



SUMMER 2024

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE DEPARTMENT OF BLACK STUDIES NEWSLETTER

Welcome To 2024-2025!

Greetings from the (Interim) Chair

As you'll see in this Summer 2024 newsletter, we've come a long way since gaining full departmental status in 2023, building a community of Black Studies scholars, including talented student assistants, extraordinary guest lecturers, and our own fully-engaged faculty. We've introduced exciting new courses such as AfroLatinidad(es), the Black Diaspora in Providence, and Faith and Spirit in the Black Family and Community. Our courses are increasingly popular—last year more than 230 students took Black Studies courses, and Fall 2024 enrollments are up more than 20%. Most exciting of all is the news that we've begun the search for a new faculty colleague, for a tenure-track position as a full time Black Studies professor.

This looks to be another great year for Black Studies, and we hope you'll join us on this inspiring journey of discovery and joy!

- Prof. Tony Affigne, Interim Chair

New Department, New Logo

To commemorate our new status as a full academic department, the Black Studies Faculty decided that a new logo was needed - one that fully represented the department, the students and faculty, and what Black Studies meant to our community. After an extensive selection process, this design, created by Kelvin Afranie '25, was chosen as our new department logo! A big thanks to Kelvin for his incredible work that will represent our department for years to come!



Faculty and Staff

MEET THE DEPARTMENT



Dr. Eva Michelle Wheeler
BLACK STUDIES,
WORLD LANGUAGES AND
CULTURES



Dr. Aishah Scott
BLACK STUDIES,
HEALTH SCIENCES



Dr. Tony Affigne
BLACK STUDIES,
POLITICAL SCIENCE



For more information visit: black-studies.providence.edu

2023-2024 INAUGURAL GUEST SPEAKER SERIES

DR. GLADYS MITCHELL-WALTHOUR

The Department of Black Studies welcomed our first guest lecturer for the 2023-2024 Inaugural Guest Speaker Series in December 2023. Dr. Gladys Mitchell-Walthour is a Professor of Political Science at North Carolina Central University, as well as the current Dan Blue Endowed Chair of Political Science at NCCU. Her research specializes in



Transnational Black politics, intersections of race and gender, skin color discrimination, social welfare, and the racial politics of conventional and social media. Her lecture was entitled, “Black Women in Power: New Hope for Progressive Politics in Brazil.”



PROFESSOR KIM TAYLOR-THOMPSON, J.D.



The second lecture in the 23-24 speaker series was Professor Kim Taylor-Thompson, J.D. of the NYU School of Law. Prof. Taylor-Thompson spent 10 years at the DC Public Defender Service, and was then a professor at NYU Law for the next 30 years. Her teaching and scholarship has focused on the impact of race and gender in public policy – particularly criminal and juvenile justice policy – and the need to prepare lawyers to meet the demands of practice in and on behalf of marginalized communities. Her lecture in February was entitled, “There Are Children Here: The Racialized Mistreatment of Black and Brown Children in the Justice System.”



DR. DEIRDRE COOPER OWENS

The third speaker for the 23-24 Guest Speaker Series was Dr. Deirdre Cooper Owens of the University of Connecticut. Dr. Cooper Owens is a popular public speaker, writer, and reproductive justice advocate. She is also an Organization of American Historians’ (OAH)



Distinguished Lecturer, a past American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Fellow, and she has won several prestigious honors and awards for her scholarly and advocacy work in history, and reproductive and birthing justice. The April lecture was entitled, “Examining Slavery, the Archives of the Womb & the Birth of American Gynecology.”



NEW FACULTY



MARCO McWILLIAMS

ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR

Marco McWilliams is a Providence-based Black Studies scholar who has taught at the [University of Rhode Island](#), [Morehouse College](#), and [Rhode Island College](#). He was [Fellow and Practitioner in Residence](#) at Brown University's Swearer Center, and is an editor of *Reimagining New England Histories: Historical Injustice, Sovereignty, and Freedom*. In the fall semester he will teach *Faith and Spirit in the Black Family and Community*.

