton.

As I walked with the President to his office in Nassau Hall, he explained that he thought the university had to respond in some way to the demands for more recognition in the curriculum of the experience of Black Americans. It was not clear to him what needed to be done, nor that the faculty would approve any significant steps that might be suggested, but he was committed to supporting a serious consideration of various alternatives. It was bound to be controversial, but he wondered if I would be willing to chair a committee on the subject.

That President Goheen was turning to a junior member of the History Department was a little ominous. It never occurred to me that I might have been picked to be point man of this platoon because I was expendable. Being young and foolish, I was flattered. There were, after all, benign explanations of my being put in charge of this project. I am a specialist in the history of the American South, which is inherently about Blacks and whites and their relationships to each other.

Revealingly, there was no one else on the Princeton faculty whose field was more centrally concerned with the Black experience. In the supercharged atmosphere of that time, my being white made it more difficult for me to be taken seriously by Black students and by Black activists and scholars outside the University. However, there was no choice on that account. Princeton had no Black faculty member, other than Sir Arthur Lewis, and this was not his thing.

So, the committee was appointed. We spent the summer gathering information about what other institutions were doing and constructing a reading list of available scholarship. One of the quiet objections to doing anything was that, however legitimate the subject, there simply wasn’t enough scholarship to support a serious intellectual effort. The mere heft of the committee’s bibliography refuted that argument. The major fault line within the committee and among the faculty in general distinguished between a department and an interdepartmental program. That question occupied a good bit of the committee’s vigorous discussions during the academic year 1968-69. I will not rehearse those arguments here. The committee eventually chose to recommend an interdepartmental program. I believed then, and continue to believe, that in the Princeton context, that was a crucial and wise decision.

Looking back on it now, I remain extremely proud of what we created in those heady and fluid days of the late 1960’s. I realize, however, that the primary source of my pride is not what African American Studies was at the outset, but what it has become and what it has accomplished in the intervening years. Those were not “the good old days;” they simply were days that made a brighter future possible.

—Professor Emeritus Sheldon Hackney
Students involved in the newly established Afro-American Studies Program (and one administrator, Roberto Barragan of the Office of Student Aid) Circa 1970

Class of 2018, the first to graduate with a concentration in African American Studies

THE CENTER FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

In 2005, President Shirley Tilghman convened an Ad Hoc Committee to reflect on the future of African American Studies at Princeton. The committee was chaired by Professor Kwame Anthony Appiah. Drawing on the recommendations of a 1987 Self-Study, Professor Nell Painter’s recommendations, and Professor Valerie Smith’s stewardship, the committee recommended in 2006 the formation of the Center for African American Studies with Professor Smith as founding director, and the Center moved from Dickinson Hall to its new home, Stanhope Hall. The Center established many signature offerings and events that helped achieve a high profile that continues to this day. A faculty-graduate seminar started, an Advisory Council was established, and many key lecture events like the Toni Morrison Lecture Series, the James Baldwin Lecture, and the Reflections on African American Studies Lecture began. A strong core faculty emerged in these years, and sole appointments in African American Studies began. In 2009, Eddie S. Glaude Jr. was appointed chair.

THE DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

In the summer of 2015, the University Board of Trustees voted to create a new department for African American Studies. With the status of department, undergraduate students gained the option to concentrate in African American Studies. The graduates of Class of 2018, a cohort of 10 students, are the first group of students to make this particular history. The department is new, but already stimulating new undergraduate programs have been introduced, including the options to Study Abroad during the academic year and summer months. The faculty in African American Studies continues to grow in both sole and joint appointments.
COURSE OF STUDY & SUBFIELDS

With a combination of courses and interdisciplinary research opportunities, students who earn a certificate or complete the African American Studies concentration are equipped with critical and analytical skills that prepare them for a range of professions. They are highly qualified to pursue graduate work in the field or its cognate disciplines, and are prepared to enter a society in which race continues to be salient.

Students in the field are expected to understand the basic themes and ideas that structure work in African American Studies across a number of different areas of inquiry. Toward that end, the course of study is organized into three thematic subfields:

African American Culture and Life: In this track, students encounter the theoretical canon and keywords which shape the contemporary discipline of African American Studies. Accessing a range of interdisciplinary areas, situated primarily in the United States, students will learn to take a critical posture in examining the patterns and practices that order and transform Black subjects and Black life.

