Department of African-American Studies
2020 Assessment Report

MISSION STATEMENT
African-American Studies at The University of Montana connects African and African-American (including Latin America and the Caribbean) history, experiences, and perspectives with the 21st century. The goal of the African-American Studies curriculum is to develop a basic knowledge of, and appreciation for, the diverse experiences of the African Diaspora, and their contributions to the nations into which they were incorporated. Through this study students will recognize that the African-American narrative connects to the core issues of nation formation, identity politics, social movements, and the liberal state. Those who take this minor will likewise be equipped to talk through the racial fracture lines that mark this nation as a country where the color of one’s skin is socially significant. In all these efforts, we promote scholarship that is driven first and foremost by an interest in creating knowledge and furthering our understanding of the African-American experience. The interdisciplinary curriculum of African-American Studies includes course offerings from the following academic disciplines: anthropology, economics, English, geography, history, music, political science, and sociology. Some topics of study include: African heritage and cultural continuity among African-Americans; African-American identity issues and cultural variation; the history of African-American protest and resistance, including the abolitionist, anti-lynching, and civil rights movements; the Harlem Renaissance; the social dynamics of integration and segregation; and the various circumstances of, and prospects for, African-Americans in the 21st century.

DEPARTMENT ALIGNMENT WITH PRIORITIES FOR ACTION
After listing each departmental objective, indicate which of the five Priorities for Action the objective supports. In this section, you may also briefly describe any innovative or noteworthy programs/initiatives that support the Priorities for Action.

1. To deepen students’ knowledge about the history and contemporary experience of the African-American community. (Education for the Global Century and Dynamic Learning Environment) Noteworthy Initiatives: We have sponsored public forums such as the highly successful and well-attended panel, “Racial Justice and the Humanities: Opportunities, Obstacles, and Offering Insight” that we co-sponsored with UM’s Humanities Institute on October 8, 2020.

2. To sharpen students’ critical thinking skills about racial dynamics, social change movements, and religious practice. (Education for the Global Century and Dynamic Learning Environment) Noteworthy Initiatives: We have developed and twice offered a new course “White Supremacy: From Theory to Practice” and students have developed practical, real-life projects as a result of their study in the class including but not limited to an educational curriculum for residence hall students, a public information campaign on Montana white nationalist groups, and a children’s book on African-American heroes in Montana.

3. To prepare students to speak about, respond to, and engage contemporary racial issues. (Education for the Global Century and Dynamic Learning Environment) Noteworthy Initiatives: We developed a new online course, “Dismantling Racism: From Theory to Practice,” that has not only filled to capacity with for-credit
students every time that we have taught it, but we have offered it through UM Online for more than 400 non-credit students as well.

4. To create new knowledge about the African-American experience through faculty research and writing. (Discovery and Creativity to Serve Montana and the World). Noteworthy Initiatives: Faculty have published academic works on national speaker Ta-Nehisi Coates, civil rights activist Vincent Harding, the religion of white rage during the civil rights movement, and the role of religious resources in the civil rights movement and the anti-Apartheid campaign. In addition, faculty have published ten articles in popular press sources and penned more than 25 blog entries which have garnered in the period of review more than 20,000 visits. In addition faculty from the department have given more than thirty public talks and addresses reaching more than 7,000 audience members in the state and across the country