PAUL CATO, PH.D.

POST-DOCTORAL
TEACHING FELLOW

Paul Cato is an interdisciplinary scholar who studies African Americans' place within love's history, theorization, and politics. His dissertation, "[More Like a Fire, Like the Wind](#)," examines the discourse on "active love" that unfolded through James Baldwin's conversations with contemporary Black intellectuals. In addition to his scholarly endeavors, Cato is heavily involved in the fight against racism and ableism. He will teach *Intro to Black Studies*.



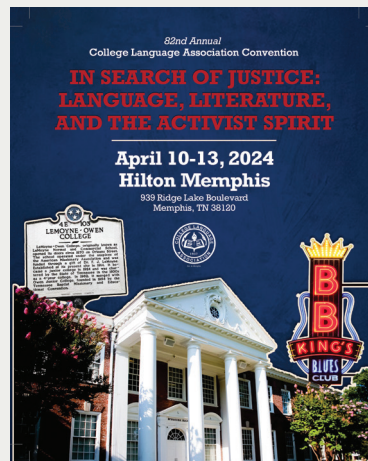
FACULTY NEWS

“OUR AFROFUTURE IN THE CROSSHAIRS”

This past March, Drs. Aishah Scott and Eva Wheeler represented our department at the 48th Annual National Council for Black Studies Conference in San José, CA. The National Council for Black Studies was formed out of the substantial need for a national stabilizing force in the developing discipline of Africana/Black Studies. The roots of NCBS run deep in the evolutionary growth of the discipline given that the organization was formed only seven years after the establishment of the first Black



Studies Program in the United States. Today, the purpose of the NCBS is multidimensional and the scope of its functioning is quite broad. As an organization created and sustained primarily by students and their teachers, NCBS is committed to academic excellence and social responsibility. Sponsored by the Department of African American Studies at the San José State University (SJSU), the theme of the 2024 conference was “Our AfroFuture in the Crosshairs: Black Studies in the Age of Artificial Intelligence, Big Tech, and the Cultural Wars.”



“BLACKNESS AND THE MULTILINGUAL SPEAKER”

In April, Dr. Wheeler presented research at the 82nd Annual College Language Association (CLA) Convention in Memphis, TN. The CLA was founded by Dr. Hugh Morris Gloster who, in 1937, “engaged other English teachers at predominately private ‘Negro’ colleges and universities to form an association which would address the problem from its origins to its current state. In 1937, eight men and women met at LeMoyné and formed the Association of Teachers of English in Negro Colleges (ATENC).” In addition to chairing the “Language and Linguistic Justice” session, Dr. Wheeler presented her paper, “Blackness and the Multilingual Speaker: In Search of Justice in the Language Classroom and Beyond.”

“BE(COM)ING A BLACK SPANISH SPEAKER”

In October 2023, Dr. Wheeler was invited to the University of Maryland to guest lecture on “Be(com)ing a Black Spanish Speaker: Raciolinguistic Identity and Belonging in the Language Classroom and Beyond” as part of the university’s Race, Equity, and Justice: Anti-Racist Futures Speaker Series. As a faculty member in both the Black Studies and World Languages and Cultures Departments here at Providence College, Dr. Wheeler provided an important commentary on racial and linguistic identities both in and outside the classroom.

RACE, EQUITY, AND JUSTICE
Anti-Racist Futures Speaker Series

Be(com)ing a Black Spanish Speaker:
Raciolinguistic Identity and Belonging in the Language Classroom and Beyond

Dr. Wheeler will speak on the intricate dynamics that shapes the relationship between language, race, and identity. Through a keen raciolinguistic lens, she examines the transformative power of language in shaping our sense of self and our place in the world.



