



## **Rename the Department of "African American Studies" to "African American and Africana Studies" (Senate Document #23-24-06)**

**PRESENTED BY** Wendy Stickle, Chair, Senate Programs, Curricula, and Courses Committee

**REVIEW DATES** SEC – September 11, 2023 | SENATE – October 3, 2023

**VOTING METHOD** In a single vote

**RELEVANT  
POLICY/DOCUMENT**

**NECESSARY  
APPROVALS** Senate, President, and USM Chancellor

### **ISSUE**

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The College of Behavioral and Social Sciences's Department of African American Studies proposes to change the name of its department from "African American Studies" to "African American and Africana Studies". Research interests within the department have shifted significantly over the years and now include major projects situated in Africa and the Diaspora. This name change also reflects the undergraduate student body, which has changed over the past decade and now has a much higher proportion of first generation or second-generation students from Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere. This departmental name change is also consistent with many peer institutions in the BIG TEN, where department names include African (Michigan, Ohio State), African Diaspora (Indiana) or Africana (Rutgers). Other departments are called "Black Studies" to encompass the global perspective on race. During its more than 50 years of existence, the African American Studies Department has focused on providing critical assessments and solutions for contemporary problems facing the African American community. With faculty trained in sociology, psychology, criminology, African American and American Studies, history and philosophy, the department is well positioned to address these issues in a global perspective by examining Africa, the African Diaspora, and the interrelations between peoples of African descent. The department has also modified existing courses and developed new courses on Africa and the Diaspora that reflect the human, cultural, social, political, economic, and historical factors that have created and shaped the "Black" social experience globally. Separate proposals have also been submitted to change the names of the Upper Division Certificate and the Bachelor of Arts in "African American Studies" to "African American and Africana Studies".

The proposal was approved by the Senate Programs, Curricula, and Courses committee on September 1, 2023.

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

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The Senate Committee on Programs, Curricula, and Courses recommends that the Senate approve this name change.

## **COMMITTEE WORK**

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The committee considered this proposal at its meeting on September 1, 2023. Sangeetha Madhavan and Ashley Newby, from the Department of African American Studies, and Katherine Russell, from the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, presented the proposal and answered questions from the committee. The committee approved the proposal.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

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The Senate could decline to approve this new department name.

## **RISKS**

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If the Senate declines to approve this department name change, the current name will not adequately describe the coursework and activities of the department.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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There are no significant financial implications for this name change.

**University of Maryland  
PCC Proposal**

**PCC Log No: 23024**

**Program:** African American Studies 128301

**Department/Unit:** African American Studies Department

**College/School:** BSOS 28


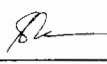
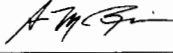
**Proposal Contact Person (with email):** Ashley Newby, anewby1@umd.edu

**Type of Action (check one):**

- Change to Unit, Department, or College
- Other:

Please see BSOS memo 08.04.2023. Proposed changes below to be considered at this time include (1) change department name and (4) change course prefix. Proposed changes 2, 3, and 5 will be routed separately via campus online workflow.

**Approval Signatures** - Please print name, sign, and date. For proposals requiring multiple unit approvals, please use additional cover sheet(s). Digital signatures may be used.

1. Department Committee Chair Dr. Robert Choflet 3/10/2023 
2. Department Chair Dr. Sangeetha Madhavan 3/10/2023 
3. College/School PCC Chair Kristi Hall Aug 5, 2023
4. Dean Katherine Russell Aug 4, 2023  Aug 5, 2023
5. Dean of the Graduate School (if required) \_\_\_\_\_
6. Chair, Senate PCC Wendy Stickle September 1, 2023
7. University Senate Chair (if required) \_\_\_\_\_
8. Senior Vice President and Provost \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:**  
When approved by the dean of the college or school, please email the proposal to [pcc-submissions@umd.edu](mailto:pcc-submissions@umd.edu).

**Summary of Proposed Action (use additional sheet if necessary):**

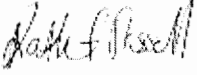
**Unit Code(s)** (to be entered by the Office of Academic Planning and Programs):



UNIVERSITY OF  
**MARYLAND**  
COLLEGE OF BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
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To: Wendy Stickle  
Chair, 2023-2024 University Senate PCC Committee

From: Katherine Ford Russell   
Associate Dean, College of Behavioral and Social Sciences

RE: Proposed Department Name Change & Course Prefix Change

Date: August 4, 2023

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Attached please find a PCC proposal from the Department of African American Studies (128301) in the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences (28) at University of Maryland.

I am requesting that the University Senate PCC Committee consider only the following two changes in the proposal at this time.

- Change the name of the Department from African American Studies to the **Department of African American and Africana Studies.**
- Change the course prefix from AASP to **AAAS.**

The other three changes described in the attached proposal (change the title of the major, change the title of the certificate, and change the certificate curriculum) will be routed through the appropriate online workflows for separate consideration by the University Senate PCC and VPAC Committees.

