



**MASTER OF ARTS
DEGREE IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES
STUDENT HANDBOOK**

2014-2015

**Department of African-American Studies
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NYANSAPO
"Wisdom knot"

A symbol of wisdom, ingenuity, intelligence and patience

Welcome!

On behalf of the administration, faculty, staff, and current student body, we would like to extend a heartfelt welcome to you from the Department of African-American Studies as you begin your journey towards the Master of Arts degree. We are all very happy that you have joined this community of scholars as you complete your degree.

The faculty will encourage you to take full advantage of the research, teaching, and scholastic opportunities as well as all the cultural activities the local Atlanta community has to offer. We hope that your time with us will be academically thought provoking, boundary breaking, intellectually inspiring, and personally satisfying.

We have worked hard to provide you with accurate information pertaining to a comprehensive array of policies and procedures related to our graduate program, but if you have any questions that remain unanswered in this handbook, please consult with the Graduate Program Director. This *Handbook for the Master of Arts Degree in African-American Studies* is designed to provide a convenient guide to students in the M.A. program in African-American Studies at Georgia State University. This *Handbook* is meant to supplement the *College of Arts and Sciences Graduate Bulletin*. (The *Graduate Bulletin*, available online at http://www.gsu.edu/images/Downloadables/Catalog_Graduate_08-09.pdf, always takes precedence over any departmental documents.) Students should use this *Handbook* for guidance but remain in contact with the AAS Graduate Program Director and with the AAS office.

Best wishes,

Akinyele Umoja, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of African American
Studies

Sarita K. Davis, Ph.D., MSW
Graduate Program Director

Introduction

The Department of African-American Studies (AAS) was founded in 1994. African-American Studies offers an interdisciplinary approach to the study of African people nationally and globally. It offers critical attention to the various dynamics of human reality, including race, that affect the lives of African people worldwide. As an interdisciplinary field of concentration, it offers critiques of knowledge presented in traditional disciplines and professions, scholarly and artistic accounts of realities of the lives of African-Americans, and perspectives on social change. AAS provides students with the intellectual origins, concepts, research, tools, and models of the discipline. The Department also provides the knowledge and skills necessary for the study of group cultures, and a curriculum that contributes to the goals of multicultural education. Faculty and courses are drawn from the Department itself and from other departments and programs within the university. We appreciate your interest. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of service.

AAS has eight (8) core faculty and twenty (20) affiliate faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Education. Associates teach African-American Studies courses, serve on AAS committees, and serve on graduate thesis committees as members or chairs. A complete list of core and affiliate faculty can be found below.

Here is the contact information for the **core** faculty and staff of the AAS:

CORE FACULTY

	Contact Information	Research Interests	Teaching Interests
Makungu Akinyela Associate Professor Emory University	makinyela@gsu.edu 3-5141	Narrative Therapy and Narrative Practices of Family Counseling	Theory
Lia Bascomb Assistant Professor UC Berkeley	lbascomb@gsu.edu 3-5137	Popular Culture	Popular Culture
Sarita Davis Assistant Professor Cornell University	saritadavis@gsu.edu 3-5134	Sexual Health, HIV/AIDS Prevention Education	Research Methodology and Health Disparities (HIV)
Patricia Dixon Associate Professor Temple University	pdixon2@gsu.edu 3-5139	African American Families, and Female/ Male Relationships, and Community Development	Female/Male Relationships
Jonathan Gayles Associate Professor University of South Florida	jgayles@gsu.edu 3-5142	Education, Educational Policy, and Masculinity	Research Methods, Introduction to African- American Studies, and Black Masculinity

Maurice Hobson
Assistant Professor
University of Illinois,
Urbana-Champaign

mhobson@gsu.edu
3-5136

Atlanta History

Urban History,
Ethnography, and
Popular Culture

Jamae Morris
Assistant Professor
University of South
Florida

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3-5145

Health Disparities

Health Inequities in the
US, The Health of
Black Women, and
Health Issues in the
African Diaspora.

Cora Presley
Associate Professor
Stanford University

cpresley@gsu.edu
3-5132

African Women's
History

African Women and
Liberation Movements

Akinyele Umoja
Associate Professor
Chair
Emory University

aadaku@gsu.edu
3-5133

African American
Social Movements,
Civil Rights
Movement, and Black
Power Movement

African American
Social Movements,
Civil Rights
Movement, and Black
Power Movement

STAFF

	Contact Information	Telephone
Belinda Futrell Business Manager	bfutrell@gsu.edu	3-5138
Tiffany Bullock Administrative Assistant	tbullock1@gsu.edu	3-5135

AFFILIATE FACULTY

Mohammed Hassen Ali, History	Shirlene Holmes Communications	Jacqueline A. Rouse History	Elizabeth West English
Allison Calhoun-Brown Political Science	Carrie Manning Political Science	Aida Harvey Sociology	Mary B. Zeigler English
Kimberly Cleveland Art History	Carol P. Marsh-Lockett English	Oliver Green Music	Tiffani King Institute for Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
Geoffrey J. Haydon Music	Abbas Barzegar Religious Studies	Chantee Earl Education	Marva Carter Music
Joyce King Education	Lakeyta Bonnette Political Science	Gladys Francis Modern Classical Language	Gordon J. Vernick Music

Christina Fuller
Public Health

Chivon Mingo
Gerontology

Harcourt Fuller
History

Ryan Heath
English

Vincent Lloyd
Religious Studies

Natalie Tindall
Communications

For updates on AAS course offerings, activities, and policies, visit our web page at <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwaad/>

Students are encouraged to participate in governing the Department of African-American Studies by serving on AAS committees. Students interested in the governing of AAS can obtain a copy of the *Department of African-American Studies Bylaws* from the AAS office and contact the AAS Graduate Program Director.

