

African American Studies

Rationale

The African American Studies course in the Howard County Public School System is designed to develop an understanding of the causes, character, and consequences of the African American experience and its influence on the world, the United States, and the African American community. Beginning with a historical, geographical, social, political, economic, and cultural understanding of the African continent, the course will provide a descriptive and corrective overview which will introduce the student to the study of the African and African American experiences.

Upon completion of the course, the students will:

- Gain an appreciation of the richness, diversity, and contributions of African American culture to national and international life and the world.
- Reaffirm the fact that civilization in the United States is not the result of the work and energy of one people, but is the result of the contributions of African Americans and many other groups.
- Develop a knowledge of important people, events, and ideas that have played a key role in shaping the history and culture of African Americans, and the history and culture of the United States.

There are connecting threads present throughout the course. These threads are reflective of major aspects of, and influences on African American life. Some of the major themes to be developed throughout the course will include the:

- Enduring presence of Africanisms – those patterns of life which emanated from Africa – and their impact on African American life in the United States.
- History and nature of the African American family.
- Impact of racism and colonialism – individual and institutional – on Africans and African Americans.
- Origins and development of slavery and its negative impact on Africa and the United States.
- Bi-cultural nature of the African American experience – minority and dominant –

and how Americans have responded to that duality or twoness.

- Diversity of thought, response, and expression that African Americans have demonstrated in reaction to their experiences.
- Development of African American nationalism as a result of the segregated nature of American society.
- Participation of African Americans in each of the nation's wars and conflicts.
- Importance of the African American church and other religious components as forces for social change and continuity.
- Significant and continuous role of women in the African American experience and in the struggle for liberation.
- Absence of monolithic viewpoints and ideas as many individuals and groups have struggled for freedom.
- Failure of government – federal, state, and local – to support existing laws and demands of African Americans that would provide equality.
- Presence of an Afrocentric perspective as an alternative to the Eurocentric viewpoint that has dominated American life and culture.

LANGUAGE USAGE STATEMENT

It is important that students and teachers be sensitive to the use of nomenclature in studying the African American experience.

From the end of the Civil War through the early years of the twentieth century, African Americans were commonly referred to as “colored.” Later, with the rise of a new racial awareness that culminated with the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, the term “Negro” was widely accepted.

The civil rights movement of the 1960s popularized the designation of the term “black.”

Since the mid-1980s, with the shift to a historical emphasis on origins, the term “African American” has become widely accepted.

It would be helpful to begin this course by exploring how nomenclature has often been reflective of a certain time period or represents the frame of references of various individuals.

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES CONTENT OUTLINE

I. Africa and the World (*Suggested time frame: two weeks*)

- A. Perceptions of African geography, history, and culture
- B. Geography of Africa
 - 1. Climatic regions
 - 2. Natural resources and products
 - 3. Demographics
- C. Civilizations
 - 1. Ancient
 - a. Egypt
 - b. Kush (Merö)
 - c. Axum
 - 2. Medieval
 - a. Ghana
 - b. Mali
 - c. Songhai
- D. Institutions and culture
 - 1. Family
 - 2. Economics
 - 3. Politics
 - 4. Religion
 - 5. Education
 - 6. The arts
- E. Africa in 1400 – contributions to the world

II. Origins of Slavery (*Suggested time frame: one week*)

- A. Slavery throughout history
 - 1. Asian
 - 2. European

3. African
4. Comparative slavery
- B. European expansion and the development of the African slave trade
 1. Rise of nation-states
 2. Overseas expansion
 3. Commercial revolution
- C. Transatlantic slave trade
 1. The nature of the slave trade
 2. The physical, human, and mental impact on the slave
 3. The impact of the slave trade on Africa
- D. African slavery in Central and South America, and the Caribbean

III. The Development of Slavery in North America *(Suggested time frame: two weeks)*

- A. Servitude in North America
- B. English perceptions about Africans and the development of slavery in North America
- C. The many facets of slavery in colonial America
- D. Early opposition to slavery
 1. African Americans
 2. White Americans
- E. Contribution of Africans to colonial society