Please feel free to be in touch with me or with the BSOS PCC Chair, Kristi Hall, should you have any questions or concerns.

CC: Susan Rivera, Dean, College of Behavioral and Social Sciences  
Kristi Hall, Associate Director & BSOS College PCC Chair  
Mike Colson, Senior Coordinator for Academic Programs, Office of the Provost

### **Changes Proposed:**

1. Change the name of the department from “African American Studies” to “African American and Africana Studies”
2. Change the title of the undergraduate major from “African American Studies” to “African American and Africana Studies”
3. Change the title of the undergraduate certificate from “African American Studies” to African American and Africana Studies”
4. Change course prefix from AASP to AAAS
5. Modify undergraduate certificate to offer more flexibility for completion.

### **Summary of Proposed Action:**

#### ***Name Change:***

The future of African American studies as a field requires the critical assessment and inclusion of the challenges faced by people who share the “racial marker” in the global world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To reflect this shift, we propose a modification of the name of the department from African American Studies (AFAM) to African American and Africana Studies (AAAS). This change is consistent with three important trends. First, the faculty and the research interests of the department have shifted significantly over the years and now includes major research projects situated in Africa and the Diaspora. Second, the undergraduate student body at UMD has changed over the past decade and now has a much higher proportion of first generation or second-generation students from Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere. Third, it is consistent with many of our peer institutions in the BIG TEN where department names include African (Univ. of Michigan, Ohio State), African Diaspora (Indiana) or Africana (Rutgers). Other departments are called “Black Studies” to encompass the global perspective on race. Indeed, intellectual luminaries such as W.E.B. DuBois and icons of the Civil Rights movement including Dr. King and Malcolm X recognized the importance of global connections.

During its more than 50 years of existence, the African American Studies Department at the University of Maryland College Park has focused on providing critical assessments and solutions for contemporary problems facing the African American community. With faculty trained in sociology, psychology, criminology, African American and American Studies, history and philosophy, our department is well positioned to address these issues in a global perspective by examining Africa, the African Diaspora, and the interrelations between peoples of African descent. The name change we are proposing makes visible our main goal - to develop an interdisciplinary vocabulary and method for the study of the interconnections between North America, Africa and the African Diaspora in order to understand similarities and differences in life chances for individuals and communities of “African” descent. While we will of course continue our focus on African American communities, our students will benefit through exposure to global contexts which, in turn, should serve them well on the job market. Indeed, the name change signifies both our continued commitment to the betterment of African American lives and the strengthening of our relevance to the global landscape paying particular attention to diversity within and across groups. Moreover, retaining “African American” in the name ensures continuity of identity for our alumni who comprise a critical constituent. Through the modification of existing courses in the Social/Cultural and Policy tracks and the development of new courses on Africa and the diaspora,

we propose to transform the department so that human, cultural, social, political, economic, and historical factors that have created and shaped the “Black” social experience globally, is critically examined through qualitative and quantitative analysis.

The proposed name change is also timely in light of the Anti-Black Racism Initiative (ABRI) and, in particular, the new ABRI minor, which will be housed in our department, and the incorporation of the new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion learning outcomes given the attention to Black diversity in the US and globally.

Process

The “name modification” issue has been discussed at multiple faculty retreats over several years and faculty have thoroughly considered the benefits and possible downsides. Through these discussions, we narrowed the options to “African American and Africana” and “Black Studies.” It should be noted that, in recognition of faculty in the History Department whose specialty is African history, we are using *Africana* instead of African Studies. We also confirmed that no other USM campus has a similar name (University of Maryland Baltimore comes closest with “Department of Africana Studies”).

The department held a formal (anonymous) vote on October 5, 2022, including all TTK and PTK faculty, staff and the leadership of the Judge Alexander Williams Jr. Center (JAWC), housed in our department. The ballot offered three options: African American and Africana Studies, Black Studies, and No Change. The results were as follows:

- Department of African American and Africana Studies – 12
- Department of Black Studies – 5
- No change – 1.

***Modifications to Certificate***

Title of the Certificate:

Certificate in African American and Africana Studies

Start Term for Certificate (modified):

Fall 2023

**Table: Structure - Segments and Program Requirements**

<b>Segments</b>	<b>Current Requirements</b>	<b>Proposed Changes</b>
1. Required Foundation Courses   9 credits	AASP100	<b><i>AASP 100 or AASP200</i></b>
	AASP 101	<b><i>AASP 101 or AASP202</i></b>
	AASP200 or AASP202	<b><i>AASP GenEd of Choice</i></b>

2. AASP Upper-Level* Elective Courses   9 credits  (*300 or 400-Level)	AASP Course of Choice 1	AASP Course of Choice 1
	AASP Course of Choice 1	AASP Course of Choice 1
	AASP Course of Choice 1	AASP Course of Choice 1
3. AASP Seminar Course   3 credits	AASP400 or AASP402	<i>Optional Capstone - Approved AASP 400-level course, Education Abroad experience, UTA, etc.</i>

Current Catalog Description for Certificate:

The Certificate in African American Studies offers undergraduate students an excellent opportunity to develop a specialization in African-American issues while pursuing a major in another field. Certificate students learn about the social, economic, political and cultural history of the African-American people through a concentration of courses they plan with the AASP Academic Advisor. Courses taken toward the certificate also may be used to satisfy General Education requirements and electives. Earning a Certificate in African American Studies gives students a competitive advantage in the job market by adding greater focus to their undergraduate experience.