Degree Requirements

Master of Arts

The M.A. in African-American Studies requires thirty-six (36) semester hours of graduate course work, eighteen hours of which are required (**AAS 6000, AAS 6005, AAS 6007, AAS 6010, AAS 6012 and AAS 6052**), and twelve hours of which may be taken from AAS courses or from approved courses in other departments. (Students holding graduate assistantships (GAs) may be required to carry more hours (non-thesis hours), although this requirement does not alter the number of hours required to complete the master's degree program.) To get a course approved, discuss it with the AAS Graduate Program Director and get approval in writing or via e-mail. For available courses, see the *Department of African-American Studies Schedule of Courses* for the current year or visit the GSU Go Solar web page. Coursework must be completed with a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 (B) or better; please note that B- does not fulfill this requirement. Full-time graduate students are expected to take the core courses offered fall and spring semester. Part-time graduate students are expected to take at least one core course each semester until they finish the core.

Courses

In order to earn a Master of Arts degree in African-American Studies, a student must complete 36 credits hours of graduate coursework:

1. Students must complete eighteen (18) hours of core requirements:
 - a. AAS 6000 Proseminar in African-American Studies (3)
 - b. AAS 6005 Theories in African-American Studies (3)
 - c. AAS 6007 Black Feminist Thought (3)
 - d. AAS 6010 Research Methods in African-American Studies (3)
 - e. AAS 6012 Qualitative Research Methods (3)
 - f. AAS 6052 African Women and Socio/Political Change (3)
2. Students must complete twelve (12) credit hours of coursework in one of two areas of concentrations: Community Empowerment or Culture and Aesthetics.
3. Students who select the Community Empowerment concentration must complete at least twelve (12) credit hours of designated Community Empowerment coursework. Below are some suggested courses, but other graduate-level courses may be considered if approved by the Graduate Program Director:
 - African-American Social Movements* (**guided elective**)
 - Seminar in African-American History
 - Seminar in African-American Women's History
 - Seminar in Southern Modern Civil Rights Movement
 - African-American Political Participation
 - Dynamics of the African-American Family
 - African-American Masculinity

- African-American Women in the U.S.
 - Diaspora * (**guided elective**)
 - African-American Community Empowerment
 - Ethnicity and Aging
 - African-American Anthropology
 - African Social Movements
 - Africana Women and Social Political Change
 - African Politics
 - Geography of Africa
4. Students who select the Culture and Aesthetics concentration must complete at least twelve (12) credit hours of designated Culture and Aesthetics coursework. Below are some suggested courses, but other courses may be considered if approved by the Graduate Program Director:
- African Art
 - Contemporary African Art
 - Art of Egypt, Nubia & Maghrib
 - African-American Literary Theory
 - 19th Century African-American Literature
 - 20th Century African-American Literature
 - African-American Language
 - The Black Arts Movements
 - African-American Art
 - Jazz Styles
5. Students must complete at least six (6) credit hours of AAS 8999 Thesis Research.
6. Students must submit an approved thesis.
7. Students must satisfactorily pass an oral thesis defense.

Annual Evaluation of Students

All students enrolled in the AAS M.A. program will receive an annual evaluation. The purpose of the annual evaluation is to assess students' academic progress, rank students for GRA funding, and commend students for outstanding accomplishments (i.e., Student Appreciation). Students will be evaluated by the AAS core faculty on the basis of 1) GPA; 2) timeliness of academic progress (e.g., selection of thesis advisor and thesis committee, absence of incompletes on the transcript, etc.); 3) performance on the thesis proposal defense; 4) scholarly/ artistic/activist productivity (e.g., presentations, publications, performances, awards, etc.); and 5) GRA performance (where relevant). Annual evaluations will take place during April of each year. On **March 31st of each year** students will submit a current copy of their curriculum vitae to the Graduate Program Director. Students will receive feedback on their progress toward graduation by the end of the spring semester each year.

Thesis Committee

A thesis committee shall be comprised of a minimum of three (3) faculty members. A minimum of two (2) shall be AAS faculty members (Core, Associate, or Affiliate). The third member, as well as any subsequent members, may be members' of the AAS faculty or other departments. Under special circumstances, students, with permission of the Graduate Program Director, may have committee members from other institutions. In no instance, however, shall the number of committee members who are not members of the AAS exceed the number of committee members who are members of the AAS. Students shall select their thesis advisor by the second semester of their first year and shall complete the selection of their thesis committee before the commencement of the next fall term.

