

[Click here for a summary and to sign: https://tinyurl.com/daascstatement](https://tinyurl.com/daascstatement)

## **A Call for Asian American Studies at Dartmouth**

We are a group of Asian and Asian American students at Dartmouth who began meeting to organize for Asian American Studies, continuing the 25-year long efforts of Dartmouth students before us. **We believe that Asian American Studies is central to our liberal arts education because it elucidates our interconnected histories and present experiences, which have been rendered invisible by this institution.**

There is a popular myth often reproduced by the state, universities, and media that Asian Americans are a “model minority,” and thus are already represented within US institutions. This myth disregards the diversity of Asian American experiences—including East, West, and South Asia, as well as class, citizenship, and other disparities among us. We reject the model minority myth, which serves to subjugate Asian Americans, undermine our claims for representation in the university, and pit us against other minorities— thereby extending the false narrative that we have overcome discrimination and exist as a monolith.

Recent incidents of anti-AAPI hate crimes and violence are connected to a longer history of US state-sponsored violence against people of color. It is now more vital than ever that [Dartmouth fulfills its commitment](#) to anti-racist pedagogies and equity for all students. We continue the fight for Asian American Studies alongside Latinx, Black, and Indigenous Studies which all grew out of the 1960s Third World solidarity movements and campus struggles for ethnic studies. These movements aimed to decenter eurocentric conventions of knowledge in higher education, specifically in US history, politics, and populations. Dartmouth, a top-tier college, has fallen strikingly short of these goals, whereas our peer institutions continue to produce new ways of understanding race, gender, and sexuality through an intersectional lens. We are committed to fighting against institutional structures that place critical ethnic studies at the margins of knowledge production. Dartmouth cannot call itself a [diverse and inclusive](#) institution while its academic curriculum rejects essential pedagogies and research. **Our goal is for Dartmouth to recognize Asian Americans as subjects worth studying through the creation of an institutional home for Asian American Studies.**

In our statement that follows, we will be discussing four major topics: (1) The Problem in Asian American Studies at Dartmouth; (2) What We Believe; (3) The Problems in Organizing; and (4) What We Want.

### **1. The Problem**

[Click here for a summary and to sign: https://tinyurl.com/daascstatement](https://tinyurl.com/daascstatement)

Despite Asian Americans being the largest racial minority at Dartmouth, the College does not offer a path to concentrate in Asian American Studies. Most are under the impression that the Asian Societies, Cultures, and Languages Program (ASCL Program) encompasses Asian American Studies, but ASCL emerges from a different academic tradition focused on the Global East and is distinct from ethnic studies. It lacks a comprehensive study of the Asian diaspora, Asian Americans, and other pivotal scholarship developments (ie: intersectional, queer, and comparative race studies). Asian American Studies would address this gap by examining racialization, U.S. imperialism and colonization, gender and sexuality, labor, and migration transnationally across Asia/America.

Currently, Asian American Studies courses are scattered among departments including English, History, Sociology, or Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. **[In our course count of AA Studies and AA Studies adjacent course offerings](#), we found that only 42 courses have been offered since 2004, and only 9 have been taught for more than three terms.**

Students and faculty have been pushing for Asian American Studies since 1996— [almost 25 years](#)— with little support. Considering the liberal arts posture of the College, a comprehensive examination of Asian American identity is critical. Peer institutions have had AA Studies for several years: Berkeley (1969), Cornell (1987), UPenn (1996), Brown (1996), Stanford (1997), Columbia (1998), and Princeton (2018). There is also clear support for AA Studies on campus: just last year, the [Asia/America@Dartmouth Action Plan](#) calling for specific steps towards building AA Studies was signed by over 1,000 Dartmouth staff, faculty, and students as well as peer institutions. However, Dartmouth has given little attention to this petition, and we are picking up from where it left off.