Rationale for Modifications:

Currently, the Department of African American Studies (AASP) has five undergraduate programs: a B.A. in African American Studies and a B.A. with a Concentration in Public Policy (track), the Certificate in African American Studies, the Minor in African Studies, and the Minor in Black Women's Studies, jointly offered by the Harriet Tubman Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

New Description:

*The Certificate in African American and Africana Studies is ideal for students who want to incorporate critical Black studies with their elected major in other departments, schools, or academic programs. Certificate students receive the same interdisciplinary approach used in examining the socio-economic, historical, political, and cultural contributions of people of African descent as the major program. They are encouraged to design their own emphasis area with flexible lower-level requirements and upper-level elective courses. Students interested in a more comprehensive program may consider a track within the major.*

Five proposed changes to the certificate are designed to enhance the efficiency of students' ability to complete the certificate program by expanding their flexibility to use multiple AASP courses including GenEd, cross-listed, and approved course offerings to complete certain program requirements. In addition, the number of credits required will be reduced to 18 credits, making 21 credits (capstone options) optional.

Modification 1:

Required Foundation Courses - Segment 1, Course 1 (3 credits): The current certificate requires students to take AASP100, "Introduction to African American Studies." Our revision will add AASP200, "African Civilization", as an option. The addition of AASP200 in this area provides students with an opportunity to think about the focus of their emphasis area, whether the student is interested in courses that are more U.S. based, or global in context. Both courses serve as a foundation for most upper-level courses.

Modification 2:

Required Foundation Courses - Segment 1, Course 2 (3 credits): The current certificate requires students to take AASP101, "Public Policy and the Black Community." Our revision will add AASP202, "Black Culture in the United States", as an option in this area to align certificate requirements more closely with requirements in the major program.

Modification 3:

Required Foundation Courses - Segment 1, Course 3 (3 credits): The current course requirement allows students to select AASP200 or AASP202. The modification in this area will allow students to draw from a more expansive and flexible list of lower-level GenEd courses, including AASP I-Series and cross-listed courses. Students could also select courses not taken as courses 1 or 2 in this segment. And some students may elect to take courses cross-listed from their primary department with AASD to create a path for their emphasis area within the certificate program.

Modification 4:

AASP Seminar Course - Segment 3 (3 credits): The current course requirement allows students to select AASP400, "Directed Readings in African American Studies", or AASP402, "Classic Readings in African American Studies", as a seminar "capstone course" for the program. The modification would eliminate the requirement of a seminar course reducing the total number of credits for the certificate from 21 to 18 credits. In recent years it has been challenging to offer either course for various reasons. We have tried to offer AASP400, the only upper-level GenEd course in the department (with an honors section), however, the scheduling has been infrequent and we've had to approve other AASP 400-level courses in order for students to complete the requirement.

Modification 5:

Optional Capstone - Segment 3 (3 credits minimum): The modification would propose that a capstone for the program would be optional and would expand to include experiential learning with an approved internship, faculty mentoring in a research practicum, an approved Education Abroad experience, a teaching assistantship in an AASP course, or an approved 400-level AASP "seminar" course. This option may be attractive to students who would like to demonstrate a mastery of the discipline within the certificate program while gaining tangible skills and valuable experiences.

Capstone Options:

- AASP386: Experiential Learning in African American Studies, or BSOS355: Social Sciences Internship Practicum (Summer)
- AASP479: Special Research in African American Studies



- TLTC333: Fundamentals of Academic Peer Mentoring & TLTC399: Independent Study in Academic Peer Mentoring
- Education Abroad, an approved experience in the African diaspora
- Seminar, approved AASP 400-level courses, including AASP400 or AASP402 (when offered)

Further, to help students navigate the eligible courses that will count for their elective and optional capstone requirements, each semester in advance of pre-registration, the Academic Advisor will circulate a list of courses that will meet the requirements of the Certificate with suggested emphasis areas.

These proposed changes increase flexibility, thereby aiding in completion of the program. They facilitate the integration of African studies and African diaspora studies into the Certificate, expand on opportunities to utilize more AASD GenEd courses, and continue to draw on the existing expertise that resides in the department and with affiliate faculty, thereby reflecting the interdisciplinary strength of Black studies across campus.

The department voted unanimously (11 for, 0 against) for modifications for the certificate on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. The vote included TTK and PTK faculty, staff and the leadership of the Judge Alexander Williams Jr. Center (JAWC), housed in our department.