



# COLLEGE *of* CHARLESTON

AFRICAN AMERICAN  
STUDIES PROGRAM

## Fall 2021 Newsletter



*"Iron 'sankofa' symbol on a memorial to the enslaved workers who 'helped' build the Unitarian Church in Charleston, SC" by Spencer Means is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0*

# From the Director



**Anthony Greene,**  
Director of the  
African American Studies  
program

Greetings colleagues, students, staff, and friends of the African American Studies program. As we kick off the beginning of a new academic year, the excitement remains mixed with apprehension, frustration, and uncertainty. While America was anticipating a return to normal, there was a reminder that returning to normal will never be what it once was. As we continue to grapple with rising Covid-19 cases, individual and institutional mechanisms continue to fight against mask mandates. South Carolina has 105 cases/100,00 people (100/100,000 in Charleston County), and local hospitals in Charleston have no ICU beds. The state has one of the lowest vaccination rates in the United States. People of color and the poor, as a result, continue to disproportionately be affected by these actions. Coupled with these health concerns, we are witnessing states across the country pass legislation to restrict women's ability to make reproductive choices that directly impact their lives; eradicate lessons on American racism in schools; and people of color, African Americans in particular, continue to confront racial injustices despite the wave of social upheaval in 2020 because of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and countless others whose lives didn't reach the nation's consciousness. Kids are back to school for no more than a few weeks and there have been several school shootings. While advocacy was at the forefront during summer 2020, much of this advocacy was nothing more than performative activism. Consequently, we are witnessing, in real time, the turning back of the proverbial clock.

In the hallowed halls of the academy, African American Studies continues to provide critical analyses of American society. Dr. Jelani Favors, the Henry E. Fryer Distinguished Professor of History at North Carolina A&T noted, "...in a long tradition of HBCUs providing spaces for educators to promote, alongside standard course work, a second curriculum that espoused race consciousness, cultural nationalism and idealism" speaks also to the foundation and traditions of African American Studies. African American Studies was birthed out of this tradition. Our work remains critically important today and provides historical and social context for a generation of students who remain limited in the knowledge of Black history beyond King, Malcolm, Rosa Parks, and Barack Obama. Yet, these students are not only seeking more contextual knowledge, but they have also begun to demand that higher education creates a more inclusive campus environment and more inclusive educational content. As such, in the spirit of CofC's first AAST director, Conseula Francis, I echo and channel her spirit when she queried "How do we achieve social justice in this multiracial/multiethnic democracy?" I contend, how do we reach and connect with a growing generation of students who are seeking a better understanding of the social, cultural, and political world within which they live in?

To address these educational challenges, AAST is excited to be a part of several new endeavors in this upcoming year at the College. We are advocating for the Race, Equity, and Inclusion (REI) requirement. This curricular change would require future students to take 6-credits of an array of courses that covers domestic and global analyses of race, racism, colonialism, sexism, intersectionality, and the like. While the social sciences and humanities currently offer courses in these areas, REI offerings will be incorporated across all disciplines including, but not limited to, Biology, Chemistry, Arts Management, Philosophy, Mathematics, Finance, Business Management, etc. To facilitate this change, AAST is sponsoring a year-long lecture series entitled *Decolonizing the Curriculum: Teaching Race across the Disciplines*. This series will feature scholars from across the country who will provide lectures on the various ways to incorporate race content in the aforementioned disciplines. The Fall series features Dr. Lailani Sabzalian (Oregon) whose talk is entitled: *Sovereignty & Survivance in K-12 Education* (Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup>); Dr. Jameliah Shorter-Bourhanou whose talk is entitled: *Must I Teach Race? Addressing Racism in Philosophy*; and Dr. Sofiya Noble whose talk will focus on her award-winning book: *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*.

