

Study Abroad for African American Studies Majors

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The Department of African American Studies encourages its students to take advantage of the opportunity to complete some portion of their undergraduate study through Berkeley Study Abroad (BSA). African American Studies majors can broaden their horizons by studying African art and music in Ghana, Black Cinema in South Africa, or even literature and political ideology of the Caribbean in Barbados. Because courses taken through BSA are accepted as UC courses, with careful planning, students may spend as much as a year of study at a foreign university with no loss of time in completing their degrees.



Why study abroad?

Studying abroad provides a great opportunity for African American Studies majors to understand their course work in a broader context. By exposing yourself to a variety of different cultures and experiences, you have a better framework with which to critique and contribute to academic topics of interest. Furthermore, there are a variety of African American Studies related courses offered at foreign universities that are not available at Berkeley.

From another perspective, study abroad will help you develop practical life experiences by:

- increasing your understanding of the world and your own society
- developing self-confidence and independence
- increasing language proficiency
- improving critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- enhancing your resume for job and graduate school applications



When can I study abroad?

While it's possible for African American Studies majors to go abroad at almost any point in their academic careers, the particular semester, summer, or year that you study abroad depends on where you are in your major and what courses you plan to take while abroad. To determine the best time period for you to study abroad, consult with your major advisor at the African American Studies office in 664A Barrows Hall.



What classes can I take?

If you want to do a significant part of your major abroad, you should complete the lower-division preparation for the major and at least some of the upper-division requirements before you go. You should also complete most of your general education requirements. This way you'll have maximum flexibility in the courses you take abroad. Major and minor elective courses can be fulfilled while abroad. Students should consult their academic advisor for further information.

The African American Studies department also encourages students to take advantage of research, internship, and fieldwork opportunities while abroad. In many cases, it is possible to count this work for major credit. Please consult with your major advisor before departing to discuss this opportunity.



Where can I study abroad?

African American Studies students have the opportunity to take up to half of their major elective courses while studying abroad. There are a variety of countries and locations at which students can find applicable coursework. In many cases, the major will also accept relevant coursework even when it is not directly comparable to the content of a course offered at Berkeley. If you are looking to fulfill a substantial amount of electives while studying abroad, there are some countries that have greater opportunity for doing so than others.

At the University of the West Indies, Barbados, students can gain a unique perspective while pursuing Caribbean and African studies. Frenchspeaking students can study modern day and historical Africa in France. At the University of Ghana in Legon, students have the opportunity to study religion, dance, and politics of Africa, as well as the music and literature of the Black diaspora. In South Africa and the United Kingdom, students can find courses covering African literature and cinema, as well as courses on African-American issues. These are only a few of the options for African American Studies students.

“Study abroad is a wonderful experience because it opens your mind to things you never knew existed in real life. Experiencing another country makes the things you read in books so much more tangible and real!”
Pia Winston, African American Studies and Anthropology Major

Course credit: Students will earn UC credit for BSA courses they complete abroad. However, application of credit to major requirements is subject to the discretion of the department. To search for program and course options, go to the BSA website: studyabroad.berkeley.edu/programs and follow the links to courses offered through UCEAP and Berkeley Abroad.

Costs: Study on BSA can be comparable to the cost of study at UC. In some cases, it is less. BSA participants pay UC fees and continue to receive UC financial aid while abroad. Furthermore, BSA students are eligible for special grants and scholarships from UC, the host country, and other sources.

Plan ahead: Applications typically are due six months to a year prior to the program’s start date and some programs have academic or linguistic prerequisites that must be satisfied in advance. Please check the BSA website for guidance on “how to apply”: studyabroad.berkeley.edu/how-to-apply

What happens when I return?

Plan to meet with your faculty and/or major advisor upon your return to have your coursework approved.

Bring back course materials such as syllabi, reading lists, and exams, as these will help when petitioning for major or breadth requirements. Faculty and undergraduate advisors will review the petitions and give final approval on coursework.

I’m interested! What are the next steps?

African American Studies students interested in studying abroad through BSA should first research program options on the BSA website: studyabroad.berkeley.edu, then meet with an advisor to discuss departmental regulations and the academic planning process. Application information and BSA advising are available at the Berkeley Study Abroad office, 160 Stephens Hall.