Dr. Eva Michelle Wheeler
Associate Professor of Spanish and Black Studies
Providence College

Oct. 25, 5 pm
HJ Patterson Hall,
Room 2124





DANIEL KYEI-POAKWA, PH.D

VISITING ASSISTANT
PROFESSOR

Dr. Daniel Kyei-Poakwa has taught Black Studies at Providence College since 2011. He was educated at [Ghana's University of Science and Technology Kumasi](#), and holds both a [PhD \(Antioch\)](#) and [MBA in International Business \(JWU\)](#). Dr. Kyei-Poakwa taught previously at [Bryant University](#), [Rhode Island College](#), and [Community College of Rhode Island](#). He was also a consultant for [Brown University's Department of Africana Studies](#).

DR. SCOTT'S MICROSYLLABUS ON BLACK AIDS AWARENESS

In February 2024, Dr. Scott published a microsyllabus, "Pushing Forward: 25 Years of Black AIDS Awareness", with *The Abusable Past*, a part of the *Radical History Review*. *The Abusable Past* "provides a space for critical scholarship and rigorous debate with implications for how [people] think through the past, understand the present, and envision the future." Dr. Scott's digital microsyllabus contains an overview of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, and "explores how the marginalization of Black Americans led to the disproportionate growth of the AIDS epidemic in this community" through provided primary and secondary sources.

For more information about this topic, check out the microsyllabus at abusablepast.org.



Promotional material for the 2022 National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. Source: Congressional Equality Caucus.

ASIAN AMERICANS IN AN ANTI-BLACK WORLD

In March, Dr. Affigne attended the 2024 Western Political Science Association Conference in Vancouver, BC. Dr. Affigne is currently the Vice President-Elect of the WPSA, and will be the 2025 WPSA Program Chair. Dr. Affigne was a commenter on many discussions over the course of the conference, including a panel on Claire Jean Kim's *Asian Americans in an Anti-Black World*, and a roundtable entitled "A GLocal Approach to the Intersections of Migration and Race".

STUDENT WORKERS

New Year, New Hires

In the Spring 2024 semester, the department was thrilled to hire three student workers, all Black Studies majors or minors, to work with the department in publicity, research, and community building projects. From reorganizing and rejuvenating the Black Studies Community Room, to designing posters and event invitations, our student workers were a huge part in keeping the department running like a well oiled machine, and we couldn't have done it without them!

Two of our students, Spencer Johnson and Diane Polanco, graduated May 2024, and we wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors!



Top Right: Spencer Johnson, '24
Above: Diane Polanco, '24
Bottom Right: Christina Andrus, '26

BLACK STUDIES OVER THE YEARS

How do you introduce something that already exists? Or rather, how do you reintroduce something without painting over the past? Charged with organizing a “reintroduction” of Black Studies to Providence College, Dr. Wheeler worked with Diane, Spencer, and Christina to do just that - introduce the “new” department to campus and, at the same time, respect and honor those that came before. Diane, Spencer, and Christina, guided by Dr. Wheeler, decided to do a living timeline project - gathering research, conducting alumni interviews, and designing visual components presented last semester, but with the goal of continuously adding to the story of Black Studies on PC campus. To view the Timeline project in its current iteration, visit our department website and explore the past and present of Black Studies at PC.

→
Dr. Wheeler introduced Christina, Spencer, and Diane (left to right) at the Senior Celebration applauding their work and final project.



←
In his research summary, Spencer highlighted the ways in which the college reacted to student protest, often leaning away from creating proactive policies.

Senior Banquet and Awards

The Department held our annual Senior Banquet and Awards Celebration on May 2nd, presenting both Departmental Awards and Minor Certificates to our thirteen graduating senior minors: Anaudia Abston-Lopez, Aliyat Adeboye, Natalia Anderson, Emily Antunes, Isabel Arnout, Francilliana Barbosa, Anastasia Husset, Kim Hussey, Spencer Johnson, Kay-Lee Mendes, Jennifer Merandisse, Nallely Perez, and Diane Polanco.



