

Race and Social Justice Initiatives

Cultures, Societies and Global Studies

The Department of Cultures, Societies and Global Studies (CSGS) approaches the challenges facing humanity through perspectives that are primarily informed by the experiences of the peoples from the Global South – Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America – and its diasporas. Our department houses programs in Africana Studies; Asian Studies; Black Feminist Studies; History, Culture and Law; Latino, Latin American and Caribbean Studies; and Spanish. Tackling questions of racial and social justice are integral to CSGS’s mission, to engage in research and teaching: “on the transformative power of culture as an instrument for social change and innovation.”

A critical aspect of our unit is its foundation in academic partnerships. Such collaborations are reflected in joint appointments with English, History, International Affairs, Philosophy & Religion, Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology, Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies and the World Languages Center. In addition to offering a variety of classes that focus on race and social justice – such as “US Race and Ethnic Relations,” “Early African American Literature,” “Black Popular Culture,” “Gender, Race and Medicine” – the unit produced published works and sponsor a variety of public programming intended to foster and engage with those issues.

Among the books our faculty recently published are: *African Americans in Essex County, Massachusetts: An Annotated Guide*, *Martin Luther King and The Trumpet of Conscience Today*, and *The Politics of Language in Puerto Rico Revisited*.

Our faculty have written numerous scholarly articles in the field of racial and social justice. A small sample of them includes:

- “Bifurcating American Identity: Partisanship, Sexual Orientation, and the 2016 Presidential Election.” *Politics, Groups and Identities*
- “Contestations in Black Feminism.” *Oppositional Conversations*
- “Digital Queer Witnessing: Testimony, Contested Virtual Heritage, and the Apartheid Archive in Soweto, Johannesburg,” *Digital Black Atlantic*.
- “Mpambu Nzila: José Bedia and the Crossroads.” *Religions*
- “Not that Bad?: Rape Narratives, Genre, and #Metoo in the Work of Roxane Gay.” *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*
- “What could Explain the Lower COVID-19 Burden in Africa Despite Considerable Circulation of the SARS-CoV-2 Virus?” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*

Chapters

- “Judging Worthiness: Hurricane María, Puerto Ricans and the Articulation of American National Identity” in *The Impact of Natural Disasters on Systemic Political and Social Inequities in the U.S.*
- “Let this Seminar Be A Starting Point: Digital Storytelling and the African American Experience” in *Teaching American Studies: The State of the Classroom as State of the Field*

- “Spiritual Ethnicity: Our Collective Ancestors in Ifá Devotion across the Americas” in *Embodying Black Religions in Africa and Its Diasporas*

Events

- Reimagining Together: Community Read and Lecture with Farah Jasmine Griffin, *Read Until You Understand*
- *Memoirs of a Black Girl* Film Screening
- *Talking Back: The Genius of bell hooks*
- Speaker, CSSH Civility Series, “Anti-Asian Racism,” April 14, 2021. <https://cssh.northeastern.edu/civilityseries/civility-series-anti-asian-racism/>
- Speaker, Myra Kraft Open Classroom, Fall 2021: *Repairing a Divided America, “Asian Americans in a Multi-Racial and Multi-Religious Democracy,”* October 20, 2021
- Moderator, Northeastern University event, “Standing Against Hate: A Time to Reflect, Act, and Show Solidarity,” April 5, 2021. <https://webcasts.northeastern.edu/standing-against-hate/>
- Organizer and Moderator, Northeastern University and College of Social Sciences and Humanities, “Asia America and the World” Speakers Series. <https://cssh.northeastern.edu/aaw/>
- Member, Northeastern University, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan Committee
- Member, Northeastern University, Presidential Council

Ongoing

- Early Caribbean Digital Archive

Invited talks:

- “A Secret History of the sable Venus: Digital Analysis, Narrative Authority, and the Discourses of Race in European Novels with Afro-Caribbean Female Protagonists, 1808-1827.” Centre for Black Humanities Research Seminar. University of Bristol, Bristol, UK. November 23, 2021
- “New Directions: Black Print Culture and Archives. History of the Book Mahindra Humanities Center Seminar. Harvard University. Virtual. November 9, 2021.
- “Racing the Rise of the Novel: Black Lives and the Development of the English Novel from 1688-1832.” Queen Mary University of London Eighteenth-century Studies Seminar. Queen Mary University of London, London, UK. October 19, 2021.
- “The Fight for Educational Justice in Nineteenth-Century New England,” Kolloquium für Historische Bildungsforschung, June 2021, <https://www.erziehungswissenschaften.huberlin.de/de/historische/kolloquium>
- Speaker, Atlantic Black Box. “The Fight for Equal School Rights in Nineteenth Century New England,” Atlantic Black Box, June 2021
- Speaker, Framingham State University’s Arts & Ideas Series. “Democratizing Schools: The African American Fight for Educational Justice in Massachusetts,” Framingham State University, October 2021.
- “From Puerto Rico to Porto Rico and Back Again: Debating the Worthiness of Racialized Citizens.” Power and Agency through Transregional Storytelling in Latin(x) America and the Caribbean Symposium. Worcester Polytechnic Institute / Worcester, MA (April 27-28).

The Africana Studies program is hosting a series of talks and panel discussions focused on the student-developed, broad topic of “Africana Studies in the Academy: The Fight to Be Seen Heard and Understood.” Panel discussions have included participation not only by faculty, but also students and community members. In addition, Africana studies co-sponsored, in conjunction with the Center for Reparations and restorative Justice an amazing conference intended to explore the potential relationships between lynching and reparations. This day-long conference brought speakers such as Representative Shirley Jackson Lee, Angela Davis, and Ta-Nehisi Coates, to the campus community.

Our faculty regularly participate in race and social justice events and programming on campus, beyond the unit. Nicole Aljoe, Angel Nieves and affiliate faculty member Tracy Robinson-Wood and Melissa Pearson participated in the Racial Literacies pop-up class. New member Fadeke Castor was interviewed by Northeastern News about the African American holiday, Juneteenth.

Several of our unit members bring their research and scholarship on issues of race and social justice to bear through on-campus Northeastern-based public-facing organizations such as the Early Black Boston Almanac, the Early Caribbean Archive, the Integrated Initiative for Global Health, the Institute on Race and Social Justice, the Northeastern Center for Health Policy and Law, NULab, Office of City and Community Affairs.

This work is also brought to bear in organizations outside of Northeastern such as: the African Centre for Community Investment in Health, the Center for Critical Race and Digital Studies, the Octavia E. Butler Legacy Network, Signs: Journal of Women in Society & Culture, and the UPenn Center on Digital Culture and Society.

The CSGS faculty collaborate on an ongoing basis with several of the university’s cultural institutions—including the John D. O’Bryant African American Institute, the Asian-American Center, and the Latinx Student Cultural Center—and numerous student groups—such as the Brazilian Student Association, Chinese Student Association, Latin American Student Organization, Northeastern African Student Organization, and the Northeastern Black Student Association.