THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO'S
DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER

December 2019

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AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

SPECIAL EDITION

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Our Big Announcement

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Interdepartmental Graduate Concentration

Learn about our new Graduate program starting just in time for the Spring 2020 Semester.

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Recap: Open House and Speaker Series

Hear about and check out photos from our Open House and the first events of our Policing in Chicago Speaker Series.

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Upcoming Events

Mark your calendars! We have some great events coming up in 2020!

THE DEPARTMENT OF BLACK STUDIES

The Department of African American Studies is officially changing its name to **The Department of Black Studies** and will make the switch for the AY 2020-21. This change also comes with the addition of our new **Graduate Concentration in Black Studies** that will allow graduate level students to earn their Masters and Ph.D. degrees in their home department with interdisciplinary training. “We are returning to our roots”, says Dr. Jane Rhodes, Professor and Department head of Black Studies, “we think it will more accurately reflect what we study and teach.” We asked various professors what they thought about the name change as well. With their diverse backgrounds, the answers covered multiple viewpoints of why this name change is important to them, and also to the University.

FACULTY RESPONSES

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“The name change is significant for several reasons. First is the return to Black Studies as a field/discipline/commitment to community engagement. This is of particular importance to me because the majority of Black Studies departments were created as results of student and community demand. Second is our understanding of Blackness as a social, spatial and geopolitical construct rooted in solidarity and an explicit acknowledgment of the diaspora of African-descended people in the Western Hemisphere and throughout the globe.”

-David Stovall, Professor

“I’m really excited about the department’s new name. Black Studies signifies that our research and teaching is grounded in the experiences of historically oppressed and exploited populations and that we encourage an appreciation for struggles to achieve liberation and justice. The new name also signals our embrace of a global perspective that highlights the links between white supremacy, capitalism, and colonialism as well as the connections between struggles for liberation in Africa, throughout the Americas, and around the world.”

-Andy Clarno, Associate Professor

“The name change acknowledges the rethinking and signal work that has transformed the field in the last generation and that make Black Studies one of the most intellectually vibrant and consequential fields in which to be working today.”

-Ainsworth Clark, Associate Professor

“As a new assistant professor of Haitian and Caribbean arts and expressive cultures in the department, I understand the shift from the situated ethnonational American designation to a racial marker as a critical move to be inclusive of broad expressions of Blackness with which people of African descent and their interlocutors dialogue. “Black Studies” networks interdisciplinary knowledge production and practices by our faculty, students, and administrators as we think through “communion” rhetorics that nullify differences and positionality among Black people.”

-Mario LaMothe, Assistant Professor

“The name, Black Studies, is an assertion that global, white supremacist historical processes, such as colonialism, slave and plantation economies, the imposition of colonial debt on former Black colonies, etc. have all functioned to create crucial linkages amongst Black populations across national borders. That kind of critical premise can radically widen the conversation, stakes, and the political imaginary of how we understand Black racialization and how to counter the neoliberal violences that are brutalizing so much of the world”

-Helen Jun, Professor

“The formal change in the department’s name actually corresponds with the language I’ve always used in describing my vocation as a “Black Studies Scholar.” This was due, in part, to the Radical Black Education tradition of St. Louis, Missouri that shapes my view of the field. So, in a sense the name change is catching up with my personal intellectual identity. In addition to this, as a graduate student I was mentored by the Black Studies department at University of California Santa Barbara. There are at least two aspects from that department that continue to shape my work as a Black Scholar: The Black Marxist critique of raccialized capitalism, and the collective healing properties of Haitian Vodou, forms of social medicine that reside in the music, dance, rhythms, literature, and visual art of the African Diaspora.”

-Johari Jabir, Associate Professor

INTERDEPARTMENTAL GRADUATE CONCENTRATION

This concentration goes hand in hand with the name change to Black Studies. It will enable students with a wide range of intellectual and professional interests to develop expertise in race, culture and politics before embarking on their careers. For the inaugural semester we will offer 2 courses for anyone at the University to take. Make sure to sign up soon, seats are filling up quickly!

AAST 501. Interdisciplinary Seminar in Black Studies. 4 hours.
Instructor: Beth Richie
Tuesday 10:00AM – 1:00PM
Graduate introductory seminar to the intellectual traditions, theoretical frameworks, and methodological innovations shaping the interdisciplinary field of Black Studies.

AAST 502. Graduate Colloquium in Black Studies. 1 hour.
Instructor: Madhu Dubey
Tuesday 3:30 – 4:30PM
Interdisciplinary research and writing colloquium in the field of Black Studies. Course features the research of faculty, guest lectures, and advanced graduate students from UIC and Chicago's broader scholarly community.