The Chair of the thesis committee must be an AAS faculty member. Under special circumstances and with permission from the Graduate Program Director, committees may be co-chaired; however, at least one co-chair must be an AAS faculty member and the number of co-chairs who are not members of the AAS cannot exceed the number of co-chairs who are members of the AAS.

The first two (2) members of the thesis committee, including the chair or co-chair(s), whether from the AAS or elsewhere, must be full-time, tenured, or tenure-track faculty members. Additionally, at no time shall the number of committee members who are not full-time, tenured, or tenure-track faculty members exceed the number of committee members who are full-time, tenured, or tenure-track faculty members.

Committee Changes

Except for faculty members who are no longer employed by the University, no committee member including the Chair may be replaced or withdrawn from a committee without his or her explicit consent. All committee changes must be approved by both the Graduate Program Director and Thesis Chair. The written petition specifies that all members of both committees (the previous committee and the proposed committee) agree to the change, and that new members will:

1. Have ample time to become familiar with the student's thesis;
2. Accept the committee responsibility; and
3. Are aware that there will be no reimbursement for any expenses incurred.

Thesis Proposal and Thesis

The thesis proposal is defended before the thesis chair and two other committee members. If a student wishes to include a committee member not on the full-time faculty at Georgia State University, the student must request permission from the thesis committed.

Committee members will have at least two weeks time to review a thesis proposal. Before the student can proceed with writing the thesis, the student's committee must approve the proposal unanimously. When a committee has approved a thesis, the AAS Graduate Program Director must be informed immediately and presented with the signed Thesis Proposal Defense form .

The thesis is a rigorous research paper (**approximately 100 pages typed and double-spaced**) on a focused topic that informs the body of literature in African-American Studies. Students may find it useful to examine M.A. theses that are available in the university library. The student is responsible for making the final version of the thesis conform to format, style, and other requirements of the thesis committee as well as the College of Arts and Sciences. Students should consult the *College of Arts and Sciences Thesis Guidelines* for thesis requirements available at <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwgas/dissertations.html>. Additional copies of these guidelines are available in the AAS office. An electronic version must be submitted to the GSU Office of Graduate Studies and a traditional bound copy must be deposited with the AAS.

When the thesis committee judges that the thesis is ready for presentation, the student presents the thesis orally before the thesis committee and any other interested faculty and students. This public presentation is known traditionally as the **thesis defense**. The thesis committee is the sole judge of the quality of the thesis and must approve it before it can be turned in to the Office of Graduate Studies. Approval is indicated by the signature of the thesis chair as per the above hyperlinked guidelines for electronic thesis submission; however, an AAS Thesis Defense Form signed by all committee members must also be deposited with the AAS Graduate Program Director. There are two deadlines for the presenting the thesis: **The Thesis Proposal deadline is October 31st and the Thesis Defense deadline is March 15th. Students who fail to present their documents prior to these deadlines are at risk of not graduating in May of their final year.**

Students may take Thesis Hours (AAS 8999) at any time during their period of matriculation; *however*, only students who are making satisfactory academic progress may enroll in Thesis Hours. A minimum of six (6) thesis hours is required for the M.A. degree. In principle, thesis hours are intended for students who are actively working on a Master's thesis after a thesis proposal has been approved; however, students may use thesis hours to conduct preliminary research. Students should consult their thesis advisors regarding their academic progress and the use of thesis hours. Students are encouraged to use thesis hours judiciously and with prudence.

Your thesis must be carefully prepared according to the Graduate Office of Arts and Sciences guidelines, which are available at <http://www.cas.gsu.edu/grad.html> and also <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwgas/dissertations.html>.
Research Involving Human Participants

Any study involving human research participants requires special approval. If the thesis research project (or any other project) uses questionnaires or otherwise involves human research participants, the student must obtain the *Application and Guidelines for Research Involving Human Subjects* from the office of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), Alumni Hall G76,

phone 404-651-4689 or online at http://www.gsu.edu/research/human_subjects.html. Online submission is now strongly preferred, and students (as well as the faculty members who sign off on their applications) must complete an online training module before submitting the application. Please note that this training module is lengthy and may take from 1½ to 4 hours to complete. The IRB approval process can take anywhere from two weeks to two months. *No data collection can take place prior to IRB approval.* Plan accordingly!

Transfer Credit

Students may transfer up to **six semester hours** of previous graduate coursework toward the M.A. degree upon recommendation from the AAS Graduate Program Director and Director of Graduate Studies and approval by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Financial Assistance

Graduate Assistantships (GAs)

The Department of African-American Studies awards a small number of **Graduate Assistantships (GAs)** each year. There are two types: GRA (graduate research assistant) and WAC (writing across the curriculum consultants). Students holding GRAs work with faculty members on research projects or class-room related activities. Some GRAs may be assigned to the department and will assist with clerical and creative needs of the department. Students holding work with faculty teaching writing intensive courses. These students will assist faculty with reviewing and assessing written assignments as well as instructing students with re-writes. Students receiving WACs must participate in a one-time only WAC training session the summer prior to the fall term. Please note that, unlike GRAs, WACs, may be for one semester only and carry a variable stipend and tuition waiver.