Global Race and Ethnicity: In this track, students use the prevailing analytical tools and critical perspectives of African American Studies to consider comparative approaches to groups, broadly defined. Students will examine the intellectual traditions, socio-political contexts, expressive forms, and modes of belonging of people who are understood to share common boundaries/experiences as either: (1) Africans and the African Diaspora outside of the United States and/or (2) non-African descended people of color within the United States.

Race and Public Policy: In this track, students use and interrogate social science methodologies in examining the condition of the American state and American institutions and practices. With an analysis of race and ethnicity at the center, students will examine the development of institutions and practices, with the growth and formation of racial and ethnic identities, including changing perceptions, measures, and reproduction of inequality.
THE SENIOR THESIS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

Through the course of study, readings, and lectures, students in AAS apply their knowledge through independent writing and research assignments, leading up to the senior thesis. A senior thesis must be written by every senior at Princeton, and in AAS. The thesis is the culminating project informed by a student’s selected AAS subfield, and a subject of inquiry of the student’s choosing.

In the Senior Colloquium, students workshop their theses for clarity and improvement, and also practice becoming conversant about the research by contextualizing their work alongside pertinent contemporary issues and news stories. Workshopping the theses of each student as a group, guided by a member of the core faculty, gives all students a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the field of African American Studies.

The format of the Colloquium is a gesture towards modeling the sort of fruitful exchanges and convened conversations that African American Studies students can bring with them as they leave the University to enter new workplaces, campuses, and neighborhoods.

The characteristic that best encapsulates this first class of African American Studies concentrators is the ability to really create and design their experience as students. I hope that they carry this sensibility and approach to whatever they end up doing: work or community building.

—Professor Ruha Benjamin, Faculty Advisor for Senior Colloquium, 2018
Photos by Sameer A. Khan
“Take My Hand; I’m the One that Can Give You Strength”: Reconstructing the Figure of the Conjure Woman into the Protector of Ancestral Memory and Propagators of Culture using the African American Creative Realm

Jennifer Bunkley
Advisor: Autumn Womack

Bunkley explores the figure of the conjure woman as she is depicted in African American literature, blues music, and film. The thesis argues that the conjure woman does important cultural work as a preserver and propagator of African American ancestral memory and culture.

The Experience of Black Female Undergraduates at Three Predominantly White Institutions

Avanthi Cole
Advisor: Ruha Benjamin

Cole aims to understand why Black women are disappointed with their college experiences, despite these universities’ alleged commitment to ensuring students of all background can thrive, through interviews with twenty-one seniors at Princeton, Penn and Columbia.


Imani Noelle Ford
Advisor: Imani Perry

Ford uses literary and visual works to provide a critique of hope and hopelessness in the tradition of Black Male Letters. The thesis reveals that the tradition reflects a gendered conception of hope founded on the desire to attain white patriarchy.

The Fight to be Heard: Haitian Informal Diplomacy and United States-Haiti Foreign Relations in the 1990’s

Rachelle Jacques
Advisor: Reena Goldthree

Jacques demonstrates the complexities of the political relationship between Haiti and the United States and highlights the political actions of Haitians who operate in the informal political sphere.

“Who Do You Say That I Am?” The Significance of the Racial Depiction of Jesus Christ in the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church

Samantha Newman
Advisor: Wallace Best

Newman examines how the depiction of Jesus Christ as racially white has been understood and challenged in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, first tracing the way the prevalent depiction of Jesus Christ as racially white came to be, next analyzing information from site visits at five different AME churches and interviews with their pastors.

Feeling Ways: A Case for Black Mundane Futurity

Rosed Serrano
Advisor: Nijah Cunningham

Serrano provides a critique of Afro-futurism and gives an analysis of literary texts in order to explore the concept of mundane futurity, an alternate way to imagine the future.
Two Tales, Two Cities: Worker Cooperatives, Community Development, and the Quest for the Next Economy
Amina Simon
Advisor: Joshua Guild
In the past two decades, the community development world has begun to turn to worker cooperation as a potential strategy for wealth building in low-income urban communities. This thesis examines two such efforts, the Evergreen Cooperatives of Cleveland and Cooperation Jackson of Jackson, Mississippi.

“A Race Outcast from an Outcast Class” : Black Americans and the Experience and Representation of U.S. Communism in the Interwar Period, 1919-1941
Nicky Steidel
Advisor: Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor
Steidel provides a history of Black laborers in both the U.S. and the Caribbean who choose Communism as a way to assert their claims to a burgeoning global modernity made possible through the intertwined dynamics of capitalist exploitation and racial domination, and seeks to read this movement alongside and intertwined with non-Black international and US Communist movements.