IV. African Americans in the Revolutionary Era *(Suggested time frame: one week)*

- A. Slavery and the Declaration of Independence
- B. African American participation in the War for Independence
- C. Impact of Independence on African Americans
 1. The Articles of Confederation
 2. State action
 3. Protest and institutions: African Americans' response to independence
- D. Impact of the United States Constitution on African Americans

V. African Americans in Antebellum America (*Suggested time frame: three week*)

- A. The growth and development of slavery
 - 1. “King Cotton” and the agrarian South
 - 2. Slavery in the North
- B. Slave community
 - 1. Culture
 - 2. Family
 - 3. Religion
 - 4. Race Relations
 - 5. Politics
 - 6. Economics
- C. Treatment of slaves
- D. Slaves’ response to slavery
 - 1. Slave revolts
 - 2. Abolitionists movement
- E. Status of free African Americans
- F. Forces against slavery

VI. The Civil War (*Suggested time frame: two weeks*)

- A. Historical interpretations of the causes of the Civil War
- B. The road to war
- C. Lincoln and emancipation
- D. African American participation in the Civil War

VII. The Era of Reconstruction (*Suggested time frame: three weeks*)

- A. Reconstruction defined
 - 1. Political/Economic
 - 2. Social/Cultural

- B. Challenges of reconstruction
 - 1. Policies and programs
 - 2. Reaction to reconstruction
 - 3. Results of reconstruction
- C. Legacy of reconstruction
- D. Historical interpretations of reconstruction

VIII. Betrayal and Reaction (*Suggested time frame: three weeks*)

- A. The Rise of “Jim Crow”
 - 1. The origins
 - 2. Results
 - a. Federal government’s policies
 - b. State governments’ responses
- B. African Americans’ response to a changing America
 - 1. Industrialization
 - a. The populist movement
 - b. The labor movement
 - 2. “Great Migrations”
 - a. South to north
 - b. The "Promised Land"
- C. Responses to “Jim Crow” policies
 - 1. Booker T. Washington
 - 2. W.E.B. DuBois
 - 3. William Monroe Trotter
 - 4. Marcus Garvey
 - 5. Ida B. Wells
 - 6. NAACP
- D. World War I and its impact on African Americans
 - 1. African Americans’ Responses
 - 2. African American Participation

3. Racism, riots and a new identity
- E. African Americans in the 1920s
1. The Harlem Renaissance
 2. Artistic achievement and cultural expansion
 3. Music and its impact (Jazz)

IX. African Americans and the U.S. in Upheaval (*Suggested time frame: three weeks*)

- A. Urbanization and rural life
- B. African Americans and the Depression
1. Effects
 2. Responses
- C. The New Deal and African Americans
1. The New Deal, Franklin Roosevelt, and African Americans
 2. New Deal Programs and African Americans
 3. Legacy of the New Deal era
 - a. Outcomes
 - b. Evaluation
- D. World War II and its Impact on African Americans
1. Homefront
 - a. Second Great Migration
 - b. A. Philip Randolph and Executive Order 8802
 - c. Race riots of the 1940s
 - d. Outcomes and expectations
 2. Military participation
 - a. Segregation in the armed forces
 - b. African American involvement in the war
- E. Stirrings of change in the post-war era
1. The demands for a new racial perspective
 2. The new racial agenda for integrating into the mainstream
 - a. African Americans in a new world role

- b. The ongoing fight against segregation
 - 1) Organizations
 - 2) Integrating the military
 - 3) Stopping school segregation – Brown vs. the Board of Education

X. The Search for Liberation (*Suggested time frame: four weeks*)

A. Voices for change

- 1. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- 2. Malcolm X
- 3. W.E.B. DuBois
- 4. Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)
- 5. Black Muslims
- 6. Black Panthers
- 7. Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)
- 8. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- 9. National Urban League

B. Government response: “The Great Society”

C. Urban challenges and unrest

D. Vietnam and its impact on African Americans

- 1. African Americans in the armed forces
- 2. Protest at home
 - a. War
 - b. Race relations
 - c. Poverty

E. Challenges to liberation and African Americans’ responses

XI. African Americans Today: Current Trends and Challenges for the Future

(Suggested time frame: four weeks)

- A. Geography and demographics
- B. Religion and the church
- C. Intellectual and cultural
- D. Political
- E. Socio-economic
- F. A global perspective