**AP African American Studies**

**Syllabus 2025-2026**

**Contact Information**

Ethan Borchers, Roosevelt High School  
ethan.borchers@slps.org

Welcome to AP African American Studies. If this is your first AP course, you picked the best course to start with. If this is your second round with an AP course, well you finally made it to the best of the best. This course is designed to make you think critically, write critically, and question what you have been taught about history, as well as the global society. This is one of the newest courses in AP classes and I am genuinely excited to share the knowledge and skills with you!

**Course Description**

AP African American Studies is an interdisciplinary course that examines the diversity of African American experiences through direct encounters with authentic and varied sources. Students explore key topics that extend from early African kingdoms to the ongoing challenges and achievements of the contemporary moment. Given the interdisciplinary character of African American studies, students in the course will develop skills across multiple fields, with an emphasis on developing historical, literary, visual, and data analysis skills. This course foregrounds a study of the diversity of Black communities in the United States within the broader context of Africa and the African diaspora.

**Course Goals**

Throughout this course, students will learn to:

* Apply lenses from multiple disciplines to evaluate key concepts, historical developments, and processes that have shaped Black experiences and debates within the field of African American studies.
* Identify connections between Black communities in the United States and the broader African diaspora in the past and present.
* Compare and analyze a range of perspectives about the movements, approaches, organizations, and key figures involved in freedom movements, as expressed in text-based, data, and visual sources.
* Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity and complexity of African societies and their global connections before the emergence of transatlantic slavery.
* Evaluate the political, historical, aesthetic, and transnational contexts of major social movements.
* Develop a broad understanding of the many strategies African American communities have employed to represent themselves authentically, promote advancement, and combat the effects of inequality.
* Identify major themes that inform literary and artistic traditions of the African diaspora.

Through daily lessons, students will practice five essential skills:

* **Apply Disciplinary Knowledge** (Explain course concepts, developments, patterns, and processes (e.g., cultural, historical, political, social).
* **Written Source Analysis** (Evaluate written sources, including historical documents, literary texts, and music lyrics.)
* **Data Analysis** (Interpret data represented in tables, charts, graphs, maps, surveys, and infographics.)
* **Visual Analysis** (Analyze visual artifacts, including works of art and material culture.)
* **Argumentation** (Develop an argument using a line of reasoning to connect claims and evidence.)

Course Textbook

Franklin, J. H., & Higginbotham, E. B. (2021). *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of*

*African Americans* (10th ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Use of Primary Sources:

This course uses a plethora of rich primary sources in the written form and pictures of material artifacts. Students will use each source selection from the Lesson Topics found in the Course Exam Description. The daily course activities will require students to analyze each source encounter for each lesson topic.

Secondary Sources List

**Unit 1 Secondary Sources**

Pasciuto, Greg. (2024, March 12). Just How Christian Was the Kingdom of Kongo? Retrieved

from <https://www.thecollector.com/catholicism-kingdom-kongo/>

Samms, Andrew. (2018, September 03). *Sundiata Keita (1210? -1255?)*. BlackPast.org.

<https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/keita-sundiata-1210-1255/>

**Unit 2 Secondary Sources**

Gates, H. L. (2013, September 19). *Who Led the First Back-to-Africa Effort?* PBS.

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/who-led-the-1st-back-to-africa-effort/>

Taylor, D. B. (2020, June 13). *The History of Juneteenth*. The New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/article/juneteenth-day-celebration.html?auth=login-google1tap&login=google1tap>

**Unit 3 Secondary Sources**

* Francis, T. (2022, January 27). *West Indian Immigration to the United States (1900- )*. BlackPast.org. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/west-indian-immigration-to-the-united-states-1900/>
* Lumpkins, C. L. (2008). *American Pogrom: The East St. Louis Race Riot and Black Politics*. Ohio University Press.