The Case of the Cameroons: Building a Nation From the Remnants of Colonialism
Wilglory Tanjong
Advisor: Emmanuel Kreike
Tanjong uses Cameroon, a dual linguistic country, as the primary case-study to explore how the country was built from colonialism’s remnants, though colonies were not necessarily intended to become nations. The thesis works to make sense of Cameroon’s present moment: a country on the brink of civil war.

People, Not Patients: An Analytical Critique of the Medical Approach to Racial Disparities in Premature Birth and Birth weight in the United States
Elena Tsemberis
Advisor: Carolyn Rouse
Tsemberis unpacks the underlying causes of the racial disparity in premature birth and birth weight in the United States, specifically that African American women are 2.5 times more likely than white women to experience preterm birth (PTB) or deliver low birth weight (LBW) infants.
**SENIOR THESES - CERTIFICATE STUDENTS**

**The Veneration of Whiteness and The Prized Mestizo: Mexico’s Contemporary Racial Climate and the Role of Eugenics and Mestizaje in Its Production**

Arianna Brown  
Advisor: Bruno Carvalho

Brown explores the entangled nature of eugenics and mestizaje in 1930’s Mexico and the ways in which both were deployed strategically in the quest for modernity, racial improvement, and Mexican nationhood.


Jeremy Burton  
Advisor: Imani Perry

Burton provides a comparative analysis of charter law development in Illinois and Louisiana using Naomi Klein’s shock doctrine, which suggests that pro-capitalism agents capitalize on disasters to push through their agendas such as privatization.

**Locking Up the Ballot Box: An Analysis of Felon and Ex-Felon Disenfranchisement in Modern U.S. Society**

Chandler Cleveland  
Advisor: Douglas Massey

Cleveland studies the history and legality of felon and ex-felon disenfranchisement laws in the United States and analyzes their effects on African Americans in both Republican- and Democrat-dominated states.

**Fidie Hwan a N’akyi a na Èkò: A Case Study of Ghanaian Migrants and the Diaspora as Agents of Development**

Joy Darney  
Advisor: Robert Wuthnow

Darney uses forty in-depth interviews with Ghanaian migrants and the diaspora to assess the different factors that keep them tied to the country. It also evaluates their engagements to understand whether and how they contribute to Ghana’s development.

**Dissecting Dominicanidad: An Analysis of the Dominican Diaspora and Its Effect on Northeastern, Tri-State Politics**

Samuel Davies  
Advisor: Christopher Achen

Davies characterizes the Dominican diaspora by analyzing a few of its most seminal components: politics, economics, and geography. Furthermore, this thesis aims to use the trifecta to transpose Dominican political attitudes into an American political framework via an analysis of Dominican American political socialization since the 1980’s.

**Six black people**

Selah Hampton  
Advisor: Jaamil Olawale Kosoko

Hampton explores “what it means to perform while Black.” Drawing inspiration from the experiences of women of color and their interactions with Princeton University, *Six black people* is a work that concerns racial identification in white spaces and complicates the question of what it is to present Black work without preface.
To be (Un)seen, (Un)worthy, and (Un)Black: Rethinking Black Womanhood and Negation in Contemporary American Theater
Abigail Rose Jean-Baptiste
Advisor: Nijah Cunningham
Jean-Baptiste focuses on forms of absence and negation (invisibility, masochism, and alienation) as modes of performance by and upon the Black female body in contemporary theater to re-situate Black womanhood.

An Investigation into the Hindrances to Traditional Medicine Use in the Treatment and Prevention of Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Symptoms
Myesha Jemison
Advisor: Ruha Benjamin
Jemison offers an investigation into the treatment and prevention of HIV and AIDS in Southern Africa. Focusing specifically on Angola, Mozambique, and South Africa, the thesis aims to determine the hindrances to the use of traditional medicine in HIV and AIDS management (political, epistemological, and environmental barriers) using content analysis, interviews, and climate data analysis.

Decoding the Right to Vote: The Role of Felon Disenfranchisement on African American Voting in the United States
Chelsea Johnson
Advisor: Omar Wasow
Johnson looks at the phenomenon of differential severities of disenfranchisement policies across the US by setting a case study between three bordering states with significantly different felon disenfranchisement laws and analyzing the limiting and deciding factors in these differences.

