

Welcome to the webpage for the graduate program in the W.E. B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies. We are pleased that you are interested in graduate study with us. We began admitting students into our graduate program in 1996. Over 97% of our graduates, thus far, have found jobs primarily in the academy yet also in positions outside of a college or university setting. Below you will find information that should help you decide whether to apply to our graduate program. If you are truly seeking a PhD in African American studies, we hope you will apply.

We admit students only into a course of study for the PhD in Afro-American Studies. The Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies does not have a master's degree program; we offer the Master's Degree for Doctoral Candidates only to students in our PhD program.

One of the reasons our graduates are so successful is that the faculty in the Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies take great care to provide them with the challenge of a rigorous course of study. We recognize that most students do not come to us with a thorough grounding in the history, culture, politics, and literature of African Americans. We provide such grounding in the first year in our one-year-long, team-taught course Major Works (Follow this link to our degree guidelines). The benefits of this course alone are immense.

We also train our graduate students as cross-disciplinary scholars. That is, we require our students to deepen their understanding of African Americans by insisting that they investigate black life through multiple and intersecting knowledge bases. Many of them revel in the opportunity to move outside the confines of one disciplinary (literature, history, politics, and so forth) box, as their interest in the Du Bois Department's graduate program was sparked by just such wide-ranging intellectual concerns.

To accomplish the above goals, we admit only the number of graduate students we can support both financially and intellectually. Usually that number is **five**. As you can see, ours is a highly competitive graduate program, as the number of applications we receive from well-qualified students far exceeds the number we can admit. Because our program is small, we wish to admit students who are interested in African American studies as their primary scholarly focus. If you know that you are not deeply interested in African American Studies as a cross-disciplinary intellectual endeavor and you seek to become a scholar only of literature or history or African studies or religion, or political science, or the ancient world, and so forth, you likely will find another graduate program more suited to your needs.

Here is a description of the four major criteria on which we base our decisions:

- We analyze the applicant's **record of academic achievement** by an analysis of **all undergraduate and graduate transcripts**. We look for high academic achievement, especially in courses related to African American studies. We also look for a demonstrated interest in African American studies through undergraduate or graduate course work. We value as well an academic record that demonstrates intellectual growth and maturity over time.
- **Statement of Intellectual Interests** (500-750 words): We are interested in knowing why you wish to pursue a PhD in African American Studies. You may let us know by telling us about the area or areas of African American Studies that interest you (You should

ensure that your interests connect with those of the faculty in the Du Bois Department). That is, what do you anticipate your research and scholarship will focus on during your graduate studies? While we do not seek a personal statement, you would benefit by telling us—very briefly—what influenced your decision to pursue African American Studies at the graduate level. We are training scholars, so we would like to know as well what you plan to do after earning the PhD. This statement and the writing sample carry a great deal of weight during the admissions process.

- **Writing Sample:** In your writing sample, you must demonstrate your readiness for graduate level research and writing. This means that your writing sample should be nearly, if not entirely, free of major grammar and sentence errors; it should be your best work. Indeed, it should exemplify your strengths as a researcher/scholar who is prepared to work (or learn to work) at an advanced level with library and archival materials and/or conceptual and intellectual ideas. We place a high premium on strong writing samples that present a demonstrated interest—if at all possible—in African American studies.
- **Three letters of recommendation.** While character plays a part in any assessment of students' abilities, we are not looking for general character references. We are seeking insights on your intellectual abilities, writing and research skills, and a commitment to high-quality course work. The best letters would come from a faculty person who is familiar with your work in African American studies or a related area.

### **Application Deadline**

Our application deadline is 15 January. It is imperative that we receive all of your application materials on or before the deadline. For more information on The Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, you may follow this link: [www.umass.edu/gradschool/](http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/) You also may download an application by following the links at the top of this page.

### **Waiver of Application fee**

If you are an undergraduate who qualified for a waiver of the fee for the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) (whether or not you have taken it or will submit it), you will also qualify for a waiver of the University of Massachusetts Amherst's Graduate School application fee. If you think you may qualify, contact The Graduate School at 413.545.0722.

### **Transferring Courses**

Students cannot transfer any credits that were used to obtain an undergraduate or graduate degree at another university.

We do not accept transfer credits to substitute for content courses or seminars we offer in our graduate program. However, by special petition to the Graduate Program Director, a student may receive consideration to transfer courses in theory and methods, or in historiography. The students must demonstrate with compelling evidence (syllabi, course descriptions, course work, or other documents) that a previous course or courses have prepared a student for the cross-disciplinary scholarship we require for graduate study in the Du Bois Department.

### **Undergraduate Degrees, GPA's, and Test Scores**

All students must have a bachelor's degree before their admission to the graduate program in the Du Bois Department.

We do not have a set minimum grade point average (GPA) for admission into the graduate program. Students whom we have admitted in the past, however, do not generally have an undergraduate GPA of less than 3.0, and on average, students admitted to the Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies have GPAs in the range of 3.3-3.5 if admitted with undergraduate degrees and 3.0 or more if admitted with a graduate degree.

We do not require Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores. We assess students' overall academic profile. We place strong emphasis on the writing sample, the statement of intellectual interests, and on course work in African American Studies. If students have GRE scores and wish to send them with their applications, we would consider them only as part of a student's overall academic record. The specific scores, however, would not become a major factor in our decision making.

We require all International students to meet the current requirements set by The Graduate School for scores on the TOEFL. Currently those requirements are as follows:

- A score of at least 550 on the paper test

- A score of at least 213 on the computer test

- A score of at least 80 on the internet test

All valid scores must be for tests taken no more than two years prior to the date of your admission.

You do not need TOEFL scores if any of the following apply: 1) you are a citizen of an approved English-speaking country 2) you have had two years of full-time college/university study in the United States prior to your admission to the Du Bois Department 3) you have earned a college or university degree in the United States or in an approved country (See The Graduate School's website for the list of approved countries).

There are, of course, limitations to this medium, so if we have not answered your questions here on our website, do not hesitate to contact the Graduate Program Director at the following email address: [jimoh@afroam.umass.edu](mailto:jimoh@afroam.umass.edu).