

## **Diversify your intellectual experience through Africology and African American Studies at Eastern Michigan University**

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Dear EMU Student:

I hope this message finds you well. As you breathe the fresh air of summer and as we climb out of the doldrums of Covid-19 mandates that sometimes disallowed us from going about our lives as we used to do, presumably, you must have begun to plan for fall, 2021. Please, allow me a moment of your busy day to acquaint you with the intellectually-diversifying and career-oriented learning opportunities that we offer here at EMU's Department of Africology and African American Studies (AAAS).

AAAS offers several undergraduate and graduate academic programs and General Education courses that are designed to help enrich your learning experience in a way that could better prepare and equip you with knowledge and skills for effective functioning in our world of diverse peoples and cultures. Through a systematic and critical exploration of lived experiences of African peoples in general and African Americans in particular, AAAS at EMU contributes to a basket of fruits of knowledge of peoples and cultures of the world designed to strengthen and diversify your learning journey through this institution.

Are you aware that we offer [a 33-credit hour Master of Arts \(MA\) degree program in Africology and African American Studies](#) which is open to ALL students, regardless of your country of origin, racial, ethnic, or gender classification? Are you aware that we offer [a 33-credit hour bachelor's degree program in Africology and African American Studies](#) which is open to ALL students, regardless of your country of origin, racial, ethnic, or gender classification? Indeed, our students—that is, students who traffic through our myriad of courses each semester—represent a diverse group of learners who come here to join us in our often exciting, critical and systematic exploration of the black experience in its domestic and global contexts. We offer a myriad of opportunities—through coursework—by which you can not only join in learning about ancient Africans' creative adaptations to their social and natural environments but also a variety of epochal events and transformations that led to our contemporary global African presence.

So, besides our 33-credit Major in Africology and African American Studies, we also offer [a 21-credit Minor in Africology and African American Studies](#), [a 12-credit Undergraduate Certificate in African Studies](#), and [a 15-credit Graduate Certificate in Africology and African American Studies](#). We also encourage students to double-major in Africology and African American Studies and any other discipline of their choice that can fit into the 124-minimum number of credits that you need to earn a bachelor's degree at Eastern Michigan University. Every semester, we provide a mix of course sections that pertain to not only multidimensional aspects of black life and culture in the United States but also to the Caribbean and Africa. Thus, Africology is designed to provide you with a holistic understanding of the global black experience even though we accord a historically necessary premium attention to the African American experience in the New World, particularly the United States.

### **When the “world” was our village**

Going back to history, we can recall that there was a distant time in the history of human social evolution when "our world" consisted of just our villages where we were born and nurtured, as well as destinations to which our most natural means of movement, namely our feet, could take us. During that ancient pre-historic period, most likely, our ancestors were not even aware that their understanding of what constituted the totality of the world, was simply a microscopic snippet of it to which they were confined by their limited horizon. Human civilization ultimately achieved greater self-awareness, and advanced technologically away from that simplistic mode of existence and that simplistic horizon to efficient and complex machines, including motor vehicles, watercraft, aircraft, the telephone, and now the internet, as expanded and quicker means of transportation and instantaneous human interaction and human communication emerged.

### **Today's Global Village**

Thus, we now talk in terms of a global village inter-connected by instantaneous modes of personal and mass communications. For Africology and African American Studies, one of the implications of all these technological transformations in human existence is a fact that our students are bound to be ill-served and ill-prepared by a tunnel vision of the black experience—that is, one that is simply local and simply domestic in content though our education must prepare us to fit well into the societies in which we live and function. Hence, for our students to be reasonably and optimally equipped to function in a world of diverse peoples and cultures that is increasingly inter-connected by instantaneous digital communications and creeping socioeconomic and corporate globalization, including our own heterogeneous society inevitably marked by a diverse work environment, they, in effect, deserve exposure to an Africological scope of inquiry—that is, a global vision of the black experience.

### **Liberal Arts designed to Open and Broaden Minds**

Easily remembered as the father of Black Studies, W.E.B. DuBois (1868-1963), the first African American to earn a Ph.D. in the year 1895 from Harvard (America's oldest university), was a champion of a broadly-based and worldly educational experience. As he articulated it in his classic known as *The Souls of Black Folk*, educational outcomes should include "... intelligence, broad sympathy, knowledge of the world that was and is, and of the relation of men [and women] to it" (quoted in Mullane, 1993, p. 392).<sup>1</sup> In terms of the New World, he posited the following challenge to educators: "The problem of education ... among [African Americans] must first of all deal with ... the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races" (quoted in Mullane, 1993, p. 382). DuBois could not be more correct. Ideally, liberal arts education, at its best, is meant to open and broaden minds, not close, or contract them, not reify cultural hegemony, or parochialism or a white supremacist vision of society. Yes, a well-rounded education must make us aware of who we are in the universe of peoples and cultures, but at the same time, reasonably enlighten us about peoples and cultures that are not part of our proximate cultural and geographical space. No doubt, this is a tough challenge, but one that is achievable. In short, liberal arts education is meant to enlighten and broaden our horizons, not cause atrophy. Thus, in our increasingly globalized social and digital space, you stand to benefit from and be intellectually strengthened by an Africological course of study which, among other learning outcomes, is designed to help you achieve a deep or deeper understanding of human equality in the context of human differences and commonalities as members of the same human species.

If you have not had a taste of what we offer, you are not opening yourself up to a rich opportunity that exists here at EMU for you to acquire a critical understanding of race, its intersection with class, ethnicity and

gender, and how race influenced the social evolution of our heterogeneous society. Avail yourself of an opportunity to acquire a critical knowledge of and perspective on how our society evolved from what was once a slave-owning state to what it is now: a country that was led recently (2008 to 2016) by a President Barack Obama who was elected from a minority community of contemporary African Americans, most of whom are descendants of ancestors who were subjected to two hundred and forty-six years of African enslavement in the United States (1619-1865). Avail yourself of an opportunity to critically learn about how the afore-mentioned transformations consequentially gave a concrete meaning to our ideal concept of freedom and how it also expanded our democratic space and strengthened our system of representative governance. And avail yourself of an opportunity to critically learn about how a stratagem of non-violent direct action serves as a tool for positive social change.

### **Gen Ed options, Careers Possible Through AAAS & Our Variety of Names**

Year-round, AAAS offers a set of [AFC courses that count towards EMU's General Education Program](#). Our website also presents information on [various types of careers that were established by individuals who graduated with degrees in Africology and African American Studies](#). And, a critical piece of information that I need to leave with you is that though we are known as Africology and African American Studies here at EMU, our discipline goes by a variety of names across US universities, such as Africology, Black Studies, African World Studies, Global African Studies, Pan-African Studies, Black American Studies, and Africana Studies.

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<sup>i</sup> For more on this, go to Mullane, Deirdre. (Ed.). (1993). W.E.B. Du Bois from *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). *Crossing the danger water: Three hundred years of African American writing*. New York: Doubleday.