The Chair of AAS, in consultation with the Graduate Director, decides which students will receive GAs. GRAs are assigned to faculty based on research interests. WACs are assigned to faculty based on the number of students approved through the WAC program. WAC and GRA positions require 8-10 hours of work each week during the semester. All GA positions include tuition waivers. Note that student fees and summer funding are not covered by GAs.

Students holding GAs must register for at least 9 hours to be considered full-time (note: this requirement does not hold for non-GA students). Nine to twelve hours may be regular classes or thesis hours, and the remaining hours may be AAS 8990, Directed Research (a variable number of hours course that does not meet but gives GAs course credit for doing GA work).

New students applying for GAs must have all application materials in to the Graduate Office by **February 15 or the second Friday of the month** (whichever comes later) to be considered in the first decision-making process (later applications may be considered if funding becomes available). Students can receive **GA funding for 2 years maximum.** Students are encouraged to apply for extramural fellowships and may hold graduate assistantships outside AAS. *All students*

holding GAs are required to carry health insurance, either through university student health insurance or an approved alternate provide (International students are required to carry university student health insurance whether or not they hold a GA.)

Eligibility Requirements for GAs

1. Students receive graduate assistantships based on availability and on the student's academic records or prospective performances, academic or career interests, as well as previous experiences in, for example, research, volunteer work, or community service.
2. GA students must be registered for at least **9 semester hours** of course work in fall and spring semesters, plus **9 hours of Non-Thesis Research in African-American Studies (AAS 8990)** to reflect the work done for the GA, for **18 credit hours total**. *AAS 8990 does not count as part of the 36 hours of coursework required for the M.A. degree.*
3. GA students must not hold full-time jobs and cannot hold student assistant positions or other part-time Georgia State University positions. They may, however, hold up to 2 GA appointments. These can be from different departments or units.

Tuition Waivers

All GA positions include tuition waivers. Non-GA students can apply for **out-of-state** or **international tuition waivers**. All tuition waivers are for one year. The student must inform the AAS office in advance of registration at the beginning of each academic year that a tuition waiver is needed. See the online Graduate Catalog for more information.

Other Sources of Financial Aid

Information about other possible sources of financial aid is available at the **Office of Student Financial Aid** at (404) 413-2400. You can also visit the **GSU Web Page** at http://www.gsu.edu/es/financial_aid.html for information about housing, financial aid, and registration.

General Information

Advisement

Advisement for graduate students in the Department of African-American Studies is done by the **Graduate Program Director**. Please contact the AAS office for an appointment. The Graduate Program Director will serve as the default faculty mentor until the student selects her or his own thesis committee chair. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with the Graduate Program Director at least once a year to discuss his or her progress.

Course Load

Twelve credit hours per semester are considered a full load for a graduate student. If a student wishes to complete the M.A. program in African-American Studies in the recommended two years, she or he should take 9 hours a semester during the first year. Students holding GAs must register for 9 credit hours of coursework plus AAS 8980, Non-Thesis Research, for a total of 12 hours. AAS 8980 *does not* count in the 36 hours of coursework required for the M.A. in African-American Studies. Many students choose to take summer courses in order to concentrate on the thesis during the last year of the program. Students with summer GAs must register for a full load of summer coursework (nine hours of course work plus AAS 8980), the same as in the regular semesters. Courses taken in the Maymester count as part of the summer course load.

Grades

AAS uses a +/- grading system that awards the following grades: A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D (60-69), and F (<59). For AAS 8999 (Thesis credit) the grade of IP (in progress) is given. These IP grades will not be computed in the student's cumulative grade-point average. When the student's thesis has been approved and the student has met all the requirements for graduation, all the IP grades will be changed to P (Pass). For AAS 8980, Non-Thesis Research (the course that students holding GAs take), grades given are S (Satisfactory) or U (Unsatisfactory).

A student must have a cumulative grade point average of "B" or better in order to receive a graduate degree. Please note that B- *does not* meet this requirement. If a student's cumulative grade-point average falls below 3.0 at the end of a semester, an academic warning will be issued from the Office of Graduate Studies. If at the end of the next eighteen semester hours of enrollment a 3.0 or better cumulative GPA is not achieved, the student will be dismissed from the program.

First-year students holding provisional enrollment status must attain a B or higher grade (*not* B-) in each course for which they are enrolled in order to gain regular enrollment status from their second year forward.

Directed Readings Courses (AAS 6999)

The Directed Readings course (AAS 6999) is reserved for advanced M.A. students moving towards a well-defined research topic who are in need of a special course to address themes not already covered in existing AAS courses. *Students who are in their first semester of study should not request a directed readings course, nor should students request such a course to study material already covered in an existing course (for example, because the student wishes to take the course in a different semester than the course is normally offered).* The only exception is for M.A. students who wish to create a custom graduate component for a specialized course that is only offered at the undergraduate level. Such students, in consultation with the instructor of the

undergraduate course, and with approval of the Graduate Program Director, may establish a directed readings course which mirrors, but goes significantly beyond, the material presented in the syllabus for the undergraduate course in question.