**Unit 4 Secondary Sources**

* Carson, C., & Carson, D. (n.d.). Black Panther Party. https://web.stanford.edu/~ccarson/articles/am\_left.htm



* Christie. (2022, July 29). *DJ Kool Herc and the birth of hip-hop: Christie’s*. YouTube. [DJ Kool Herc and the birth of hip-hop | Christie's](https://youtu.be/Jdb3MTz7xXg?si=5EUS_agaMPCnP1kg)

**Units of Study**

In addition to the selected secondary sources listed below the course will cover all four-unit topics and all 74 lesson topics while utilizing every sole source encounter to instruct students. Students will be assessed with Multiple choice quizzes, short answer Quizzes, and Document Based Questionnaires. There will also be the AP exam at the beginning of May and an Individual Student Research Project.

**Unit 1 Source Engagement**

* The source *Sundiata Keita* written by Andrew Samms discusses the Emperor before Mana Musa and contributed to the wealth before Musa took over. Students will complete a compare and contrast document with each emperor. Students will examine a primary source about how Musa contributed and this source on how the emperor before him contributed to the wealth and growth of the Mali Empire. **1.5 The Sudanic Empires: Ghana, Mali, and Songhai (Skills 3A & 3C)**
* The next source dives deeper into how Christianity played a role in the development of the kingdom of Kongo. This source is written in *The Collector* a history website of a collection of blogs, stories, and essays. The activity that will be incorporated into this is an introduction to Document-based reading and Questioning. Students will be given excerpts from this article and will have to annotate their section and create a practice Thesis statement based on the information given to them. This may be done individually or in small groups. **1.9 West Central Africa: The Kingdom of Kongo (Skills 1C & 2B)**
* **Unit 1: Origins of the African Diaspora**
  + 1.1 Introduction to African American Studies (Skills 1A & 2A)
  + 1.2 The African Continent: A Varied Landscape (Skills 1B & 2D)
  + 1.3 Population Growth and Ethnolinguistic Diversity (Skills 1C & 2D)
  + 1.4 Africa’s Ancient Societies (Skills 1A & 1D)
  + 1.5 The Sudanic Empires: Ghana, Mali, and Songhai (Skills 3A & 3C)
  + 1.6 Learning Traditions (Skill 1A)
  + 1.7 Indigenous Cosmologies and Religious Syncretism (Skills 1B & 2B)
  + 1.8 Culture and Trade in Southern and East Africa (Skills 3A & 3C)
  + 1.9 West Central Africa: The Kingdom of Kongo (Skills 1C & 2B)
  + 1.10 Kinship and Political Leadership (Skills 1D & 2B)
  + 1.11 Global Africans (Skills 1C & 2C)

**Unit 2 SOURCE ENGAGEMENT**

* The first activity involved the secondary source is a deep dive into Paul Cuffee and his mission to bring African Americans back to Africa and create what is known today as Sierra Leone. With this source, I would plan to have 3-5 Thesis Statements generated with this source and see if the class can find the thesis statement that encapsulates the whole source. Students will have to annotate the reading first and then discuss and analyze the source to determine which statement fits the source the best. This source is titled *Who Led the First Back-to-Africa Effort?* This was located on the PBS website but originally written in *The Root.* **2.18 Debates About Emigration, Colonization, and Belonging in America**
* The next source centers around giving students more clarity on the origins of Juneteenth. This was an article written in the *New York Times.* It describes the origins of how Juneteenth became a national holiday. I would have students write a contextualization paragraph exit ticket on the importance and connection to the lessons before about why Juneteenth needs to be celebrated. **2.24 Freedom Days: Commemorating the Ongoing Struggle for Freedom.**
* **Unit 2: Freedom, Enslavement, and Resistance**
  + 2.1 African Explorers in the Americas
  + 2.2 Departure Zones in Africa and the Slave Trade to the U.S.
  + 2.3 Capture and the Impact of the Slave Trade of West African Societies
  + 2.4 African Resistance on Slave Ships and the Antislavery Movement
  + 2.5 Slave Auctions and the Domestic Slave Trade
  + 2.6 Labor, Culture, and Economy
  + 2.7 Slavery and American Law: Slave Codes and Landmark Cases
  + 2.8 The Social Construction of Race and the Reproduction of Status
  + 2.9 Creating African American Culture
  + 2.10 Black Pride, Identity, and the Question of Naming
  + 2.11 The Stono Rebellion and Fort Mose
  + 2.12 Legacies of the Haitian Revolution
  + 2.13 Resistance and Revolts in the United States
  + 2.14 Black Organizing in the North: Freedom, Women’s Rights, and Education
  + 2.15 Maroon Societies and Autonomous Black Communities
  + 2.16 Diasporic Connections: Slavery and Freedom in Brazil
  + 2.17 African Americans in Indigenous Territory
  + 2.18 Debates About Emigration, Colonization, and Belonging in America
  + 2.19 Black Political Thought: Radical Resistance
  + 2.20 Race to the Promised Land: Abolitionism and the Underground Railroad
  + 2.21 Legacies of Resistance in African American Art and Photography
  + 2.22 Gender and Resistance in Slave Narratives
  + 2.23 The Civil War and Black Communities
  + 2.24 Freedom Days: Commemorating the Ongoing Struggle for Freedom