African American Studies welcomes our new Visiting Assistant Professor! Dr. Don "DJ" Polite comes to us from the University of South Carolina where he recently completed his Ph.D. in History. You can review more about DJ in the Faculty News section, but please join me in welcoming him to the Lowcountry. As we continue to be resilient in the face of the pandemic, African American Studies is looking forward to another exciting year of programs and events which will engage our students in learning about the areas of African American history and culture, domestically and abroad.



# Faculty Spotlight

We are happy to welcome  
Dr. Don Polite  
this academic year as our  
Visiting Associate Professor.

DJ Polite received his PhD in 2021  
from the University of South Carolina.

Previously he earned an M.S. in  
Education from CUNY-Brooklyn  
College, and a B.A. in American  
Studies from Williams College. His  
research is centered on race, empire,  
and citizenship.



His dissertation topic looks primarily on the mutually reinforcing growth of U.S. Jim Crow policies and empire in the Caribbean, particularly Puerto Rico. It explores the ways that the solidification of both relied on each other, and cemented secondary citizenship status for African-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and especially women of both groups.

# Alumni Spotlight



**Courtney Hicks**

Outreach Assistant Avery  
Research Center

I am Courtney Hicks a 2019 Graduate of the African American Studies Department. Post-graduation I began my professional career at the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture here in Charleston.

The interdisciplinary skills that I learned during my matriculation in the program extended more than just in my area of study, but also my daily life. I can analyze things critically, make historical connections to current events, along with engage in productive dialogues with my colleagues, friends, and Avery community members.

The knowledge that I learned in the AAST department continues to be relevant and a great support in my professional endeavors and aspirations. I plan to continue my studies in Fall 2022 to pursue my master's degree in Africana Studies at Georgia State University. Super thankful for my time and mentorship in the African American Studies Department and always look forward to seeing the new scholars that complete the program!



# Faculty News

## What's new with AAST faculty, affiliates, and friends?

- Mari Crabtree's book, *My Soul is a Witness: The Traumatic Afterlife of Lynching, 1940–1970*, is finally in production with Yale University Press! She has also published an essay in *Rethinking History* last December titled "The Ethics of Writing History in the Traumatic Afterlife of Lynching," and another essay of hers, "Stick to the Script?! No, Stick It to the Man!" appeared in *Contemporaries* this June. She had the pleasure of co-authoring an essay with Aaisha Haykal this spring titled "The Value of Integrating African American Archives into Undergraduate African American Studies Curricula," which will be published in the edited volume, *Ethnic Studies in Academic and Research Libraries*, later this year. Also, she is excited to pursue two new projects this academic year during her sabbatical: an essay on the trans-Pacific Black radicalism of Robert F. Williams and Nakajima Yoriko and a new book project on the pleasures and political utility of subversion, deception, and humor in the Black cultural tradition.
- Gary Jackson has two new books out this fall! One is a poetry collection called *origin story*, which is available now. His other book is an Afrofuturism anthology he co-edited called *The Future of Black*, which will be available this November.

# AAST Student Award Winners and Graduates

While COVID-19 shut down our campus and precluded our annual celebration of the African American Student Awards, we want to acknowledge their hard work and accomplishments!

**Conseula Francis Outstanding Student Award:**  
Alexis Burgess

**Ajani Ofunniyin Community Activism Award:**  
Ayana Waugh

**African American Studies Rising Scholar Award:**  
Janae Dorsey & Zinnia Harris

**African American Studies Outstanding Senior Scholar Award:**  
Alexis Burgess

**African American Studies Capstone Project Award:**  
Alexis Burgess

**Bernard Powers Writing Award in African American Studies:**  
Zinnia Harris

Congratulations to all of our AAST graduates who completed the degree program this past Spring. We wish our sixth graduating class all the best as they determine their post-graduate paths!