The procedure for setting up a directed readings course is as follows: 1) The student should discuss the course desired with an interested faculty member and, together with this faculty member, plan the list of readings, the timeline, and the measurable outcomes (e.g., a paper, a conference presentation, etc.). 2) Using the Directed Readings Form in the back of this Graduate Handbook, the student should obtain signatures of the faculty member with whom the course will take place as well as the Graduate Program Director. 3) The student should leave a signed copy with the Graduate Program Director and keep a photocopy of the signed form for her/his own records.

Students may take up to two (2) AAS 6999 courses during their matriculation in the AAS M.A. Program. These courses will count as electives on the program of study.

Graduation

A student must apply for graduation through the Office of the Registrar **two semesters** in advance of the expected graduation date. The deadlines for application for each semester's graduation are published in the *Graduate Catalog* and at <http://www.cas.gsu.edu/grad.html>. Students who have completed their coursework are automatically placed on the list to graduate by the Graduation Office. If they do not plan to graduate, they must notify the Graduation Office by that semester's announced deadline or they will be charged a graduation fee of \$50.00. Please read the Continuous Enrollment policy below, as it relates to graduation.

Petitions

Students who wish to deviate from any of the College requirements for the M.A. degree may petition the Graduate Petitions Committee of the College to grant a waiver of the requirement.

Time Limits for Completion of Requirements

A student must graduate within seven calendar years of taking her or his first class applied to the M.A. program in African-American Studies. Any deviation from this schedule will require a written petition to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

Recommended Timeline for Completion of the AAS M.A. Degree

The AAS M.A. degree is designed to take 2 years for full-time students. Students should strive to complete their studies and defend their theses within this timeframe.

During the first year, full-time students should complete all six core courses (AAS 6000, 6005, 6007, 6010, 6012, and 6052). By the time of the first annual evaluation, which occurs near end of the first year, students should have selected a thesis advisor.

By the second semester of the first year, students should have selected all members of their thesis committee. During the second year, students should finish all remaining electives and begin taking thesis hours.

Ideally, students will complete and defend the thesis proposal no later than the first semester of the second year and finish their thesis no later than the second semester of the second year. It would be undesirable for full-time students to continue beyond the second year in the absence of extreme extenuating circumstances. As indicated above, GA funding is only available for two years for students to whom it is awarded.

Part-time students will take considerably different trajectories based on their individual circumstances and should consult with the Graduate Program Director to establish a trajectory for completion.

Forms you will need to complete as you move through the timeline include:

Annual Student Evaluation Form (each year by March 31st) *

Thesis Committee Form (each year by March 31st)*

Thesis Proposal Defense Form (fall of 2nd year)

Final Defense of Thesis Form (spring of 2nd year)

*If the date falls on a weekend, the preceding Friday will be the due date.

Continuous Enrollment

GSU now requires all graduate students to 1) be enrolled during the semester they graduate and 2) to carry a total of 6 semester hours across the 3 semesters including and preceding the semester of their graduation. For example, if you plan to graduate in spring, you must be registered during the spring semester *and* have accrued a total of 6 semester hours across the academic year covered by the summer-fall-spring period comprising that academic year. If you fail to meet this requirement, your graduation will be delayed until you meet it. For more information, see <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwgas/enrollment.html>.

Re-entry

Students who fail to matriculate for 12 months or more will be required to file a re-entry application with the Office of Graduate Studies. Re-entry may or may not be granted upon application. Students who are granted re-entry may begin in the fall and will be subject to the policies and regulations in place at that time, not the ones that were in place at the time of their original matriculation. There is a \$25 fee for filing a re-entry application. For further instructions, see <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwgas/reentry.html>.

Student Health Insurance

The following groups of students are required to have health insurance. Students in these categories are automatically assessed a health insurance premium upon registration. Students who have comparable coverage through another insurance company have the option to waive out of this mandatory insurance plan provided by United Healthcare. See below for details about waving out of the plan.

- All undergraduate, graduate and ESL international students holding “F” or “J” visa status.
- All graduate students receiving a full-time tuition waiver as part of their graduate assistantship award.
- All graduate students receiving fellowships that fully fund their tuition.
- Undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in programs that require proof of health insurance

Important note: GSU automatically charges all GAs and international students for the health insurance by including the cost in your student fees. *Enrollment is a separate process; just because you have paid does not mean you are enrolled.* For further information, go to the **GSU website**. For more information or to enroll, go to <http://sfs.gsu.edu/tuition-fees/what-it-costs/student-health-insurance/>

Appendix A: Guidelines for Writing a Thesis Proposal and a Thesis in African-American Studies

When the faculty of the Department of African-American Studies at Georgia State University designed the Master of Arts major in African-American Studies, a decision was made to require a thesis because of a great need for research and scholarship on the lives of people of African descent in all their diversity, historically and globally. Due to the fact that African-American Studies has developed as an interdisciplinary field of study, many different research methodologies and approaches to scholarship are available. These include African-centered approaches using traditional disciplinary methods as well as more recently developed interdisciplinary methods. In deciding which methods and approaches to use, consider the question you are asking and how best to answer that question.

