African and Afro-American Major: Learning Goals and Outcomes:
The African and Afro-American Studies Department is multidisciplinary with some of its faculty holding joint appointments in other departments. The department brings together scholars and scholarship from various disciplines to explore the cultures, histories and societies of African and African descended people. The department’s offerings range across the traditional fields of anthropology, economics, history, literature, music, politics, etc. The field of African and Afro-American Studies is not only multidisciplinary, but also interdisciplinary, comparative and cross-cultural. The disciplines are integrated by certain themes that underscore the uniqueness of the department. First, the AAAS subject matter focuses on African peoples and their cultures and those peoples of the American, the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa who are descendants of Africans. Second, the AAAS department’s courses offer a non-western comparative, and a non-racial approach to the interpretations and understandings of the experiences of African peoples of the wider world social, economic, and political systems. Third, the AAAS courses broadens the scope and range of traditional disciplines and offer general education courses in which the knowledge of the presence, roles, and cultural contributions and experiences of African peoples and their descendants have been omitted or neglected.

The AAAS variety of course offerings affirms the intellectual importance of research and scholarship of the contribution of peoples of African descent globally. In sharing the University’s commitment to academic excellence, the AAAS department provides students with the requisite tools to comprehend, analyze, and evaluate events and phenomena that structure the experiences and possibilities of Africans in the continent of Africa and its diaspora.

Knowledge:
Students completing a major in African and Afro-American studies will come away with a strong understanding of:

1) History of the diversity of African peoples worldwide and their struggles for social, political, and economic empowerment.
2) Contributions of Africans in Africa and the diaspora in the development of the cultural, social, political and global interdependence.
3) Think critically about arguments based on critical analysis and evaluation of evidence.
4) Major questions, concepts, theories, ethical and research methodologies used in interdisciplinary comparative, and cross-cultural studies.

Skills:
A major in African and Afro-American Studies emphasizes core skills in data collection, critical thinking and communication. AAS majors will be trained and prepared to:
1) Conduct scholarly, professional and original research applying interdisciplinary, comparative and cross-cultural research methodologies
2) Students will be able to synthesize, as well as articulate orally and in writing, a coherent narrative about the history, religions, cultures, and societies in the continent of Africa and the Africa diaspora.
3) Students will be able to situate texts, documents, traditions, ideas, artistic productions and relevant data in their contexts.
4) Evaluate information critically with particular attention to examining and analyzing new areas of research in Africa and the African diaspora.

Social Justice:
The African and Afro-American Studies curriculum provides students with knowledge and perspectives necessary to participate as informed citizens in the global community. AAAS courses incorporate a multifaceted approach to social justices. These courses strive to simultaneously promote human development and the common good through addressing challenges related to both individual and distribute justice. This approach allows for the empowerment of individuals and groups as well as active confrontation of injustice and inequality in society, both as they impact clientele and in their systemic contexts. The social justice courses include discussions of four critical principles that guide their work: equity, access, participation, and harmony.
1) From this perspective, equity is the fair distribution of resources, rights and responsibilities to all members of society.
2) Access is key to a socially just world. It includes notions of fairness for both the individual and the common good based on the ability of all people to access the resources, services, power, information, and understanding crucial to realizing a standard of living that allows for self-determination and human development.
3) Participation is also crucial to a socially just world. This principle describes the right of every person in society to partake in and be consulted on decisions that impact their lives as well as the lives of other people in their contexts and systems.
4) The final element of social justice is harmony. This is a principle of social adjustment wherein the actions revolving around the self-interests of any individual or group ultimately produces results that afford the best possible outcomes for the community as a whole.

The AAAS curriculum fosters an open climate for a consideration of a full range of discussion of issues that affect injustice, economic inequities, social, political, and religious oppression in Africa and the African diaspora. The courses address issues that deal with international political economy, poverty alleviation, oppression, exploitation, and economic and political empowerment of the marginalized throughout the world.

Upon graduating:
A Brandeis student with a major in African and Afro-American studies will be prepped to:
1) Pursue graduate study and a scholarly career in African and Afro-American studies or in any of the disciplines represented in the department.
2) Pursue professional training in a variety of careers including healthcare, social work, government, international organizations, business, journalism, law, education,
entertainment, and non-profit organizations in and outside the United States of America.