SAVE THE DATE

2025 SENIOR BANQUET AND CELEBRATION

THURSDAY, MAY 1ST
MOORE HALL 125
6:00PM-8:00PM

Tickets Available to Purchase
SPRING 2025

Above: Drs. Wheeler and Affigne with the Black Studies Graduating class of 2024.



Spencer Johnson was the recipient of the Mary McLeod Bethune Award. This award recognizes academic and scholarly achievement by a senior BLS minor who embodies the academic vigor of Mary McLeod Bethune.



Aliyat Adeboye was the recipient of the Amílcar Cabral Freedom Award. This award is presented to a senior Black Studies minor who has promoted the principles of Black Studies through leadership, and displays a deep commitment to social justice.

STUDENT NEWS

ALUMNI UPDATES

SPOTLIGHT

Francilliana Barbosa, '24

“One word to describe the BLS Department [...] would be phenomenal. Phenomenal because there is a lot happening around us and the department is still able to stand strong and do the work that needs to be done. Moving forward in my life and career, my BLS minor affects my ability to continue to see social issues in many different perspectives. Being a Black Studies minor helped me realize that in whatever career or wherever life takes me that I will forever hold a focus on the minority community.

My career focus is in the health field and there are a lot of disparities that Black Studies has helped me to see. I loved how my major in Health Policy and Management connected to a lot of the courses that I took in Black Studies and that is what made me more passionate. I hope to be in the health field for a long time and I hope to always tackle the disparities that we are facing even if not at a policy level but I hope to make a difference in the community that I choose to work for.”



Francilliana Barbosa graduated this past May 2024 with a Major in Health Policy and Management and a Minor in Black Studies. She currently works in Human Resources as a Program Administrator at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston. Francilliana is also working on her Patient Care Tech certification to be able to experience and work on the clinical side of the hospital with patients.

Spencer Johnson, '24



On to Argentina! A big congratulations to Spencer Johnson '24, who will be traveling to Argentina next year to teach English as a cultural ambassador for the Fulbright Program. In a conversation with Vicki-Ann Downing, Spencer said he chose to apply for a placement in Argentina because the country’s political turmoil, economic difficulties, and racial climate fascinate him — and because he doesn’t know anyone who has been there.

“I talked about being [in Argentina] as a Political Science minor with contentious economic debate, and as a Black studies minor who can experience the very small Afro-descended population.”

In addition to teaching skills he has learned through working as a tutor in the Writing Center on campus, Spencer credited his foundational understanding of the social and political climate in Argentina to Dr. Wheeler’s “Afro-Latinidad(es): Identities, Expressions, Resistance” course.

Check out the PC website to read the full interview with Vicki-Ann Downing.
<https://news.providence.edu/spencer-johnson-fulbright/>

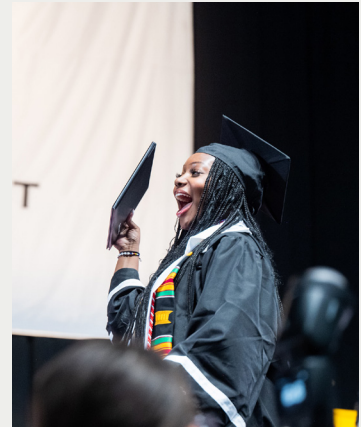
Spencer Johnson graduated this past May 2024 with a Major in English and Minors in Black Studies and Political Science.

ARE YOU A BLACK STUDIES ALUMNUS/A?

We’d love to hear how you’re doing!

Send us an update at black.studies@providence.edu

Congratulations Class of 2024!



Contact Us:

Dr. Anthony Affigne
Interim Department Chair
Howley Hall 316
401.865.2569
affigne@providence.edu

Katherine Lynch
Administrative Coordinator
Howley Hall 119
401.865.2125
klynch25@providence.edu

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