**Unit 3 Source Engagement**

* The first source revolves around the Race Riots at the beginning of the twentieth century. We would have already discussed the Tulsa race massacre but now I would add the next biggest riot in this era which is the East St Louis Race Riot. I would have stations with documents from the novel by Charles Lumpkin *American Pogrom: East St Louis Race Riot and Black Politics*. Students will connect the readings to the Tulsa Massacre and to the Red Summer. This adds a local piece to my class which may be more relevant to students. **Topic 3.6 White Supremacist Violence and the Red Summer (Skills: 1C, 2C)**
* The Afro Caribbean Migration source I will use is from an article from *Black Past.* It was written by an author named Tam’ra-Kay Francis detailing more about the Afro Carribean Migration. The activity I will be using for this is a short answer Questionnaire with the source as excerpts and notes and previous lessons for contextualization. **Topic 3.17 Afro-Caribbean Migration (Skills: 1C, 2A)**
* **Unit 3: The Practice of Freedom**
  + Topic 3.1: The Reconstruction Amendments (Skills: 1C, 2B) (EK 3.1.A.1,2,3,4 & 3.1.B.1, 2)
    - Reconstructions, Reuniting Families, Black Codes, Labor, Defeat of Reconstruction
  + Topic 3.2: Social Life: Reuniting Black Families and the Freedmen’s Bureau (Skills: 1B, 2B)
    - Freedmen’s Bureau, Reuniting Families, Emancipation, Legal Marriages, Domestic Slave Trade
  + Topic 3.3 Black Codes, Land, and Labor (Skills: 1C, 2C)
    - Black Codes, Sharecropping, Convict Leasing, Land Ownership
  + Topic 3.4 The Defeat of Reconstruction (Skills: 3A, 3C)
    - Reconstruction, De jure Segregation, Poll Taxes, Plessy v. Ferguson, Racial Violence
  + Topic 3.5 Disenfranchisement and Jim Crow Laws (Skills: 1A, 3B)
    - Jim Crow, Disenfranchisement, Racial Segregation, Lynching, Nadir
  + Topic 3.6 White Supremacist Violence and the Red Summer (Skills: 1C, 2C)
    - Red Summer, Tulsa Race Massacre, Racial Violence, Great Migration, Armed Self-Defense
  + Topic 3.7 The Color Line and Double Consciousness in American Society (Skills: 1D, 2C)
    - Color Line, Double Consciousness, Racial Discrimination, Social Alienation, Agency
  + Topic 3.8 Lifting as We Climb: Uplift Ideologies and Black Women’s Rights and Leadership (Skills: 1A, 2B)
    - Racial Uplift, Women’s Suffrage, Black Women’s Leadership, Industrial Education, Civil Rights
  + Topic 3.9 Black Organizations and Institutions (Skills: 1A, 2A)
    - Black Businesses, Black Press, AME Church, Madam C.J. Walker, Economic Self-Sufficiency
  + Topic 3.10 HBCUs, Black Greek Letter Organizations, and Black Education (Skills: 1B, 3B)
    - HBCUs, Black Greek-letter Organizations, Vocational Education, Liberal Arts Education, Educational Equity
  + Topic 3.11 The New Negro Movement and the Harlem Renaissance (Skills: 2A, 3A)
    - New Negro Movement, Harlem Renaissance, Racial Pride, Cultural Innovation, Black Aesthetic
  + Topic 3.12 Photography and Social Change (Skills: 2C, 3B)
    - Photography, Social Change, New Negro Movement, Black Aesthetic, James Van Der Zee
  + Topic 3.13 Envisioning Africa in Harlem Renaissance Poetry (Skills: 2C, 3A)
    - Harlem Renaissance, Poetry, African Heritage, Colonialism, Identity
  + Topic 3.14 Symphony in Black: Black Performance in Music, Theater, and Film (Skills: 1A, 3B)
    - Harlem Renaissance, Jazz Age, Blues, Jazz, African American Performers
  + Topic 3.15 Black History Education and African American Studies (Skills: 1D, 2A)
    - New Negro Movement, Black Intellectual Tradition, African American Studies, Black History, Carter G. Woodson
  + Topic 3.16 The Great Migration (Skills: 2C, 2D)
    - Great Migration, Economic Opportunities, Racial Violence, Black Press, Urbanization
  + Topic 3.17 Afro-Caribbean Migration (Skills: 1C, 2A)
    - Afro-Caribbean Migration, Economic Opportunities, Cultural Blending, Religious Diversity, Radical Black Thought
  + Topic 3.18 The Universal Negro Improvement Association (Skills: 1B, 2C)
    - Marcus Garvey, UNIA, Pan-Africanism, Back-to-Africa Movement, Black Nationalism
* **Unit 4: Movements and Debates**