### STUDENT LEARNING GOALS and MEASUREMENT TOOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learning Goals</th>
<th>Embedded Exam Questions</th>
<th>Essay Writing</th>
<th>Research Paper Writing</th>
<th>Exit Interviews</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Students will identify the primary social, cultural, and political movements and actors in African-American history from the Maafa through to the present.</td>
<td>Summative assessments in Parts I and II of the African-American History Survey</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Question included in oral exit interview.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Students will identify the primary questions and methodologies employed by scholars of the African-American experience including literary, historical, sociological, anthropological, and religious studies analysis.</td>
<td>Final exam question in Intro to African-American Studies/Black: From Africa to Hip-Hop.</td>
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<td>Question included in oral exit interview.</td>
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<td>3. Students will analyze the nature and extent of contributions made by African Americans to host nations through protest movements, physical labor, technical expertise, political negotiations, and cultural contributions.</td>
<td>Research paper written in course of fulfilling upper-division course electives requirement.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Question included in oral exit interview.</td>
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<td>4. Students will identify the metaphor that best interprets the African-American experience and defend their choice.</td>
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<td>Question included in oral exit interview.</td>
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<td>5. [Honors designation] Students will develop an argument based on new research and synthesize of their class learning about a fundamental problem in the study of the African-American experience.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>25-page research paper written as part of an Independent Study</td>
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RESULTS and MODIFICATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Goal results</th>
<th>Modifications made to enhance learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(We include here the results of our evaluation of exit interviews and upper division research papers.)</td>
<td>In this instance, we made a point of emphasizing this content in our introductory class through lectures, discussion, and assessment opportunities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal: Students will identify the primary social, cultural, and political movements and actors in African-American history from the Maafa through to the present.</td>
<td>That said, we have introduced a set of new alternative final assessment options in our introductory class that allows students to do creative projects (board games, podcasts, etc.). The research on this kind of pedagogical innovation indicates higher levels of student engagement and retention.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Results: We continued to see very high rates of success in this area. Even with the implementation of a more nuanced rubric of evaluation, one hundred percent of the students in the major and minor scored an 8, 9, or 10 – our target goals – in their exit interview on this question.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal: Students will identify the primary questions and methodologies employed by scholars of the African-American experience including literary, historical, sociological, anthropological, and religious studies analysis.</td>
<td>Given the high rate of success in this area (the last two cycles we also found 100% of our students responded positively), we have continued to make no modifications in classroom instruction other than to re-design out advanced writing classes to focus more on multiple iterations of the same paper. The sampled research papers, for example, all went through a three-draft iterative revision process that resulted in very strong final products.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Results: For the third cycle in a row, 100% of students completing a degree in our program in the last two years successfully analyzed the nature and extent of contributions made by African Americans to host nations. This rate has continued successfully since the last report.</td>
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<td>We reviewed a sampling of fourteen advanced writing papers for evidence of the ability to analyze the kind and content of contributions made by the African-American community. Twelve of the fourteen sampled papers showed strong evidence of this analytical ability as evidenced in strength of thesis, use of credible evidence, sophistication of analysis, and identification of contributions. This is a notable improvement over last year’s set of papers (up to 86% from 71%).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal: Students will identify the metaphor that best interprets the African-American experience and defend their choice.</td>
<td>Given the high rate of success in this area, we have made no modifications. Again, our curriculum is working in this area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Results: As above, even with the implementation of a more nuanced rubric of evaluation, one hundred percent of the students in the major and minor scored an 8, 9, or 10 – our target goals – in their exit interview on this question.</td>
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FUTURE PLANS FOR CONTINUED ASSESSMENT

Despite the loss of 75% of our program budget and 60% of our instructional budget, we have initiated the new alternative assessment processes in our introductory class and the core course – African-American History Since 1865. This has emerged after the program’s director was selected for the inaugural class of the MUS Teaching Scholars program which focused on student engagement techniques.
APPENDICES

1. Exit interview instrument.
2. Sample Responses from Student Exit Interviews [from notes taken during oral exit interviews]
3. Exit Interview Response Tabulation 2020
4. Curriculum Map
AAST Exit Interview Instrument

Discuss the following questions:

Based on your learning in the AAS major or minor, which metaphor(s) do you think most effectively frames the African-American experience: resistance, movement, accommodation, renewal, or a metaphor/theme of your choosing? Explain why.

How have blacks contributed to their host nations?

Pretend I am a first year student considering a major or minor in African-American Studies. I have just asked you to explain to me what kind of questions students in African-American Studies classes study and how researchers have studied them. How do you respond?

Based on your classes in the major or minor, what are the most influential movements in which African Americans have taken part?

What is the most important thing you learned?
Based on your learning in the AAS minor, which metaphor(s) do you think most effectively frames the African-American experience: resistance, movement, accommodation, renewal, or a metaphor/theme of your choosing? Explain why.

**Student 1:** Begin with finding all compelling and effective frameworks. Had to choose one – resistance because it best captures AAST history is largely a story of building institutions, perseverance, and founding hope. Epitomizes AAST history. Examples – Institutions – as a means of liberation and of preserving culture i.e. immediately following civil war, education, churches with political activism. Longstanding tradition to use institutions to do that. Perseverance – talking about Pauli Murray – her life was born in early 1900s. Seeks to go to UNC. Is denied. Denied support from NAACP because of sexual orientation. Goes to Howard University. Seeks to go to Harvard. Is denied. Acquires degrees. She was a trail blazer. Quote - “what is often called exceptional ability is nothing more than persistent endeavor.” Her life is an example of persistence. Founding hope – when talked about blues music, during Jim Crow, in places where blues were played it was a cathartic release. It was about the collectivity of the experience and the dancing that was offered.

