



Incorporating Black History into Curriculum Across the Disciplines

By Mia Hairston, Program Coordinator

February calls for a time of reflection and celebration of Black History and the expansive contributions of African Americans in our society. The University of Detroit Mercy honors Black History through enriching programming experiences, such as exhibits, book talks, and tours of historical museums. University faculty can further this tradition by incorporating African American studies into their respective disciplines. In this article, Detroit Mercy Professor and Director of African American Studies [Justin Williams](#) offers a few insightful tips to support faculty in facilitating these endeavors. He notes that providing students with African American knowledge across disciplines allows for an even more comprehensive understanding of American History.

Get Inspired

Finding the right source of inspiration can help to inform educational intention. Dr. Williams shares that his inspiration for becoming an African historian is rooted in untold stories; reading Howard Zinn's *A People's History of The United States* and shared experiences from his grandmother about the Jim Crow era encouraged him to know and understand more about the interactions of African Americans with Africa. He offers Henry Louis Gates' and Kwame Anthony Appiah's scholarly encyclopedia titled *Africana* as a resource for faculty interested in black history and the impact of African culture on the world. Exploring unknown truths about black history can open up new worlds for educators, as it has done for Dr. Williams.

Start Locally



“Take advantage of Detroit’s strength!” Dr. Williams acknowledges that Detroit is one of the most important places in Black history. According to New Detroit, a racial justice organization, Detroit has been a center for African American progress dating back to slavery and the civil rights era, and this holds today. The city is rich in African American culture and provides opportunities to extend the learning experience. Dr. Williams often encourages his students to visit distinctive sites preserving black culture, ranging from Black Film Exhibits to museums or even the local jazz lounge. Creating opportunities for students to get involved in communities or local organizations that celebrate black culture helps students develop reverence and deeper cultural awareness.

Diversify Curriculum

Share your discipline through the lens of the African American experience. The simplest way to diversify the curriculum is by incorporating prominent black figures and their contributions in various disciplines. Faculty can also fuse their curriculum with readings, case studies, or digital resources about relevant historical content made by black creators. Facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration through research initiatives, welcoming guest lecturers, or open dialogue about issues that impact the African American community are other ways to diversify the curriculum and expand upon the perspectives of learners.

Incorporating Black History doesn’t have to be limited to February and promotes diversity, inclusivity, and an enriching educational experience for all. By highlighting the achievements and stories of African Americans year-round, educators empower students to be well-informed, empathetic, and socially conscious. According to Dr. Williams, “If you’re talking about African American experiences, you’re talking about American History. “