Optional Ph.D. Emphasis in Black Studies

The Department of Black Studies Doctoral Emphasis (BSE) represents an unparalleled asset in the production of 21st century interdisciplinary scholars. Forty years ago, the University of California at Santa Barbara launched a program devoted to the research, study, and teaching of Black Studies after several African American students seized control of the computer center on campus late in 1968 and demanded systemic change in the curriculum of the university. In the decades that followed, numerous struggles no less difficult have been waged to preserve, expand, and solidify a freestanding Department of Black Studies.

Black Studies as an inter-departmental set of conversations and intellectual questions supports a multifaceted undergraduate curriculum at UCSB. Today, Black Studies is acclaimed by students as one of the best teaching departments on campus, with a solid roster of world-renowned scholars who teach, research, and serve the intellectual and policy interests of Black people around the world. Doctoral emphasis students are encouraged to apply for Black Studies Teaching Assistantships as part of their training.

Applicants must first be admitted to, or currently enrolled in, a UCSB Ph.D. program participating in the Black Studies graduate emphasis: Chicana and Chicano Studies, Education, History, and Sociology. Black Studies Emphasis (BSE) students are required to successfully complete five courses, designed to develop a critical and analytical understanding of the study of Black people in local and global contexts. In applying this knowledge to their major research project, BSE students will also complete one dissertation seminar in the Department of Black Studies. BSE dissertation committees must have one member or reader with a minimum appointment of .25% in the Department of Black Studies and dissertation must have a Black Studies focus. Applications to the Black Studies Doctoral Emphasis may be submitted at any stage of Ph.D. work and applications will be accepted throughout the year.

Doctoral Emphasis Coursework

The BSE gains its distinct identity by focusing on four broad areas of inquiry: Race Studies, including local, national, and transnational regimes; Black Studies traditions of criticality, activism, social justice, and transgressive epistemology; African Culture and Identity in America and throughout the Diaspora; Comparative Ethnic Studies.

Required Courses:

1. BLST 206: Graduate Proseminar. A one-quarter critical inquiry based on dissertation related research addressing several issues in the curricular development of black studies: research writing, formal presentation, postdoctoral programs, revision, and journal publication process.

2. BLST 208: Issues in Black Studies Epistemology and Pedagogy. A one-quarter Introduction to Black Studies as a field with its own logic and history of inquiry. Students gain a methodology for creating paradigms, organizing and interpreting data, and constructing knowledge through research and teaching in Black Studies.

3. Two Topics Courses selected from an approved list of courses in participating departments other than a student's disciplinary department. One of these courses should also be outside of the Black Studies Department. A student may petition for a 200-500 level course not yet listed to substitute for the topics course. Such courses may be pre-approved by emailing the course description and syllabus to the chair of the BSE Steering Committee.

4. BLST 599: Dissertation Prep Seminar. Typically taken after advancement to candidacy, BSE students will discuss their dissertation proposals and other dissertation-related work-in-progress for critical feedback.