**Unit 4 SOURCE ENGAGEMENT**

* The first activity will be using an article written at Stanford that highlights and informs about the Black Panther Party. By now, students will have completed their Individual Student Project, and this will be used as a source for a DBQ about the Black Panther party. This is a practice for the exam DBQ, and students will use this source to contextualize how this author views the Black Panther party. **4.11 The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense**
* The final source is a clip from DJ Kool Hercs about the introduction to the Hip Hop genre of music. The activity that will be used is a bellringer and I will have students guess who started hip hop and rap. Then I will play this video and introduce DJ Kool Hercs the originator of Hip Hop. This will serve to introduce African Americans and their influence on music in the 20th and 21st centuries. **4.17 The Evolution of African American Music: From Spirituals to Hip-Hop**
  + Anti-colonial Movements and the Early Black Freedom Movement
    - Negritude, Segregation, Civil Rights Movement, G.I. Bil, Housing Discrimination
  + The Long Civil Rights Movement
    - Civil Rights Org, Black Women’s Leadership, Politics of Freedom, Sounds of the Movement
  + Black Power and Black Pride
    - Decolonization, Black Power, Black Panther, Black Art Movements
  + Black Women’s Voices in Society and Leadership
    - Women of the 20th Century Movement, Black Life
  + Diversity Within Black Communities
    - Black Middle Class, Black Political Gains, Contemporary Communities
  + Identity, Culture, and Connection
    - Music, Science & Tech Achievements, Black Studies, Afrofuturism

**Individual Student Project**

Each student will be required to select a topic in which they will research some aspect of the topic. Students will have to write a 2–3-page paper before the end of the first semester.

The following aspects of the paper are as follows:

Make certain your 2–3-page paper has the following elements:

1. **Clear Thesis Statement**

2. **4 Sources** either **2 Primary and 2 secondary,** or **4 secondary** or 1 **primary and 3 secondaries**.

3. Cite evidence from your sources to support your thesis/claim.

4. Make sure to address either a similarity or difference between at least 2 of your sources.

5. Properly cite your sources using **MLA or APA** citations.

6. Be certain to provide a bibliography at the end of your paper with each source used to finish your project.

3b Support a claim or argument using specific and relevant evidence.