Another example about resistance – modes of resistance available to 18th or 19th slave – feigning sickness, slave revolts. Contrary to what past historians have suggested. Capitulation or compromising to survive was in fact resistance. Anything that would tell an enslaved individual that they were a human was a form of resistance. I hadn’t thought about the sorts of resistance that were available to enslaved individuals.

**Student 2:** Renewal. Has attributes of resistance and accommodation. AA experience is ever changing. Becoming more beautiful and terrifying. How navigate society deeply situated in racism? Emmersed in this ideology. Going from old to new. From Resistance to Accommodation. If the world around you refuses to change, you change yourself and hope that the changes affect the world.

Why terrifying? – Because racism has evolved over time – lot more subtle now. I feel as if that subtleness gets very confusing. Harder to point out.

**Student 3:** Renewal because all the other things are relevant but to me – yes there has been movement and different ways and uplift but it was all just a small piece of renewing – everything. Renewal in self, culture, worth. In a sense of being who African Americans were and are as people. Renewal also is recognizing where people came from in order to renew. Step out of a dark history and find light and hope.

**Student 4:** Based on your learning in the AAS major or minor, which metaphor(s) do you think most effectively frames the African-American experience: resistance, movement, accommodation, renewal, or a metaphor/theme of your choosing? Explain why.
Since beginning of the slave trade, each one pertains to a certain time period. Movement sticks out because the experience mostly progressed and evolved through actions of resistance, accommodation, etc. Movement encompasses the other metaphors. Movement in the sense of progression, community unity.

**How have Blacks contributed to their host nations?**


*Student 2:* Broadway. AF-AM contributed politically, socially, culturally. Every way. Politically speaking can think of participation in emancipation, civil war, founding of country. Every war. Have contributed significantly to routing discriminatory elements in voting and civil rights. Culturally have contributed in music – not only do lots of musical forms source or ref AfAm music, but music with political aspect draw from pioneers of AfAm who did so in blues with political agenda or social content. Just in terms of literature – contributed to understanding marginalization in general. Because of oppression – blacks have had a better understanding of racial dynamics at play.

*Student 3:* I think one of the most amazing contributions is showing a different culture, way of being. Not everyone was raised the same or is the same. History textbooks show only one way of leaving. Now people are speaking out and having a voice that they are different and making that known to others. They bring a sense of history, - here we are, we made it, we’re going to be strong. We’re going to show that we’re people. We’re just as good everyone else. Specifically hip-hop. I listen to a lot of hip-hop music. I dance hip hop. Crumping is a dance style that is very important to me. More violent and more emotion. Came from African Americans.

*Student 4:* I read too deeply into the question. Host nations is problematic. Connotates a sense of alienness. Unwelcoming. Like a parasite. Blacks and people of color are seen as the other – exotic and foreign. As far removed from symbiosis as it can be. America has taken more than it will ever give. And African-Americans have given more than they will ever be allowed to take. As for contributions – culture, blood sweat and tears; food, art, spirit and soul.
Based on your classes in the major or minor, what are the most influential movements in which African Americans have taken part?

**Student 2:** Most influential is the Reconstruction era because 1) had the main metaphor of renewal – an explosion of AA initiative – occupying political offices, advocating for public schools, shaping our own destinies. Most influential because AAST initiative seen in every consecutive movement post reconstruction – Harlem Renaissance, Double V, Popular Front, CRM, Black Power, and Black Lives matter.

**Student 3:** Civil rights movement. Black Power movement – recent, influential, current. Has been reborn a couple of times. Now taking hold more than it did the first couple of times. Harlem Renaissance. Also the wars – any wars – the part that African-Americans played – both those they had to and ones they chose to. All the wars. All different. Different time in each period.

