

# African-American Studies



WASHINGTON  
& JEFFERSON  
COLLEGE

The African-American Studies (AAS) Program maintains that the **experience and contributions of African-Americans are central to American culture** as a whole. Interdisciplinary in focus, this minor **explores the diverse experiences of African-American people** from the period of European contact with North America and the beginnings of the Atlantic slave trade to the contemporary moment through the **study of history; art, literature, music, and other forms of cultural production; philosophy and religion; and public policy.**

In particular, the minor provides students with **opportunities to interrogate how ideas of racial identity and difference have been constructed and articulated in U.S. culture**, what impact those ideas have had, and the diverse ways in which African-Americans have endeavored to achieve greater rights and representation. Through the study of African-American experiences in their diverse manifestations, students will **develop the knowledge, skills, and perspective** through which they can **meaningfully engage contemporary questions of diversity, inclusion, and social justice.**

## Minor Requirements

Introduction to African American Studies (AAS 101)

Four of the following courses:

- Topics in African American Studies (AAS 250)
- African American Literature (ENG 270)
- Studies in African American Literature (ENG 343)
- Topics in African American History (HIS 275)
- The Underground Railroad in History and Culture (HIS 279)
- Abolition & Emancipation in the Atlantic World (HIS 325)
- Popular Music (MUS 221)
- Jazz History (MUS 251)
- Philosophy and Race (PHL 137)
- Race and Ethnicity (SOC 241)

*Some additional course topics may occasionally be designated at AAS courses depending on their content. These four additional courses should be selected from at least two different departments or programs.*

## Program Director

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# Why African American Studies?

W&J students share their experiences with the AAS minor. Jasmine Dey '23 (they/them) is pursuing a master's degree in public health at UNC Chapel Hill and Madison Butler '23 (she/her) is attending Duquesne University's Kline School of Law.

## What led to your interest in AAS?

"The minor of AAS kind of fell into my lap as a junior. I completed most of my major classes, but I knew I did not want to graduate early. With this, I asked my advisor to help me pick a major. They informed me that I already had completed 3/5 [of] classes necessary for the minor. It was with this I realized that I was picking classes without even knowing that they related to AAS. Therefore, I like to think that the interest was an unconscious interest that I am grateful to have gained more knowledge." (Butler '23)

## Were there particular memories or themes that you revisited from your AAS-affiliated classes after completing them?

"The themes of community-based action and resilience were common throughout my AAS-affiliated classes. Whether in a philosophical, historical, or literary context, even a new scholar of AAS will come to understand that community is at the very core of every struggle African-American people have navigated. It is not through the actions of one that African-American people have been able to adapt or overcome, but for the willingness of the collective to stand together and push onward." (Dey '23)

## How would you say that your experience in the AAS minor prepared you for life and work after college?

"Navigating life after college has been more about understanding how our world works than any one subject in particular. However, in order to understand the way the world works one must break down the systems under which it operates. Through the AAS minor, I spent a great deal of time understanding the systems in our country and not only how they have - and continue to - impact African-Americans but how they impact us all. This context informs my problem solving and decision making in the healthcare world." (Dey '23)

"Having just completed my first semester in law school, AAS gave me the tools to feel comfortable speaking up in class about the tough topics we discuss. It has helped me realize my passion for helping groups who are oppressed or have hate crimes against them. It also has helped me decide to continue taking AAS classes in law school such as Race in the Law that will be offered in my upper-level classes." (Butler '23)



## Program Website

washjeff.edu/african-american-  
studies

## Your Future. Founded here.

A full list of courses and descriptions can be found online in the College catalog.