The AP Rubric will score this paper.

**AP Testing**

**The AP Exam will take place on Tuesday, May 8th (morning session).**

* **60 MCs**
* **3 SAQs**
* **1 DBQ**
* **Individual Student Project**

**Class Supplies**

1. A notebook or folder dedicated to this class **ONLY (You may still want to take notes even if the class is remote)**
2. All assignments presented in class (Keep these organized in notability)
3. Pens and pencils
4. Chromebook

**Grading**

You will have summative and formative assessments in each unit. The summative assessments, which measure your understanding of the entire unit, are worth 60% of the total grade and the formative assessments, which are designed to prepare you for the summative assessment, are worth 40% of the total grade.

*Formative Assessment/Enrichment – 40%* - This includes writing assignments, map work, reading/content quizzes, content projects, in-class and electronic discussions, debates, etc. This category also includes assignments assigned as homework.

*Summative Assessment - 60%* - Summative assessments include objective unit quizzes, essay questions, and other major unit projects. Students who achieve 69% or lower may retake the summative to achieve a passing score on the assessment. The higher score to a maximum of 75% (see paragraph below) will be taken as the official grade for that assessment.

**Grading Scale**

90% and higher = A

80-89% = B

70-79% = C

60-69% = D

59% and lower = F

**Late Work**

Late assignments can be submitted for partial credit (credit determined by the instructor) after the assigned due date. If the assignment is significantly late (over two weeks) the assignment may still be turned in but may not receive credit that reflects a passing grade on the assignment. Assignments after a unit is completed will not be accepted. It is the student’s responsibility to track if they have submitted assignments on time.

**Final Exam**

The Final Exam or the AP exam will take place in Early May (I will update you when I get a specific date). This will take a matter of 1-2 class periods, and you may miss another class on that day. We will communicate with teachers for missing work.

**Homework/Classwork Policy**

All homework and other assignments should be completed on time. Any graded homework/classwork will fall into the formative category. Note: some homework/classwork will not be collected but will be used to gain knowledge of the historical concept/theme. Again, late work will be accepted to a certain point but may not receive full credit after a certain point.

Students who exhibit a pattern of incomplete work are subject to the following:

* Parent/Teacher Conference (Via Zoom or Phone)
* Recommended and Scheduled Conferences with teacher
* Interventions include, but are not limited to conferences with the counselor, Dean, and/or other related services.

**Student responsibilities after an absence from class**

Students should check (in this order)

* Microsoft Teams- Everything will be in there.
* Contact the teacher to receive missing work.
* Speak with a fellow student about missing work.

Make-up assessments must be arranged before the absence if you’re aware of the date or immediately after returning to school.

**Chromebook Usage Policy (in-person): The usage of the Chromebook is a privilege and should only be used for classroom instruction within the said class.** Students should bring their Chromebooks to class fully charged every day. Do not expect to charge the Chromebook (or any other electronics) during class time. If the student does not have their Chromebook, they must still complete the assignment. **Inappropriate use of the Chromebook in or out of class could lead to:**

* No classroom use of the Chromebook
* Disciplinary actions that include parent-student conferences, administrative/dean referrals, etc.

**The Chromebook is school property. Please take care of it and keep it in a safe place. You are financially responsible for it during this school year.**

**Technology Policy: Video and audio recordings of any person in the classroom or on Zoom must be accompanied by their permission and the permission of the supervising adult for the class. This is inclusive of school and personal electronic devices. Violation of this could lead to consequences given by the school and/or local authorities.**

**The use of electronic/online devices (outside of research) to complete assignments can be considered plagiarism and/or cheating. It will be dealt with according to the student handbook but also could impact your status in this class.**

**\*Note: This syllabus is subject to change and is intended to outline the course, communicate class norms, and expectations, and provide a written layout of the class themes and major deadlines. In rare cases, dates may be amended based on situations that arise throughout the semester, so always check the Live Calendar for the most up-to-date information.**