The Blacker the Berry: The Black Church, Linked Fate, Marginalization, and the Electability of Black Candidates
Brandon McGhee
Advisor: Omar Wasow
McGhee explores the role of the Black utility heuristic and advanced marginalization within the Black community in the twenty-first century, specifically focusing on the Black electorate. In other words, McGhee seeks to understand how Blackness provides a particular political lens which shapes the way Black Americans think about and evaluate political issues and candidates.

The Unfinished Business of Empire: Brexit and the Ghost of Enoch Powell
Adetobi Moses
Advisor: Simon Gikandi
Moses looks at how migrants and refugees in Britain have been linguistically coded in newspapers, political speeches, and other forms of media leading up to Brexit and how this linguistic and racialized project illuminates the ways that the specter of Britain’s lost empire continues to hang over British society.

The Divided State of America: The 450-Year History of the Creation and the Conflation of Whiteness in the United States
Taylor Pearson
Advisor: Douglas Massey
Pearson explores the construction of whiteness throughout history, making the claims it was a deliberate decision on the part of the white political elite in order to fracture interracial alliances and to manipulate the working-class white voting block.
What is Race? An Exploration of Race as a Biological, Social, and Ethical Identity
Folasade Runcie
Advisor: Michael Smith

Runcie seeks to understand what exactly racial identity is by examining it from a biological, social, and ethical point of view. Runcie discovers that race is both a social and ethical identity which is important in our self-conception. Additionally, this thesis argues that even in a world with racial equality, race will remain an important ethical identity, especially for African Americans, as it provides information about one’s ancestral history.

“We Are All Bound Up Together”: The Evolution of Black Female Activism in the Context of the Women’s Rights Movement as Seen Through the Works of Maria W. Stewart and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, 1825-1911
Gabriella Taylor
Advisor: Beth Lew-Williams

Taylor provides a microhistory tracing the lives and public careers of Maria W. Stewart and Frances Harper, using the Women’s Rights Movement and the Civil War/Reconstruction as a lens to understand the ways in which these figures envisioned citizenship for Black Americans in the nineteenth century.

Achieving the Ultimate Goal: School-based Support Services for Pregnant and Parenting Students in the Newark Public Schools District
Jordan Thomas
Advisor: Elizabeth Mitchell Armstrong

Thomas addresses questions regarding the scope of school-based support services offered to pregnant and parenting students in the Newark Public Schools District. This thesis explores the potential factors that shape the range of services available in NPS, and proposes a core set of policy efforts to further improve the provision of school-based support moving forward.

The Utopian Impulse of Black Nationalism: Case Studies of the Black Belt Thesis an the Republic of New Afrika
Imani Thornton
Advisor: Desmond Jagmohan

Thornton’s research is an attempt to reclaim, redeem and reconnoiter the utopianism of Black Nationalist projects of the “past.” This thesis considers in particular two of the most radical, bold, and often forgotten utopian Black Nationalisms: the Black Belt Thesis and the Republic of New Afrika.
CLASS OF 2018

CONCENTRATORS

Jennifer Bunkley
Lilburn, Georgia
African American Culture & Life

Avanthi Cole
Princeton, New Jersey
Race & Public Policy

Imani Noelle Ford
Chicago, Illinois
African American Culture & Life

Rachelle Jacques
Stamford, Connecticut
Race & Public Policy

Samantha Newman
San Diego, California
Race & Public Policy

Rosed Serrano
Yonkers, New York
Global Race & Ethnicity
Afro-American Studies was never meant to be solely for Afro-Americans. It was meant to try to redefine what it means to be human, what it means to be modern, what it means to be American, because people of African descent in this country are profoundly human, profoundly modern, profoundly American. And so to the degree to which they can see the riches that we have to offer as well as see our shortcomings, is the degree to which they can more fully understand the modern and what modernity is all about, and more fully understand the American experience.