OPEN HOUSE &

On October 15 we invited students, staff, and faculty to come hang out and enjoy each others company over some (very large) pizza. It was a great time to meet some new people and mingle with familiar faces while learning about what is coming up for the Department. Dr. Jane Rhodes, introduced herself and others in the room. Professor Helen Jun invited students to upcoming events and gave out information about getting involved with the Department, and Professor Madhu Dubey, Director of Graduate Studies, spoke about the new Graduate Studies Concentration. It was a wonderful time for all! Thank you to everyone for joining us and please come visit us anytime!

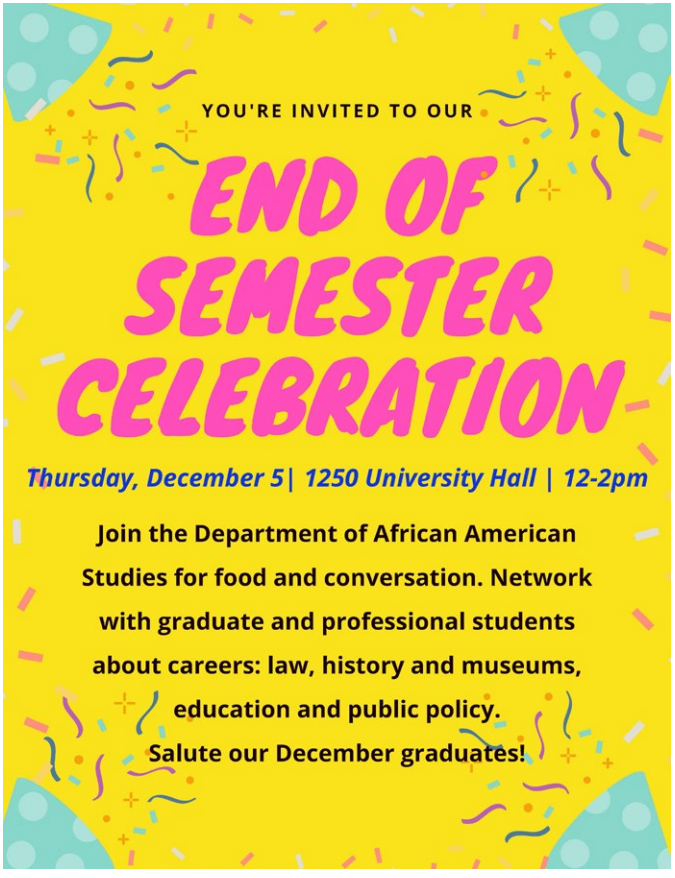
SPEAKER SERIES

Professor Andy Clarno is currently teaching our Policing in Chicago course this semester. This course introduces students to the history of policing in Chicago, from Fort Dearborn and the Haymarket affair through the Burge torture scandal, with attention to links between local police and federal law enforcement agencies. The course addresses a range of recent and ongoing debates, including the death of Laquan McDonald, the trial of Jason Van Dyke, and questions about civilian oversight, expanded sanctuary, the gang database, surveillance in schools, social media monitoring, and the new police academy.

As a part of the curriculum, Andy organized a speaker series with six events inviting multiple speakers from local organizations to discuss topics covered in the course, like surveillance, community control, and transformative justice. The speakers shared their own stories while creating dialogue about their respective organizations work and goals. **This series has been extremely important because it also introduces and invites students to plug into the work of these existing projects and campaigns.**

Thank you to all of the participating speakers and organizations! We would also like to thank the series co-sponsors: Latin American and Latino Studies; Sociology; Criminology, Law, and Justice; Gender and Women Studies; the Social Justice Initiative; the Latino Cultural Center; the African-American Cultural Center; the Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy; and Gallery 400.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS



YOU'RE INVITED!

Join us at our

End of Semester Celebration!

12:00pm - 2:00pm

Thursday, December 5

Rm 1250, University Hall

Join the Department of African American Studies for food and conversation. Network with graduate and professional students about careers: law, history and museums, education and public policy.

Salute our December graduates!

Fair Housing: Know Your Rights

12:00pm - 2:00pm
Friday, December 6
University Hall, Room 1250

2019 Promise Prize Winner Yvonne Livingston will present her research on Fair Housing as a part of her Fair Housing course at the John Marshall Law School taught by Professor Seng. Join us for this important conversation affecting Chicagoland today.

Black Women in Popular Culture

4:30pm
Thursday, January 28, 2020
Daley Library, Room 1-470

SAVE THE DATE for this event that will uplift Black Women and their intersections within popular culture. We will be hosted by the Daley Library here on campus. More information to come soon!

Coming Soon: Toni Morrison Series

In February, we are partnering with the African-American Cultural Center and Daley Library for a series on the late Toni Morrison and her legacy. Details coming your way soon!

From all of us in the Department of African American Studies, we want to send a huge CONGRATS to all of the graduating students in and out of our Department. You have all worked SO hard and we are extremely proud of all of your accomplishments. We wish you well in your professional careers. Please keep in touch and let us know how we can support you and your work in the future!

Good luck to everyone on finals!

We are hosting open study hours in University Hall 1250 during finals week; check our Facebook and Twitter pages for hours and details.

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