One of the most difficult issues to engage in an interdisciplinary field is how to translate meanings of concepts from different disciplines into new interdisciplinary meanings. There are no easy solutions. In the still emerging field of African-American Studies, the major research methodologies that serve as starting points include those coming from the social sciences, the humanities, and the fine arts. Each area approaches the development of knowledge in different ways, using different language; therefore, we present these guidelines in three modes. Remember that there is no one correct way to approach research; there are many ways; and the student researcher must work with the faculty thesis director and committee to arrive at the best solution for the particular project. Remember, also, that this document presents guidelines, not rigid rules.

Based on your reading in African-American Studies, you are familiar with the variety of questions that African-centered scholars and activists have asked, the purposes of their endeavors, and the methods they have used. As you write your thesis proposal, consider how your project will advance the field of African-American Studies and improve the conditions of communities of color lives. Search the literature of African-American Studies and of relevant disciplines for studies and works that have addressed similar questions so that your project will build on the work of others while charting new directions for future scholarship and practice. Having ranged widely in your preliminary reading of the literature on your chosen topic, narrow your focus to a feasible project, considering the time and resources you have to pursue it. Here are guidelines for preparing four different kinds of thesis proposals: 1) social sciences, 2) humanities, 3) creative fields, and 4) activist/community leadership.

Many questions you may have about writing, including preparing a thesis proposal or thesis, can be answered by the staff of the Writing Studio (www.writingstudio.gsu.edu), located in 976 General Classroom Building. Furthermore, various GSU reference librarians (based on their subject specializations) may also be able to answer questions and locate resources for your research. In addition to the GIL and GALILEO search engines, you may try Interlibrary Loan (ILLiad, www.library.gsu.edu/ils) for materials not owned by the GSU library.

Appendix B: Guidelines for a Thesis Proposal in the Social Sciences

Definition of the Research Problem

Drawing on some combination of your or others' experiences, published statistics, historical and current events, and/or bibliographical searches of "the literature," state the purpose of your research project. State the hypothesis or hypotheses you intend to test (deductive mode) or the question(s) you seek to answer (inductive mode). Explain how and why you arrived at the hypothesis or question. You can look at prefaces or introductions to books or introductions to articles to get an idea about how others have defined research problems. You may want to consult the current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (available at the Writing Studio and used by many social sciences beyond psychology) for guidelines in preparing a social scientific research proposal, thesis, or article. Some social scientific disciplines also use the *Chicago Manual of Style* (also available at the Writing Studio).

Review of Relevant Literature

As Terry Kershaw suggests in *Towards a Black Studies Paradigm: An Assessment and Some Directions*, a review of the literature is in effect a qualitative content analysis of the reported studies you have found relevant to your research problem. Write the review as a short critical, analytical essay, drawing out the themes that emerge from various studies and evaluating their effectiveness in illuminating your research problem. For purposes of critique and evaluation, you will draw on a critical framework or theoretical perspective that you have developed or drawn from the work of others.

A literature review should be more than an annotated list of sources. Such a list can be valuable in making a preliminary assessment of the literature, but a literature review for a research proposal should focus on significant ideas and themes related to your project and should cite the works that address them. Some works are central to your research problem, and it is appropriate to summarize them. Other works touch on areas related to your research only in a contextual sense; you can refer to these works in boundary-setting ways as focused on issues that your project will not address.

Research Method or Methods

State the method(s) that you will use to collect the data or evidence from which to develop your findings. Explain *and* justify (with appropriate methodological citations) why you have chosen these methods in relation to the research problem you have defined. Describe the processes by which you will select and approach your participants or texts, the kinds of questions you will ask, and the strategies you will use to develop your findings. For example, in the **deductive** mode, if you are using survey research, describe your sampling process, present the questions/items that you plan to use, and describe the statistical methods you will use. If you are conducting interviews, present some of the questions that you will use and describe how you will analyze the participants' answers. If you are doing a content analysis, describe the kinds of

themes for which you will be seeking evidence and how you will analyze your evidence quantitatively or qualitatively. If you are doing any kind of grounded research in the **inductive mode**, describe the process by which you will gather data, the kinds of questions with which you will begin, and the form of analysis you will use to develop your findings. Be sure to get Institutional Review Board approval before collecting any data involving human participants.

Significance of Your Research Project

Explain why your research will be significant for African-American Studies. This section is a place for you to state your own philosophy or theory of African-American Studies and the ways you believe your subject matter and/or research methods will contribute to the knowledge base of African-American Studies.

