

**Saint Louis University**  
**Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report | Fall 2021**

**Program Name:** Department of African American Studies

**Degree or Certificate Level:** BA (Major & Minor) **College:** Arts and Sciences

**Assessment Contact**2017

*CAVEAT: As of Fall 2021 we were elevated, after a 40-year struggle over curricular needs and against institutional and structural resistance, to departmental status. As a result, we have never completed a full assessment cycle.*

## 1. Student Learning Outcomes

A. Through a rigorous engagement with primary and secondary scholarship, students will be introduced to the field of African efforts African descendants have established over hundreds

B. Upon completing this course of study our students will be able to identify key experiences, figures, movements, and ideas emanating from the African Diaspora.

C. Students will be

E. Students will be able to interpret movement ideas and strategies that African descendants have employed in their search for global justice.

F. Students will be able to engage with and identify political movements that emerge throughout the African Diaspora with particular focus on U.S. based struggles for justice.

In general, our Student Learning Outcomes are evaluated in three stages: Introductory, Intermediate, and Advanced. This report focuses chiefly on the Advanced level.

**Introductory level:** students develop basic knowledge of African American Studies as an interdisciplinary field of study; collaborative learning; gaining comfort contributing to course discussions; writing practice through short critical essay assignments.

**Courses:** AAM 2000: Freedom Dreams: Introduction to African American Studies and AAM 2010: Contemporary Black America

**Assessment Method:** Critical short essays that compare and contrast author's arguments

**Intermediate level:** Students develop greater range in knowledge of the field; conversant in key issues, topics, ideas, figures, sites, and strategies for justice and equity; comfort writing longer critical essays that engage secondary literature.

**Courses:** All African American Studies electives, including but not limited to: African American Psychology (Qualitative and quantitative research, research and writing); History of African American Women (Historical methods, key figures and contributions, research and writing); African/African Diaspora Art (Interpreting artistic and aesthetic production, research and writing); African American Literary Traditions (Exposure to African American Literary canon and African American Literary Criticism, research and writing); African Americans and Civil Rights



### 3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

Capstone projects are the culmination o

- b. How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

*Changes to course content*—As scholarship changes, we adapt and introduce students to the new research emerging from African American and African Diasporic scholarship. At the entry point of our degree path we've revised our introductory course, which is now retitled Freedom Dreams: Introduction to African American Studies borrows its name from one of the core texts to the course, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* by historian Robin D.G. Kelley. This book is a staple for our introductory courses. Other central texts for our introductory courses include primary documents such as David Walker's *Appeal*, and *The Souls of Black Folk* by W.E.B. Du Bois.

For our Research Methods course (which students take as their studies conclude and prepares them for Capstone) we have done the most work to revise course content. In this latter course, students are introduced to several different approaches to research, with a focus on the challenge and opportunity of decolonizing archival research. Students are immersed in a series of readings on the history of African American Studies (also known as Africana Studies and Black Studies), decolonizing research methodologies, and theoretical approaches to the study of Black life. Students also write several critical short essays, which we call "Think Pieces" that explore themes from the assigned articles. This is intended to acquaint students with different forms of writing. Throughout the course students are provided examples of scholarly articles, book reviews, review essays, Op-eds, Digital Archival approaches and theories of Digital Humanities, anthologies, book manuscripts, and dissertations. They are also introduced to the major journals in the discipline, including the *Journal of African American History*, *The Black Scholar*, the *Journal of Black Studies*, the *African American Review*, and *SOULS*. We intend to show students all of the ways scholarship

## 7. Closing the loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes

- a. What is at least one change your program has implemented as a result of assessment data? N/A
- b. How has this change been assessed? N/A
- c. What were the findings of the assessment? N/A
- d. How do you plan to continue using this information moving forward? N/A

## 8. Additional Assessment Questions:

We plan to review our assessment strategies, plan, etc., every two years. Currently we will evaluate our core major courses, and in F2023 we will evaluate our elective courses. However, this may prove challenging considering our elective courses are taught by and often originate in other units, such as Psychology and English.

We currently do not have any part of our program on the Madrid campus. However, we have had students conduct independent studies with the chairperson and other faculty members during their semester abroad. Recently, a Madrid student requested African American Studies as a minor and has already enrolled in at least two courses that would count towards the minor. We plan to grow interest in our program on the Madrid campus, but there is nothing to evaluate to date.

Engaging students in the assessment process is difficult. Prior to the arrival of a new chairperson students were not engaged collectively. We have since implemented an Advising Day for our majors, minors and any interested students. This is in addition to using the course evaluations from our core courses. These are still being retrieved.

The only external sources consulted were

