African American & African Studies (AA&AS) is a place to make connections across the complexities of Africa, Black America, and the African diaspora. Multidisciplinary in its approach to learning, as an AA&AS student, you’ll be exposed to the pressing challenges of the modern world, as well as possibilities for transformations through the study of African American and African history, literature, and culture, and the study of Africa in global perspectives.

The courses present you with tools of inquiry from multiple liberal arts disciplines to make known tremendous diversities and overlapping histories and experiences within the wider black world. AA&AS also offers two African languages, Swahili (spoken throughout East, Central, and South Africa) and Somali, in its undergraduate curriculum.

Many AA&AS graduates have not only been accepted to professional and graduate schools, but have also cultivated their career paths in exciting directions including education, business, medicine, law, the arts, journalism, local and transnational advocacy work, and foreign affairs.

The College of Liberal Arts Advantage: More Than a Major

When you study African American & African Studies at the University of Minnesota, you gain the added advantage of a College of Liberal Arts education. At CLA, the liberal arts mean you get more than just a degree in one major or another; it means you will be exposed to different areas of study, to different ways of thinking and learning. In fact, the liberal arts teach you how to learn—how to ask the right
questions, how to problem solve, and how to innovate. The liberal arts highlight the complexities of our world, because here at CLA you will study not just, say, politics or art but also where politics and art intersect, where science and ethics intersect, where economics and the environment intersect.

Meet Our Students

DeSean Smedley is one of the many great thinkers and activists who found their sense of self through the skills and experiences gained from majoring in African American & African studies (AA&AS). A native of Oakland, California, Smedley came to the University of Minnesota with a plethora of life experiences that shaped the way he understood the reality of black life in America. He decided to major in AA&AS because he was able to validate his experiences through the wealth of black intellectual thought introduced to him by his coursework and close relationships with professors.

Read more about DeSean's story, and learn more about our undergraduate program.

Student Experiences

Internships: Gain Valuable Experience in the Twin Cities and Beyond

Did you know? CLA Career Services has its very own internship reflection course! Students taking an internship can use this course to reflect on ways that their work experience is preparing them for successful careers - and receive credit for the work.
Learning Abroad Options in African American and African Studies: Prepare to Lead in a Global Economy

“The African-American and African Studies curriculum encourages a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the experiences of African peoples, and students who study abroad have an excellent opportunity to learn about those experiences firsthand by engaging with local communities. We strongly encourage students to take advantage of the university’s many learning abroad programs.” —Stephanie Lawrence, Departmental Adviser

Learn more about study abroad for African American and African Studies majors.

Student Organizations: Find Friends and Grow as a Leader

- Huntley House for African American Men
- MLK Beloved Community Living Learning Community

Undergraduate Research: Turn Curiosity into New Knowledge

The Department of African American and African Studies (AAAS) is engaged in a highly diverse and dynamic research agenda, spanning critical perspectives, creative interventions, and engaged modes of community-based civic and political participation.

The principal focus of our research and engagement is to initiate and facilitate critical dialogue on topics of particular relevance to African, African American, and African diasporic lives, experiences, beliefs, and knowledge systems.

Meet Our Faculty

Meet Our Alumni

“My experience at the University afforded me the opportunity to interact with leading scholars and communities from across the country, strategize with esteemed advocates on preventing violence against women, and to travel to Belfast, Northern Ireland, to serve as a facilitator for a research project focused on
youth work in violent and contested spaces.”

--Marcos Pope '02, Director of Partnerships and External Relations, Youthprise

CLA Graduates: Successful Careers and Purposeful Lives

CLA graduates succeed in many different careers — law, health care, medicine, business, government, teaching, advertising, arts and entertainment, international relations, and more — precisely because they understand how to navigate a complex and interconnected world. As our alumni explain below, “Being a good employee means being curious, and continuing to evolve, and learn, and educate yourself, and I can think of no stronger foundation for doing that than a liberal arts education.

“An education in the liberal arts is a springboard to lifelong career success”
-- Dean John Coleman

You might also explore

American Studies
Comparative U.S. Race and Ethnicity Minor
History
Linguistics
Political Science
Associated Careers

Advertising, Marketing, and Public Relations Managers; Community Organizers and Activists; Human-Service Assistants; Imams; Protestant Ministers; Public Interest Advocates; Public Interest Lawyers

Admission Information

FRESHMAN: Admission information

TRANSFER STUDENTS: Requirements for the College of Liberal Arts

Beyond admission, if you have questions about transferring, the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) has transfer advisors to help. Please feel free to contact them about any of the topics below!

• Course plans before transferring
• Estimated time to graduation
• Career preparation in CLA
• Getting ready for orientation, if admitted
• Connecting with major/minor departments