NEWS

"Children aren't responsible for their parents' happiness, but they still try."
FREDRIK BACKMAN, SWEDISH AUTHOR

African American Studies Department renamed to Black Studies

BY BRADY PAYNE
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

The Yale department that studies people of African descent in the United States, the Caribbean and Latin America has changed its name to the Black Studies Department, after 55 years of being called the African American Studies Department.

Three professors in the department told the News that the change was made to reflect a growing number of new professors whose regions of study extend beyond the United States.

"We study the lives and histories and movements and creative expressions of Black people around the world wherever they are, not just in North America and not even just in the Americas," department chair Erica Edwards said.

According to Edwards, the change emerged naturally through a yearslong process of evaluating the goals and direction of the department. This evaluation started in the 2022-23 academic year under the leadership of then-chair Phillip Atiba Solomon, formerly known as Phillip Atiba Goff.

Elleza Kelley, the director of undergraduate studies, wrote that the department changed its name to reflect a "commitment to the study of black life, history, and culture beyond the continental United States."

She added that the department in recent years has "welcomed incredible new faculty members who work on Brazil and the Caribbean."

The department welcomed Marlene Daut in 2022 and Kaiama Glover in 2023, both of whom teach courses cross-listed in the French department. Both have published books on Haiti. Nana Adusei-Poku, who studies artistic productions from the Black diaspora, joined in 2023, as well. Christen Smith, who studies anti-Black state violence in Brazil, also joined the department in 2024.

Glover said that though she "would have argued, and did argue, when the name was African American Studies, that the label could be applied to the Americas writ large," the old name conjured in people's imaginations something "fairly U.S.-centric."

Glover further said that she has heard from students "good things so far, maybe with some weariness," which she attributed to students' wondering whether the new name is "concretizing something that's already in process, and that's commitment, or is the name an aspiration."



KIMBERLY ANGELES / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
Professors told the News that change was made to reflect a growing interest in the study of Black people in regions beyond the United States — at Yale and in the broader field. relief to affected nations.

Similar changes have occurred at Northwestern and Georgetown, schools which also renamed their African American studies departments to Black studies. Edwards said that the name more broadly "reflects where we are as a field."

This name calls back to the history of Black studies at Yale. In 1968, the Black Student Alliance at Yale hosted a symposium titled "Black Studies in the University." Following the conference, students and faculty petitioned for a major in Afro-American studies.

In the preface to the book "Black studies in the university; a symposium," a compilation of what happened at the conference, scholar Armstead L. Robinson '69 recognized "significant omissions; for instance, little attention is paid to the Caribbean or to Latin America."

Edwards said that the department would be "convening a panel to commemorate that symposium on Oct. 27."

Though the department name has officially changed, the Black Studies Department's course code is still "AFAM."

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Faculty group hosts panel on possible Trump intervention

BY JAEHA JANG
STAFF REPORTER

Faculty leaders from three universities that have settled or are negotiating with the Trump administration spoke to Yale professors Monday at an event hosted by Yale's chapter of the American Association of University Professors.

The panelists –– which included leaders of AAUP chapters at Brown, Columbia and Harvard –– stressed the importance of faculty organizing in the face of the federal government's attempts to influence universities. The three represented schools have each faced scrutiny from the Trump administration, which threatened to restrict their federal grants. Brown and Columbia have since brokered agreements with the administration, making school policy concessions in exchange for the restoration of funding.

The panelists spoke virtually to an audience of more than 70 professors across Zoom and in person.

"Our greatest success has not been with influencing university policy," Michael Thaddeus, the acting president of Columbia's AAUP chapter, said. "Our greatest successes have been in the court of public opinion, where we're all aligned about something and we're able to stand together and speak together."

According to Daniel HoSang, the president of Yale's chapter of AAUP, while Yale hasn't had a formal settlement with the federal government, yesterday's panel provided "the benefit of thinking ahead about what could be on the horizon."