**Minors:**  
Deja' Burwell  
Lauren Davila  
Corey Hamer  
Sierra McCray  
Malayna Nesbitt  
Deja Stewart  
Bryce Warner

**Majors:**  
Alexis Burgess  
Tyrea Woodberry





# Fall 2021 Events



## Decolonizing the Curriculum Lecture Series: "Sovereignty and Survivance in K-12 Education"

September 23, 2021

6:00pm

## Decolonizing the Curriculum Lecture Series: "Must I Teach Race?: Addressing Race & Racism in Philosophy"

September 30, 2021

6:00pm



## Decolonizing the Curriculum Lecture Series: "Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism"

October 27, 2021

6:00pm





# AAST & REI Fall 2021 Virtual Lecture Series

## *Decolonizing* the Curriculum: Teaching Race Across the Disciplines

All lectures will begin at 6pm EST // 3pm PST on ZOOM



**DR. LEILANI SABZALIAN**  
University of Oregon

### The Color of Education: *Dr. Conseula Francis Emerging Scholar Lecture Series*

"Sovereignty & Survivance in K-12 Education"

Thursday, 23 September 2021



To register:  
visit <https://qrco.de/bcKyEV>  
or scan



**DR. JAMELIAH SHORTER-  
BOURHANOU**  
College of the Holy Cross

### The Color of Ethics

"Must I Teach Race?"

Addressing Racism in Philosophy

Thursday, 30 September 2021



To register:  
visit <https://qrco.de/bcN9T9>  
or scan



**DR. SAFIYA NOBLE**  
University of California  
Los Angeles

### The Color of Technology "Algorithms of Oppression": How Search Engines Reinforce Racism

Wednesday, 27 October 2021



To register:  
visit <https://qrco.de/bcNA5E>  
or scan

For more information, contact  
the Director of African American Studies

Dr. Anthony Greene  
([greenead@cofc.edu](mailto:greenead@cofc.edu))



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Artwork: Tatianna Barclay, *Metamorphosis*



# Fall 2021 Course Offerings

<b>AAST 200</b>	<b>Intro to African American Studies</b>
<b>AAST 300</b>	<b>ST: Race and Diasporic Connections in the US &amp; Latin America</b>
<b>AAST 380</b>	<b>Racism in America</b>
<b>AAST 381</b>	<b>African American Internship</b>
<b>AAST 395</b>	<b>African American Research Methods</b>
<b>AFST 101</b>	<b>Intro to African Civilization</b>
<b>ENGL 313</b>	<b>African American Literature</b>
<b>HIST 211</b>	<b>American Urban History</b>
<b>HIST 310</b>	<b>ST: The Long Civil Rights Movement</b>
<b>POLI 330</b>	<b>Southern Politics</b>
<b>RELS 298</b>	<b>ST: American Islam</b>
<b>THTR 316</b>	<b>African American Theatre</b>

## **ATTENTION: SENIOR CITIZENS**

*South Carolina residents who are over 60 years old are eligible to enroll in regular College of Charleston courses on a space-available basis for a fee of \$25 for the semester. Permission of the instructor is required for African American Studies courses. Call 843.953.5620 for details.*

# LCWA World Affairs Signature Series “Black Lives”

Black Lives is the 2021-2022 World Affairs Signature Series Sponsored by the School of Languages, Cultures, and World Affairs. In the spirit of the Akan aphorism “Sankofa,” which emphasizes the importance of looking to the past to understand the future, this series features a number of events and a range of courses taught in 15 different disciplines in an effort to enhance our understanding of Africa and peoples of African descent across time and space. For the participatory activities, students will engage with four guest speakers from the target cultures to discuss specific folk practices. Speakers will be native to the target culture (and speak relevant dialects/ languages) and have direct, applied expertise in the culture.



The modern world has been shaped by forced labor, cultural innovation, and natural resources from the African continent. Scientists have identified East Africa as the cradle of humanity, while Timbuktu and Egypt are viewed as exemplars of ancient civilizations. Today we observe how phenomena such as China’s economic reach and Boko Haram’s insurgency sway realities for states with historically weak institutions and unstable governments; while our own has sworn in the first Black and South Asian woman as Vice President. Conflict in Ethiopia. Food insecurity in Madagascar. SARS protests in Nigeria. The nomination of Black Lives Matter for the Nobel Peace Prize. Ghana’s successful “Year of Return” that invited descendants of enslaved Africans to return “home.” African footballers playing worldwide and black Olympians breaking world records. Each of these has social, economic, and political implications for Black Lives.