As students, we ask why we should wait any longer for Asian American Studies? While we acknowledge the myriad challenges to building Asian American Studies, including creating study programs, encouraging existing professors to teach AA Studies courses, and hiring faculty, this is not an impossible feat given the College's vast resources. **As a result, Dartmouth actively communicates that Asian American students neither deserve space in academia nor the opportunity to better understand themselves.**

## 2. What We Believe

We believe that Asian American Studies benefits all students, illuminating how histories and structures of oppression continue to work in our lives, our communities, and our world at large. The field also highlights the critical contributions of Asian American scholarship to knowledge itself— including in studies of race, gender, and sexuality. The lack of Asian American Studies is

[Click here for a summary and to sign: https://tinyurl.com/daascstatement](https://tinyurl.com/daascstatement)

an educational failure by an institution that prides itself on preparing students for a ["lifetime of learning"](#) and ["responsible leadership."](#)

**Our conversations with other students at Dartmouth illustrate the significance of Asian American Studies because it:**

1. Enables all students to understand how Asian/American histories and experiences impact broader political and social systems
2. Validates Asian/American experiences & communicates that we are worthy of a space for intellectual inquiry at the College (*"How do you speak as a stakeholder in society when you're not awarded a position... in the Black/white narrative?"*)
3. Teaches students how to navigate and reclaim their space in a predominantly white institution (*"Growing up, I was raised to 'put [my] head down' and take up as little space as possible."*)
4. Helps us contextualize our individual experiences and psychic struggles within a larger colonial struggle under oppressive structures (*"Black radical tradition helped me realize I'm a colonized subject, which contributes to a lot of things I experience."*)
5. Allows us to understand the formation of Asian/American identities and diasporic subjects in relation to histories of war, empire, and US immigration, while recognizing inter-Asian and inter-ethnic solidarities (*"As a Pakistani-American, do I count as Asian American?"*)
6. Situates us in a more complete genealogy and history of migration and diaspora in the Asian Americas, examining historical, cultural, and political traditions across a global Asia. (*"I didn't know I could belong to a non-biological lineage of Asian immigrants."*)
7. Brings forward the often-erased histories of Asian American historical figures including activists against anti-imperialism and U.S. militarism (*"It was difficult for me to find info on Asian American women activists; there is some erasure that makes it seem like we don't have a history."*)
8. Establishes communities of support among faculty and students, where faculty of color can draw from their own experiences to teach and empathize with students. (*"It would be nice to learn from profs that [taught] from their own experience about your experience."*)

From these conversations, we believe that Asian American Studies is transformative for students, where the classroom is not separate from our everyday lives. We believe that Asian American Studies would raise the racial and political consciousness of all students toward a better understanding of others and themselves, in an effort to foster a more equitable society.

As a field of inter-ethnic solidarity, Asian American studies also takes comparative racial and transnational approaches to create a more encompassing curriculum, including Asian-Latinx and

[Click here for a summary and to sign: https://tinyurl.com/daascstatement](https://tinyurl.com/daascstatement)

Afro-Asian Studies. It works in tandem with other ethnic studies programs to bolster minority cultural studies and provide a fuller American history.

Lastly, we condemn the decisions of the College to place the labor of building ethnic studies on faculty and students of color without compensation. Dartmouth faculty of color actively do unpaid emotional labor while having to prove that their experiences (and our experiences as students of color) necessitate study. While we see professor-student solidarity as crucial, neither our professors nor we should have to fight to be seen on this campus. The lack of Asian American studies at Dartmouth fails to support its students and faculty; it is a glaring omission in the curriculum of an institution with an Ivy League standing. Why is it that Dartmouth [lags the furthest behind in sustained ethnic studies](#), including Asian American Studies, out of any Ivy League institution?

### 3. Problems in Organizing for Asian American Studies

Despite prior organizing and a clear rationale for AA Studies, why hasn't more progress been made towards establishing a minor, modified major, major, or program? The lack of coherency for the field is a structural problem that the Dean's Office has refused to address as a matter of curriculum reform.

The administration often points to the low election rates for Asian American Studies courses as an indication that AA Studies isn't needed or desired on campus. However, there is not much evidence for this "lack of demand." For example, WGSS 66.06 Bodies in Technologies in Asian American Pop Culture, taught 21S and 21X, was quickly filled both times and had a waitlist of over 30 students. Even if the "lack of demand" claim could be substantiated, it would stem from the absence and scarcity of courses. How are students to realize that they are interested in AAS courses if so few are offered? By claiming that AAS isn't desired due to a lack of demand, Dartmouth attempts to remove itself from the situation by directing the problem at students.

Another problem is that establishing an AA Studies minor, modified major, and major requires a set of courses that can be consistently offered. **There are no dedicated courses in the field except one in English and one in Sociology. All other courses are contingent and ad-hoc offerings that disappear once the postdoctoral fellows or visiting scholars leave the College after 1-3 years.** To establish more regular courses, Dartmouth needs to hire multiple tenured and tenure-track faculty. Without an AAS establishment, there is neither an administrator nor a direct funding stream that would help expedite the hiring for junior and senior-level faculty. Current faculty are relying on existing departments to implement hiring proposals for Asian American Studies. Dartmouth is accountable for prioritizing the hiring of faculty to establish the minor, major, and program.

