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# The Growing Discipline of African Diasporic & Black Studies in Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions



# ROLE/IMPORTANCE OF BLACK STUDIES

Broadly defined as the survey of African diasporas, Black studies aims to think critically about both the histories, and contemporary social climates of Black cultures. Furthermore, it is a subject that recognizes, celebrates and most importantly learns from the diversity of Black worlds.

Canada is a nation that is home to global diasporic of Black cultures. To ignore the 400 years of history of Black people in Canada is to ignore a crucial aspect of the country's identity. Offering Black studies programs at an institution is the first step

For this reason, post-secondary educational institutions have a responsibility to offer resources that make Black studies available to its members. This can include, but is not exclusive to, offering relevant courses, hiring Black studies scholars, and ensuring space in syllabi for Black studies material.

# Current Prevalence of Black studies in Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions

There are several post-secondary institutions that offer an option for Black Studies, African diasporic studies or adjacent disciplines as a module. The parentheses feature the highest module type available for Black studies.

- Brock University (minor)
- Carleton University (major)
- Dalhousie University (minor)
- McGill University (major)
- Simon Fraser University (certificate)
- Trent University (major)
- University of British Columbia (minor)
- University of Calgary (minor)
- University of Toronto (major)
- York University (certificate)

These institutions are launching new programs in the Fall semester of 2022

- Guelph University (minor)
- Queen's University (minor)
- Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly known as Ryerson University) (minor)
- University of Waterloo (diploma)
- Western University (minor)

Most programs only offer smaller modules, such as minors, certificates and diplomas. Courses offered range from critical theory to Black art to contemporary issues and figures.

This is a growing list and there is no current centralized database where people can explore the different programs at different institutions. There appears to be a wave of new modules offered in Fall of 2022.

Western also joins the thread of universities in Canada to offer a module in Black Studies. Students now have an option to take a minor in Black Studies, starting in the 2022-2023 year under the Social Sciences faculty.

# Introduction to Black Studies 1030 F/G

## Western University

The newly-established Introduction to Black Studies 1030F/G is to be launched for a pilot semester in Winter of 2023, available to students in all years.

The course and its material is curated and spearheaded by Dr. Erica Lawson, an associate professor in the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies department. Dr. Lawson has taught in academic disciplines including feminist and gender studies, motherhood and maternal activism, Black studies and critical race theory.

This is hopefully only the beginning of the university's pursuit of putting forward a more accessible and comprehensive education on Black studies at its institution

### SYLLABUS SAMPLE

#### Learning Objectives

- Explore issues of relevance to Black studies
- Address key terminologies in the discipline
- Discuss how resilience and resistance are central to Black life
- Understand key aspects of the Black intellectual-activist tradition
- Examine how historical experiences shape contemporary realities in Black life

#### Learning Outcomes

- Familiarity with debates in the black intellectual tradition
- Improved knowledge about Black histories
- Identify connections between historical experiences and contemporary events
- Improved research and writing skills
- Critical evaluation and analytical skills
- Application of theory/analysis to issues and events

# History and Importance of Black Studies in Education

Black studies as a discipline arose from student protests for the creation of such a program in the United States during the 1960s (Asante & Mazama), and have since been expanded upon across international lines.

It is crucial that Black studies programs should not only be approached through a technocratic and intersectional perspective, but also in a way that promotes anti-racist ideologies and practices while incorporating contemporary topics. In such a way, post-secondary institutions can accurately represent Black cultures without historicizing its people and related issues, while simultaneously encouraging students to be activists in the present.

# Conclusion / Afterword

Black Studies is the ongoing pursuit of thinking critically about Black culture. Additionally, it is the continuous effort to create a world that recognizes the socio-economic environments, legal and political relationships, and histories of the people of the diaspora.

It is crucial to make space for Black scholarship in an anti-racist post-secondary institution.

It is also important to address that Black studies is not beholden to educational institutions. While Black Studies is present in traditional academia, it is not a defined discipline. Rather, it is an ongoing intellectual process of learning about but moreover, learning from Black peoples.

# References

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