Here at CofC, faculty are deeply engaged in research, teaching, and service projects that coalesce around African Studies, African American Studies, and studies of the broader African Diaspora. The Black Lives series seeks to put these efforts in closer dialogue from the unique vantage point of Charleston and the Lowcountry, a space where they intersect in key ways. Being a major center of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, enslaved Africans and their descendants have shaped our physical, cultural, economic, and political environment in such a way that Charleston can very much be described as an African city. Our theme and Charleston’s importance to the global economy calls attention to how the African continent and wider transnational Black experiences (African American, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-LatinX, Black British, Afro-European) are hubs for international engagement.

We warmly invite the College of Charleston community to participate in the Black Lives Signature Series. Check out the website to learn more about courses and upcoming events that will take part in the series! [blogs.cofc.edu/lcwa-signature-series-black-lives](https://blogs.cofc.edu/lcwa-signature-series-black-lives)



# Port of Entry

## Did you know that African American Studies has a Podcast series?

Charleston, South Carolina was a major hub of the Trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans. Scholars estimate that around 40% of all enslaved Africans that entered what would become the United States did so through Charleston Harbor. It is the port of entry for enumerable familial lines of enslaved African descent.

Port of Entry: An African American Studies Podcast is a series sponsored by the African American Studies Program in collaboration with Dr. Michael Overholt of the Teaching and Learning Team at the College of Charleston. Port of Entry promotes the culture, history, and lived experiences of people of African descent in the Carolina Lowcountry and beyond. Stay tuned for episodes that explore new scholarship, programs and events in African American Studies, notable figures and facts, and the achievements of our faculty, students, and alumni.

### Episode 1: "Alumni Spotlight- Olivia Williams and that viral Washington Post article!"



### Episode 2: "DNA Doesn't Lie"



### Episode 3: "Music and the Black Experience"



### Episode 4: "Reimagining the Middle Passage"



As we begin the start of this new academic year the African American Studies program at the College of Charleston has offered its services as a clearing house for news of events relevant to African American Studies. We have created a calendar and listings-service drawing attention to African American-related events happening across the state. The calendar is on our website and will be providing information on events that we are aware of. To keep our calendar up to date with the latest events we invite you to submit events that you believe would be beneficial to this calendar. If you would also like to be added to our African American-related Events email list please contact Casey Smith at [smithcn1@cofc.edu](mailto:smithcn1@cofc.edu).

The **Event Calendar** can be found here:  
[african-american-studies.cofc.edu/events/](http://african-american-studies.cofc.edu/events/)

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### How Can You Support African American Studies ?

Area of Need:	Financial Goal:
Study Abroad Scholarships (\$2,750/student)	\$13,750.00
Student Research & Conference Travel	\$2,000.00
AAST Student Merit Awards	\$5,000.00
AAST General/Discretionary Fund	\$2,000.00
African American Studies Program Endowment	\$50,000.00*

**Every Gift Counts! No amount is too large or small! Please consider an individual or group donation of \$25, \$50, \$100, \$1000 or more!**

All donations are tax deductible [Donate Now!](#)

In the 'Designation' drop-down menu, select 'Other'. In the 'Other' box, note your intended contribution: **R717 - African American Studies**. Thank you for your continued support of the African American Studies program.

Or visit <https://giving.cofc.edu/ways-to-give>

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### Where Are You Now?

Let Us Know What You're Up To

For 20 years the African American Studies Program at the College of Charleston has educated students in African American history and culture. We would love to hear what those students are up to now. Let us know about the exciting professional and personal milestones you've reached since leaving the College. You can email Dr. Martin with the details at [martinkl2@cofc.edu](mailto:martinkl2@cofc.edu)



**not just in february**