[Click here for a summary and to sign: https://tinyurl.com/daascstatement](https://tinyurl.com/daascstatement)

Dartmouth has not supported Asian American faculty in the past and undercuts present efforts by our professors to help build out a program, so they cannot prioritize this without great personal and professional sacrifice. Historically, faculty of color pushing for AAS have been subject to punitive and retaliatory action, and incredible pushback. Many have left Dartmouth after [not receiving tenure](#) or professing a lack of support. Tenured professors involved in instituting AAS have also left. Even though Asian Americans are the largest racial minority at Dartmouth, Asian American faculty still constitute a disproportionately small amount of the overall faculty. It is clear that Dartmouth does not prioritize hiring and retaining Asian American faculty and faculty of color. Nor does the College provide a sense of belonging or support for faculty of color who endure extensive amounts of labor for such little gain.

Most problematically, organizing for AA Studies means operating with a very limited set of information. To begin with, we had to conduct our own course count and collect numbers for AA Studies professors because this data did not exist before. It was also unclear which administrators and faculty hold key responsibilities that could make AA Studies a reality. Further, the College continues to misrepresent the presence of an [Asian American Studies program with a website](#) that leads students and the public to believe that there is an actual program with resources when there is *not*. Factors like these put considerable weight on students to work out the difficulties in building AA Studies. **Our role as students is to learn, but because Dartmouth fails to provide a comprehensive academic curriculum, the burden falls on us to fight for such a central learning experience.**

#### 4. What We Want

Despite the obstacles, it is clear that Asian American Studies is essential to a liberal arts education at Dartmouth. Within the next years, we call for Dartmouth College to:

1. **Establish an Asian American Studies Program, achieving the same status as the rest of Dartmouth's academic curriculum.** This program should not be established competitively against our other ethnic studies programs but alongside them. We ask the College to:
  - a. Provide funding for undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral research in Asian American Studies.
  - b. Offer a postdoctoral fellowship in Asian American Studies.
2. **Expand course offerings in Asian American Studies starting this year.** We compiled [a list of AAS courses that are not taught at Dartmouth, but are offered at peer institutions](#).
3. **Commit to hiring multiple tenured and tenure-track professors to work toward sustaining an Asian American Studies Program over a multiyear period.**

[Click here for a summary and to sign: https://tinyurl.com/daascstatement](https://tinyurl.com/daascstatement)

We recognize the above goals will take multiple years given the large set of AAS faculty needed to sustain the Program against the College's very limited openings for approved hires across all departments. As such, we urge the College to meet our short-term demands:

1. **Approve a proposal for a [standalone Asian American Studies Program by June 2023](#) ~~Approve the proposal by LALACS for the Department of the Americas in August 2022.~~** This would establish a foothold for the Asian American Studies minor and create a more comprehensive ethnic studies focus at Dartmouth. (Revised 11/24/2021)
2. **Hire a tenured professor who will oversee the Asian American Studies minor by 2022/23.**
3. **Establish an Asian American Studies major by 2024/25.** We ask that transnational studies and comparative ethnic studies courses be included in this because of their relevancy and also **because these courses would allow for a major to be established within the next few years.** Because of the slow process in faculty hiring, we call upon the existing Departments of History, Sociology, English to commit to regularly offering these core courses:
  - a. HIST33: Asian American History
  - b. ENGL31: Asian American Literature and Culture
  - c. ENGL53.33/WGSS36.06: Gender and Sexuality in Asian American Literature
  - d. SOCY42: Racism in Asian America
4. **Respond to our demands in a written statement of commitment to our goals for a robust Asian American Studies curriculum at Dartmouth by the end of the academic year, 2021/22.**

*We stand in solidarity with the previous efforts of 4A (Asian American Students 4 Action), DAPAAA (Dartmouth Asian Pacific American Alumni Association), and RMS (Consortium of Race, Migration, and Sexuality) in this long-standing fight for Asian American Studies at Dartmouth.*

***If you agree with our efforts to establish Asian American Studies at Dartmouth, [please sign below.](#)***

Signed,

The Dartmouth Asian American Studies Collective

1	Lily Ren '23	Student	Dartmouth College
2	Maanasi Shyno '23	Student	Dartmouth College
3	Daniel Lin '23	Student	Dartmouth College