Institutional Review Board Process

Georgia State University Institutional Review Board approval is necessary *before* engaging in research that involves human subjects. Forms for approval can be obtained from the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs in G76 Alumni Hall or, preferably, online at http://www.gsu.edu/research/human_subjects.html. The thesis chair and AAS Graduate Program Director will assist students in preparing the forms. Please note that your thesis chair and you must both become certified by completing an online training module related to IRB principles and procedures before the IRB will grant approval for your project. Once all forms have been submitted to the IRB, approval can take anywhere from two weeks to two months and may involve meeting with the IRB board, depending on the nature of your project. You must attach copies of your IRB approval and related forms (including a sample consent form and any related questionnaires or research stimuli) to your thesis proposal at the time you submit it to AAS. For legal reasons, *IRB approval must be awarded before any data collection involving human research participants can be collected.*

Appendix C: Writing the Thesis: Some General Guidelines for Everybody

The **thesis proposal** should be written primarily in the future tense – telling what you propose to do and how you propose to do it. The **thesis** itself should be written in the present (humanities/creative) or past tense (social science/activist) – telling what you found and concluded. You can incorporate into the thesis, from the thesis proposal, the definition of problem or question, review of literature, and description of method or process, with tenses changed appropriately, before you present the results of your research. You can conclude the thesis with a short summary of what you did and how you went about it, followed by the significance of the project. As your project unfolds, you will very likely find additional relevant literature to include in the review of literature section. You also may find your research taking you in a somewhat different direction from your original proposal. The important thing to remember is to stay in communication with your thesis chair and committee members and discuss these issues and changes as they arise.

You will do yourself a favor if you examine the GSU thesis guidelines before completing your thesis. These guidelines include recommendations for chapter headings, writing style, and other elements of the thesis. GSU requires electronic submission of all theses and dissertations; see <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwgas/dissertations.html> for information. Although GSU only requires an electronic copy of your thesis, the AAS requires that you submit a traditional library bound version of your thesis to the AAS library. Since African-American Studies is interdisciplinary, future students will benefit from the opportunity to examine your thesis as an example of what an African-American Studies thesis can or should look like. Your thesis also may be used to help students in AAS 6010 (Research Methods).

At some point in time, you may consider revising your thesis and submitting it to a scholarly journal, African-centered magazine, or other venue for wider distribution. Be thinking about this possibility all along, as it will guide decisions you make about style and other matters. You should also strongly consider presenting your research at one or more conferences while you are in the program. The AAS will include opportunities for students to present their research locally through our various programs, such as the brown bag lunch series.

We hope that you find proposing and writing a thesis to be challenging, exciting, and satisfying! As you write your thesis, know that you are not only learning to be an African-American Studies researcher, but you are also making a unique contribution to the body of knowledge known as African-American Studies. Regardless of where you go or what you do after you finish the AAS M.A. program, your contributions are important!

Appendix D: Graduation Checklist for MA AAS Students

*Please complete this form in its entirety and turn it in to the AAS Graduate Program Director no later than **March 31st** along with an up-to-date copy of your curriculum vitae (CV).*

Coursework Completion (please check all that apply and fill in the blanks where required):

Name and contact information:

Expected date of graduation:

E-mail:

Date submitted:

CSSW Courses: Title	Met	Not Met	Questions
CORE CLASSES (18 credits)			
6000 Pro Seminar in AAS			
6005 Theories and Concepts in AAS			
6007 Black Feminist Thought			
6010 Research Methods (Quantitative)			
6012 Qualitative Methods			
6052 African Women and Socio/Political Change			
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT/ COMMUNITY AESTICS TRACK (12 credits)			
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
THESIS (6 credits)			
1. Thesis			
2. Thesis			

Summary of Course Requirement

Core Course Work 18

CE/CA Studies 12

Thesis 6

Total Hours 36

Comments:

STATUS: **CLEARED ()** NOT CLEARED ()

**Appendix E: Annual Student Evaluation Form
African-American Studies Program**

*Please complete this form in its entirety and turn it in to the AAS Graduate Program Director no later than **March 31st** of your first year of matriculation.*

Thesis Committee (provide name, rank, department, phone #, e-mail address):

- 1) Thesis Advisor (must be AAS core or associate faculty) _____

- 2) Other AAS Committee Member _____

- 3) Other Committee Member _____

- 4) List any additional members, if applicable _____

Initial grade (circle one): PASS, PASS w/REVISIONS, FAIL

Second grade, if applicable (circle one): PASS, PASS w/REVISIONS, FAIL

Thesis Proposal

Expected/Date of thesis proposal defense: _____

Expected/ Outcome (circle one): PASS, PASS w/REVISIONS, FAIL

IRB Approved (circle one): Y / N / Not applicable

Thesis

Thesis title: _____

Date of thesis defense: _____

Outcome (circle one): PASS, PASS w/REVISIONS, FAIL

Date revisions completed and approved (if applicable): _____

Graduation

Have you filed for graduation? Y/N (please note: you must file 2 semesters in advance)

Semester of anticipated graduation: _____

Date of actual graduation: _____

Funding (please list all types and sources since you have been in the GSU AAS M.A. Program)

Miscellaneous

What is your current GPA? _____

List any unresolved incompletes: _____

List any awards you have received while in the GSU AAS M.A.