**Student 4:** Abolition movement because black people exercised agency and had a say in their future; Harlem Renaissance because so much that we recognize in pop culture came from them, so much literature, poems that influenced subsequent writers, especially poetry, and changed the culture of the U.S. at large as well as the black community; civil rights movement because I’d desegregated the South and the North through different housing policies and it brought … it change the way we think about race and interracial interactions in the country and it effectively got African Americans the right to vote - being able to have the vote is extremely influential in politics; not getting an accurate view of how a community is thinking - their views on things; still an issue due to mass incarceration; the voting rights act took a big step forward; effectively integrated a lot of areas due to the affordability of neighborhoods; a lot of communities still segregated; got rid of many practices of segregation like not being able to drink at water fountains; people have more interracial friendships now. The civil rights movement was in a time when the KKK was especially powerful and the civil rights movement took away much of their power. They are less united and less powerful. And the Black Lives Matter movement takes a lot of things that give black Americans equality not just in writing but in reality. In law we are all technically equal but that is not happening in practice. Black Lives Matter is saying we deserve to be treated equally and we shouldn’t have to be afraid to get pulled over. I saw a video about black parents having to tell their children how to respond to getting pulled over by the police. That is the opposite of what is supposed to be happening. They are not supposed to be terrorizing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Movements and Actors</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Metaphor Chosen</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Contributions</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019025</td>
<td>abolitionist, reconstruction, long civil rights, voting rights, police brutality</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>resistance</td>
<td>politically, socially, culturally.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019025</td>
<td>reconstruction, Harlem Renaissance, Double V, Popular Front, CRM, Black Power, and Black Lives matter.</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>renewal</td>
<td>despite being seen as exotic, culture, blood, sweat, tears, food, art, spirit, soul</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019025</td>
<td>civil rights, Black Power, Harlem Renaissance.</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>renewal</td>
<td>culture, history, hip-hop, crunk</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018005</td>
<td>abolitionism; Harlem Renaissance; civil rights; Black lives matter; great migration;</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>renewal, resistance</td>
<td>music, inventions, HBCUs, political strategies, Af-Am Culture</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018005</td>
<td>Civil rights, popular front, Harlem renaissance, hip-hop, abolition, early revolts, reconstruction, anti-lynching, armed resistance, black power. Also socialist and communist movements</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>resistance</td>
<td>art, music, political organizing, literature, technology, Community-organizing.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018005</td>
<td>Reconstruction, Harlem Renaissance, Niagara movement, civil rights movement – discusses violence, nonviolence, and black power, popular front</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>resistance</td>
<td>culture; dance; song.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019025</td>
<td>Popular Front, Double V, civil rights, black power movement, Harlem Renaissance, abolitionist movement, mutual aid societies, reconstruction era, Jim Crow era, WWI participation, hip-hop, black lives matter</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>movement</td>
<td>example of Garvey, strong contextualization</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RUBRIC

1 to 4        inadequately describes; little to no detail
5 to 7        adequate description; lacks breadth
7 to 10       full and complete description
Required Course  (Name and Number)  | Outcome 1: Movements and Actors | Outcome 2: Questions and Methodologies | Outcome 3: Contributions | Outcome 4: Metaphor | Outcome 5: Honors  
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---  
AAS/HIST 141HX: Black - From Africa to Hip-Hop | I, D | I, D, M, A | I | I |  
HSTA/AAST 342H: African-American History to 1865 | D, M, A | D, M | D, M | I, D, M, A |  
HSTA/AAST 343H: African-American History Since 1865 | D, M, A | D, M | D, M | I, D, M, A |  
AAS 372: African-American Identity* |  |  | A |  |  
HSTA/AAST 347: Voodoo, Muslim, Church: Black Religion* |  |  | A |  |  
AAS 391: Special Topics* |  |  | A |  |  
AAS 392: Independent Study |  |  | A |  |  
HSTA/AAST: The Black Radical Tradition* |  |  | A |  |  
HSTA/AAST 417: Prayer and Civil Rights* |  |  | A |  |  
AAS 491: Special Topics* |  |  | A |  |  

**KEY:**  
I = Introduced  
D = Developed/reinforced, with opportunities to practice  
M = Mastery  
A = Assessment evidence collected  
*Students must take at least one of the courses marked with an asterisk.

**Outcome 1.** Students will identify the primary social, cultural, and political **movements** and **actors** in African-American history from the Maafa through to the present.

**Outcome 2.** Students will identify the primary **questions** and **methodologies** employed by scholars of the African-American experience including literary, historical, sociological, anthropological, and religious studies analysis.

**Outcome 3.** Students will analyze the nature and extent of **contributions** made by African Americans to host nations through protest movements, physical labor, technical expertise, political negotiations, and cultural contributions.

**Outcome 4.** Students will identify the **metaphor** that best interprets the African-American experience and defend their choice.

**Outcome 5.** **Honors** designation. Students will develop an argument based on new research and synthesize of their class learning about a fundamental problem in the study of the African-American experience.