—Professor Emeritus Cornel West
CERTIFICATE RECIPIENTS

Arianna Brown
Memphis, Tennessee
Spanish & Portuguese

Jeremy Burton
Chicago, Illinois
Politics

Chandler Cleveland
Phoenix, Arizona
Woodrow Wilson School

Joy Dartey
Philadelphia, PA & Ghana
Sociology

Samuel Davies
Princeton, New Jersey
Politics

Selah Hampton
College Park, Georgia
Chemistry

Abigail Rose Jean-Baptiste
New York, New York
English

Myesha Jemison
Virginia Beach, Virginia
Spanish & Portuguese

Chelsea Johnson
Miami, Florida
Politics

Brandon McGhee
South Euclid, Ohio
Politics

Adetobi Moses
Boston, Massachusetts
English

Ugonna Nwabueze
Stamford, Connecticut
English

Taylor Pearson
Pikesville, Maryland
Woodrow Wilson School

Folasade Runcie
Chicago, Illinois
Philosophy

Gabriella Taylor
San Francisco, CA
History

Jordan Thomas
Newark, New Jersey
Woodrow Wilson School
Imani Thornton
Matteson, Illinois
Politics

Ryan Whitfield
Los Angeles, CA
Computer Science

Photo by Sameer A. Khan
SENIOR PRIZES
RUTH J. SIMMONS THESIS PRIZE

Each year a cash prize is awarded to one or two AAS students whose senior thesis best exhibits excellence in research and writing within the field of African American Studies. Ruth Simmons is a Princeton University trustee, president emerita of Brown University, and an honorary member of the Department of African American Studies Advisory Council, who has generously endowed the prize.

2018
Imani Noelle Ford
“A Race Outcast from an Outcast Class”: Black Americans and the Experience and Representation of U.S. Communism in the Interwar Period, 1919-1941
Nicky Steidel

Previous Year Recipients
2017
“Sing the Song of Her Possibilities”: The Redefinition of the Black Girl During the Black Women’s Renaissance of the 1970’s and 1980’s
Destiny Crockett
Igiaba Scego’s ‘Beyond Babylon’: A Translation from the Italian
Aaron Robertson
2016
Georgia on My Mind: My Family and African American Experiences in Southwest Georgia, 1900-1970
Cameron Bell
Protecting the Lawful, Combatting the Lawless: Racialized Police Violence and the 1967 Newark Uprising
Audrey Berdahl-Baldwin
2015
“Tough Love”: How One High-Performing Charter School Implicitly Criminalizes Youth of Color
Shawon Jackson
Sarah Yerima
2014
From Mold to Molt: Aesthetics and the Matter of Race
Dixon Li
Free Blacks, Freeborn Slaves, and Bondsmen in a Free State: African American Life and Black Political Action During New Jersey’s Emancipatory Period, c. 1820-1845
Kellen Heniford
2013
The Modern Day Lynch Mob: Racism, Juries, and Capital Punishment in the United States
Molly Bagshaw

Transnational Angst: Black Existentialism in Contemporary Afro-Brazilian Narratives
Osasumwen Benjamin

2012
“You Ain’t Black Enough”: Identity in the Black Power Movement
Brittany Kelleher

“Black and White, White and Black”: African Americans and Irish Immigrants in New York’s Five Points, 1834-1863
Alexandra Wise

2011
Nations Torn Asunder: Race Riots in the United States and Great Britain, June - August 1919
Ariel McTootle

DISTINGUISHED SENIOR PRIZE
Awarded annually to the senior concentrator who has distinguished his or herself academically as well as beyond the classroom, reflecting a commitment to the intellectual, political, and artistic traditions in African American Studies.

2018
Imani Noelle Ford
Nicky Steidel

OUTSTANDING JUNIOR PAPER IN AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES PRIZE
This prize is awarded to the senior who submitted the most outstanding Junior Paper.

2018
Rosed Nicole Serrano

AAS SPIRIT AWARD
This award is selected by AAS staff and is given to a senior for their positive contributions to the department. It recognizes students who informally assist the faculty, students, and staff.

2018
Wilglory Tanjong

Photo by Michael Stravato for The New York Times
2018 GRADUATE CERTIFICATE RECIPIENTS

This year, four doctoral candidates received certificates in African American Studies.

Kijan Bloomfield - Religion
Emanuela Kucik - English
Jesse McCarthy - English
Kelsey Moss - Religion

Photos by Sameer A. Khan and Tori Repp.
CLASS DAY AND COMMENCEMENT

June 5, 2018
## ACADEMIC YEAR COURSES
### FALL 2017

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<td>Nijah Cunningham</td>
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## SPRING 2018

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<td>M'hamed Oualdi</td>
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Douglas S. Massey

AAS 500
AFRICAN AMERICAN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION
Naomi Murakawa

AAS 510/ REL 515
RACE, RELIGION AND THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE
Wallace D. Best

ARC 556/ AAS 557/ MOD 503
MICROHISTORY: TOWARD AN ARCHITECTURE OF SLAVERY
Samia Henni
2017-2018 FACULTY-GRADUATE SEMINAR
"HOW WE GET FREE: THE BLACK POLITICAL IMAGINATION"

Faculty Convener: Professor Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor

In this seminar, we will think expansively about the meaning of “Black politics” and its relationship to the persistent Black struggle for “freedom”. In this sense, we hope that all works presented can also engage with the meaning of freedom, its articulation and the ways that it shapes Black political struggle. We will explore these concepts in different geographies, historical periods, and social contexts. Black politics is multifaceted even as the status quo has tried to narrow it into the actions and campaigns of Black elected officials.