program: _____

Any presentations? _____

Have you met the criterion for continuous enrollment? Y / N / Not applicable

Any special remarks? _____

**Appendix F: Thesis Committee Form
African American Studies Program**

*Please complete this form in its entirety and turn it in to the AAS Graduate Program Director no later than **March 31st** of your first year of matriculation.*

Your Name: _____

Year admitted to the program: _____

REQUIRED MEMBERS

1) Thesis advisor:

Name
Department
Campus Address
Campus Phone
E-mail

2) Committee Member (and/or Co-chair):

Name
Department
Campus Address
Campus Phone
E-mail

3) Committee Member:

Name
Department
Campus Address
Campus Phone
E-mail

OPTIONAL MEMBERS

4) Committee Member:

Name
Department
Campus Address
Campus Phone
E-mail

5) Committee Member:

Name
Department
Campus Address
Campus Phone
E-mail

Appendix G: Thesis Proposal Defense Form (Deadline October 31st)

Please complete this form with signatures and turn it in to the AAS Graduate Program Director on the day you defend your thesis proposal.

Your name: _____

Your complete mailing address:

E-mail address: _____

Phone number: _____

CERTIFICATIONS

The above student successfully defended her/his thesis proposal on _____ (date).

The tentative title of this thesis is: _____

Necessary IRB approval has been obtained: _____ YES _____ NO

Which type?: _____ Human Subjects (Full review)
_____ Human Subjects (Expedited Review)
_____ Exempt

IRB protocol/approval number: _____

Thesis committee approvals:

1) Thesis Advisor

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____

2) Committee Member (or Co-chair)

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____

3) Committee Member

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____

4) Committee Member

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____

5) Committee Member

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____

**Appendix H: Final Defense of Thesis Form
African-American Studies Program
(Deadline March 15th)**

Please complete this form with signatures and turn it in to the AAS Graduate Program Director on the day you defend your thesis.

Your name: _____

Your complete mailing address:

E-mail address: _____

Phone number: _____

CERTIFICATIONS

The above student successfully defended her/his thesis on _____ (date).

The final title of this thesis is: _____

Necessary IRB approval was obtained: _____ YES _____ NO

Which type?: _____ Human Subjects (Full review)

_____ Human Subjects (Expedited Review)

_____ Exempt

IRB protocol/approval number: _____

Thesis committee approvals:

1) Thesis Advisor

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____

2) Committee Member (or Co-chair)

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____

3) Committee Member

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____

4) Committee Member

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____

5) Committee Member

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix I: Thesis Sign-Off Form
(delete this tag from submitted form)

TITLE

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts in the

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

Date

by

Student Name

Committee:

Chair Name

Member Name

Member Name

Department Chair Name

Date

Appendix J: Directed Readings Request Form
African-American Studies Program: AAS 6999

Instructions: You must submit this completed form for the directed reading course you wish to undertake before the first week of the semester that you intend to do the directed reading. In addition, attach to this form: (1) the objectives of the directed reading, (2) a reading list, and (3) proposed outcomes to be evaluated (such as a paper, a series of papers, a creative work, and so on).

Student Name

Date

Student I.D.

Contact Information (phone and/or e-mail)

Title of directed reading course

Semester and year you wish to do the directed reading

Name and signature of faculty partnering for the directed reading

Faculty name: _____ Signature: _____

Approval of Graduate Program Director (Signature): _____

Appendix K: RECOMMENDED TIMELINE FOR FULL-TIME AAS M.A. STUDENTS

***Note: This chart does not include Graduate Assistantship (GA) hours.**

****Note: This chart may vary for part-time students.**

Year 1		
Fall	Spring	Summer (Optional)
<u>Coursework</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAS 6000 • AAS 6005 • AAS 6010 <u>Other</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin thinking about your thesis topic • Begin getting to know faculty in order to find a thesis advisor and thesis committee members • Check in with the Graduate Program Director by the end of the semester to discuss how you are doing 	<u>Coursework</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAS 6007 • AAS 6012 • AAS 6052 <u>Other</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select Thesis Committee Chair & committee members (Appendix D - Deadline: March 31st) • Submit Annual Evaluation materials (Deadline: March 31st) (Appendix E) • Update CV 	<u>Coursework</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CE/CA course

Year 2		
Fall	Spring	Summer
<u>Coursework</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CE/CA courses • Thesis Hours <u>Other</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis Proposal Defense (Deadline: October 31st) (Appendix E, F, & G) <u>Other</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File for graduation (2 semesters in advance) 	<u>Coursework</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CE/CA courses • Thesis Hours <u>Other</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Annual Evaluation materials (March 31st) (Appendix E) • Thesis Defense (Deadline: March 15th) (Appendix H & I) • Update CV • Exit Interview w/ Graduate Program Director • Graduation 	

Appendix L: Thesis Timeline for May Graduates

Table 2

Activity	Sept	October	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May
Prospectus Submitted / Approved by TAC (Chapters 1-3)									
Human Subjects Approval									
Data Collection									
Data Entry, Analysis & Interpretation									
Thesis Submitted to / Approved by TAC (Chapters 4-5)									
Revisions									
Final thesis submitted to Graduate Studies									
Graduation									