



ABOUT THE PROGRAM

African, African-American and Caribbean thinkers have played a major role in defining the critical issues of our time, just as the cultures of Africans and their descendants have transformed the cultures of the Americas and the world. A concentration in African and Afro-American studies allows you to explore intellectual, cultural, economic, political, social and historical issues related to Africans and people of African descent. Courses are drawn from the humanities and social sciences. Students will develop the analytical tools to read different kinds of texts, to write persuasively and to participate knowledgeably in debates about developments across the African continent, in the Americas and globally.

What makes the program distinctive?

Our faculty's diverse interests give students a strong appreciation for why debates about the census and affirmative action, for instance, are as contentious in Brazil as they are in the United States. From electoral

politics to fiction and film, you will develop a solid and interdisciplinary sense of both the inequalities that mark our past and present and the resources and strategies that have inspired transformation.

FAST FACTS

Current number of majors and minors: 21

Number of faculty: 4

Can you minor in this program? Yes

Emphasis within the major:

Majors take courses that allow them to combine an interdisciplinary range with a four-course specialization that is either geographical or disciplinary.

Popular second majors: history, politics, sociology

Website:

brandeis.edu/departments/afroamerstudies

ACADEMICS AND RESEARCH

Senior theses

Recent majors have written senior theses titled: “The Popular Is Political: Can the Revolution Be Performed?”; “The Politics of Fascination: The Case of the Malian Jeli”; “The Political Appointment of Minorities by Republican Presidents, 1980–2007”; and “Struggle No More: Social Stigma of HIV-AIDS Among Haitians and Haitian Americans.”

Guest speakers

In addition to classroom learning, students gain from the presence of world-class experts on African and Afro-American studies who are invited to deliver lectures on campus every year. These lectures provide opportunities to see the richness of our academic resources and also allow students to exchange ideas with specialists and each other.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Distinguished faculty

Our faculty members have been awarded fellowships from the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research; the Kennedy School’s Taubman Center for State and Local Government, Harvard University; and the National Humanities Center. Other faculty members have taught in Salvador, Brazil, with the Fulbright Fellowship Program.

Student awards

Our graduating majors have been awarded the Richard Kaufman ’58 Memorial Prize, the Bruce R. Mayper Memorial Award and the Rose Schlow Award.

Working toward peace

In 2009, Benjamin Bechtolsheim ’09 was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Davis Projects for Peace to assist people living in resettlement villages in northern Uganda by increasing the local capacity to confront and address sexual and gender-based violence.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Gender dynamics in Uganda

While studying abroad in Africa, Ariela Alpert ’10 conducted independent research with women’s self-help groups in Uganda focusing on family planning and gender dynamics. Alpert’s goal was to help break

the poverty cycle and catalyze development in the region, and her research concluded with specific plans to utilize new methods of family planning education within the self-help groups.

Stipends for unpaid internships

AAAS major Sam Levin ’07 did public-health work in Guinea as a Peace Corps volunteer. Nathan Robinson ’11 spent one summer interning at the Center for Legal Aid Education in Boston with a Brandeis World of Work grant. The center trains socially committed attorneys to be more effective advocates for the poor and disadvantaged. Robinson was responsible for putting together a series of new workshops called “Racial Justice and the Law” to be conducted nationally.

Student clubs

AAAS majors can experience the field firsthand by joining groups like the African Dance Club, the African Students Organization, the Black Student Organization, the Mixed Heritage Club and Diverse City (a culture, arts and ethnicity publication).

AFTER BRANDEIS

Diverse career fields

We are proud of all our graduates, some of whom have served in the Peace Corps, Teach for America and Operations Crossroads Africa. Some have gone on to pursue graduate degrees in social anthropology and other fields, and to careers in social work, education and law — for example, one graduate works with the Chelsea District Courts. Yet other recent alumni have gone on to work at The New England Journal of Medicine, MIT’s School of Engineering and the Genetics Institute, among other settings.

Notable alumni

Jhana Senxian ’98, who as an undergraduate mounted a very successful conference on complexion and colorism with papers presented by faculty of Brandeis as well as other Greater Boston area institutions, is president and chief executive officer of Sustainability Guild International. She founded the organization to help create sustainable paths to revitalizing business, government, nonprofit and educational organizations.

