ABOUT

The Department of American Ethnic Studies at the University of Washington was founded in 1985, at the conclusion of a two-year process that resulted in the reorganization of three programs (Afro-American Studies, Asian-American Studies, and the Center for Chicano Studies) that had existed as semi-autonomous units since the early 1970s. Currently, AES counts fifteen full-time members in its faculty, including four that hold joint appointments in Anthropology; Law, Societies, & Justice; Psychology; and Spanish & Portuguese Studies. In addition, all AES tenure-line professors hold adjunct appointments in other departments. Conversely, many colleagues from across campus also hold adjunct or affiliate appointments in AES.

Grounded on a multicultural, interdisciplinary, and intersectional approach, our program is distinguished by its strong focus on issues of social justice, equality, and civil and human rights—especially as this pertains to those U. S. groups that have been historically subjected to exclusion and marginalization. As a multidisciplinary program, the fields we cover in our research and teaching include Cultural Studies, Film Studies, History, Immigration, Labor Studies, Literature, Sociology, Visual Cultures, and Women Studies. Accordingly, many of our courses are cross-listed, or jointly offered, with other departments—Anthropology, Communication, History, Political Science, Sociology, Spanish, and Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies, among others. In addition, we offer courses in Swahili and Tagalog languages.

AES undergraduate majors may apply to join the Honors Program. Those admitted have the opportunity to conduct an original research project under the direction of a faculty adviser. This is part of our commitment to academic excellence by fomenting the development of critical thinking and the acquisition of excellent writing skills among our students. Other opportunities available for our majors include participation in community-based internships and practicums, independent study, and field research courses. This is congruent with our program’s stated focus on social justice, civil and human rights, and community service.

Although AES still is a relatively young department, our alumni have gone on to make significant achievements, to occupy important positions, and to make valuable contributions in diverse spheres of society.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Department of American Ethnic Studies at the University of Washington is a multicultural and multiracial research and teaching unit dedicated to the production and transmission of knowledge on key issues and aspects of race and ethnicity in the United States. Through the department’s four areas of concentration—African American Studies, Asian American/Pacific Islander Studies, Chicano/a Studies, and Comparative AES—students have the opportunity to learn interdisciplinary, ethnic-specific, and comparative concepts, theories, and methods of inquiry as applied to the study of selected U. S. ethnic groups. Central features are the diasporic and transnational connections of these communities, as well as their participation in the shaping of the cultural, literary, social, historical, economic, and political character of this country.

Our aim is to develop well-informed and compassionate citizens, to advance their capacity for critical thinking, their understanding of and respect for cultural diversity, and their self-perception as responsible members of an increasingly globalized and interconnected society.

LEARN MORE ABOUT AES AT UW

- Department Fact Sheet (PDF)
- History