While this is an important site of politics, “Black politics” is not reducible to American electoral aspirations or achievements. Considering Robin Kelley’s “infra politics” and the everyday resistance of the status quo or the theoretical innovations of the Black Feminist Combahee River Collective in the early 1970s, Black politics can be conceived of as assessing the contemporary moment and calculating what is necessary to survive and advance individually and collectively. This process of determining the meaning and emphasis about Black politics is, of course, part of the debate we will engage in over the course of the semester.

2017-2018 Presenters

Oct 4 – Christopher Tinson, Hampshire College
Oct 18 – Robyn Spencer, Lehman College
Nov 8 – Barbara Smith and Demita Frazier
Dec 6 – La TaSha Levy, University of Washington, Seattle
Dec 13 – Nathan Connolly, Johns Hopkins University
Feb 7 – Keisha Khan Perry, Brown University
Feb 21 – Christina Heatherton, Barnard College
March 28 – Premilla Nadasen, Barnard College
April 4 – Sarah Haley, UCLA
April 17 – Megan Ming Francis, University of Washington, Seattle
April 25 – Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, Princeton University
May 2 – Leah Wright Rigueur, Harvard Kennedy School
TIMELINE OF FACULTY-GRADUATE SEMINARS

2018-2019
Surveilling Blackness: Race and the Maximum-Security Society
Faculty Convener: Naomi Murakawa

2017-2018
How We Get Free: The Black Political Imagination
Faculty Convener: Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor

2016-2017
Sexuality in African American Communities and Cultures
Faculty Convener: Wallace Best

2015-2016
Black Studies and Biopolitics
Faculty Convener: Ruha Benjamin

2014-2015
Black Studies in the Digital Age
Faculty Convener: Joshua Guild

2013-2014
African/American Diasporic Literature
Faculty Convener: Wendy Laura Belcher

2012-2013
The Politics of Black Families and Intimacies
Faculty Convener: Tera Hunter
AAS PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

FALL 2017

• Whose Streets? Film Screening
  September 21, 2017
  Princeton Garden Theater

• Remembering Langston Hughes: His Art, Life & Legacy Fifty Years Later
  November 10-11, 2017
  McCosh 50

• Lorraine Hansberry: Sighted Eyes/Feeling Heart Film Screening
  December 12, 2017
  Princeton Garden Theater

SPRING 2018

• Night at the McCarter – Crowns
  March 14, 2018
  McCarter Theatre

• Sophomore Open House
  March 29, 2018
  Stanhope Hall

• May We Forever Stand Discussion with Imani Perry and Kinohi Nishikawa
  April 5, 2018
  Labyrinth Books

• The Dramatist’s Call to Action: Recognizing the Provocative Prescience
  of James Baldwin and María Irene Fornés
  Baldwin Lecture with Brian Herrera
  April 12, 2018
  McCormick 101

• “Black Studies Outside of the Academy”
  AAS Graduate Studies Event
  April 26, 2018
  McCormick 106

• Cruel and Unusual Film Screening
  May 2, 2018
  Princeton Garden Theatre

• The Reactionary Mind Discussion with Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor and
  Robin Corey
  May 3, 2018
  Labyrinth Books
ABOUT THE COVER

Wound
by Imani Ford, ’18

"My artwork is about fashioning a self in a white supremacist world. Because my body is the vessel through which I experience the world, I use sculpture, painting and drawing to ask myself questions about intimacy and healing. I am interested in how intimacy reopens old wounds, while healing, helping us forge a new self. I apply the paint, chalk, lines using line cutters, tacs, pencils, and the paintbrush end to etch into layers of paint, wood, and paper abstracting forms and using color to think about healing as a process. Sometimes cutting forms into the paper, letting other colors, figures, and paper emerge from the background. Through this wounding of material, I am able to explore new forms of contact that appear violent but perform healing, which I believe is central to creating a self."