He added that in a recent meeting with AAUP chapters across Connecticut, Sen. Chris Murphy asserted that Connecticut universities like Yale that have been spared from direct funding cuts so far may ultimately face serious threats from the federal government.

"The notion that unless there is some kind of settlement or unless funds are held up, the University and faculty are free and clear, is just erroneous on so many accounts," HoSang said.

Amy Kapczynski LAW '03, a professor at Yale Law School who kicked off the panel, discussed the Trump administration's general demands to universities and the differences between Brown and Columbia's settlements. While Columbia's settlement focused on campus discipline and oversight of certain academic areas, Brown's settlement adopted the federal government's executive order on the definition of gender, Kapczynski said.

Thaddeus said that while Columbia has a long-held reputation as an "argumentative, contrarian place where everyone has a different opinion," recent developments have highlighted the importance of faculty organization and forming coalitions with students, alumni, the press and local communities.

The panel also featured Veena Dubal, a law professor at the University of California, Irvine, and the general counsel for the national AAUP, who emphasized that legal strategies against the federal government cannot be successful "in the absence of really robust organizing" among faculty.

Alessandro Gomez, a Yale professor of mechanical engineering and materials science who attended the event, said although Yale has not yet been "hit directly," he thinks the event successfully prepared faculty for the potential negotiations between Yale and the federal government.

"I don't think in the long term, maintaining a low profile would eventually bear fruit because sooner or later, they will pass certain restrictions or laws or certain whatever it is that they will do, they will affect us, and we better be prepared by that point with faculty organization," he said.


JAEHA JANG / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
Yale hosted faculty leaders to discuss negotiations with the federal government.

Gomez said he would like to see hundreds of faculty attending these meetings.

Monday's panel came as Yale's chapter of the AAUP shifts its priorities from receiving a public statement from the University administration in defense of higher education to supporting and advising faculty with more specific initiatives.

The national AAUP was founded in 1915.

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Free coffee, tea turns from weekly to monthly at Law School

BY HENRY LIU
STAFF REPORTER

After an unexplained hiatus, a Yale Law School tradition providing a boost of caffeine on Monday mornings is back — but diminished.

"Caffeinated Mondays" offered free coffee and tea to the Law School community from 8 a.m. to noon each Monday in the Ruttenberg Dining Hall.

"A free coffee may not seem like much, but once the cold snap hits the New Haven air and the never-ending churn of clinic work reaches its full swing, my Monday morning bulldog blend sparks joy and motivates me to continue on another day," Hannah Terrapin LAW '26 wrote to the News.

But at the start of the school year last month, Frederick Liu LAW '27 said he went to the cafeteria one Monday and was told by an employee that it no longer had free coffee.

On Wednesday morning, Karen Alderman, the managing director of human resources and administration at the Law School, announced the beginning of "Monthly Morning Coffee and Tea" in an email to the Law School community that the News obtained.

According to Alderman's announcement, free coffee and tea will be available one Monday morning a month, starting this week. After Sept. 29, it will be offered on Oct. 6, Nov. 10 and Dec. 1 — four mornings over the entire semester.

In response to the announcement, law students expressed some relief. But Liu still cast the move as a loss compared to previous years.

"I still remember dragging myself into SLB 129 for my 8:10 a.m. Contracts class with Prof. Brooks and downing the glorious $0 'promissory espresso' (my only defense against unconscionability)," Liu wrote to the News, referring to a course with Professor Richard Brooks in the Sterling Law Building.

"With that luxury downgraded, I'll start accepting my Monday mornings 'as is,' with no implied warranty of wakefulness," Liu added. "I'm still grateful to the school for keeping it once a month – it's better than nothing given the current budget situation."

Yale administrators have in recent months taken measures to reduce spending due to an increase in the federal tax on the school's endowment returns.

Law School spokesperson Alden Ferro did not answer the News' emailed question about whether the reduction of caffeinated Mondays from weekly to monthly was a symptom of budget cuts.

The Yale Law Dining Hall was renamed the Ruttenberg Dining Hall in 2016.

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