



SEPTEMBER 2025

ISSUE IV

SPEL-SOC-ANTHRO NEWS

WORDS FROM THE CHAIR

Greetings!

Welcome to the Fall 2025 semester! We hope that you all had a wonderful summer full of research, internships, travel experiences, jobs, time with family and friends, and rest! We would love to hear about your experiences, so if you would like to be featured as a Student Spotlight in a future newsletter, please let us know!

We also want to celebrate our faculty in the Sociology and Anthropology Department. Dr. Mona Phillips is celebrating 40 years teaching at Spelman College, and Dr. Cynthia Neal Spence is celebrating 44 years! Dr. Bailey Brown's book, *Kindergarten Panic: Parental Anxiety and School Choice Inequality* (Princeton University Press, 2025) was published in August. Dr. James Daria won the Teacher-Scholar Exemplar Faculty Excellence Recognition Award from the Office of the Provost. Dr. Celeste Lee won an ACLS HBCU Faculty Fellowship for her project, "Racial Bias and Black Maternal Health: An Examination of Nurses' Knowledge and Perspectives." I submitted my book manuscript, *Fighting for a Good Life: Black Feminist Activism in Bahia*, to the University of North Carolina Press, and did research in Lisbon, Portugal for my project on the experiences of Black expatriates. And, of course, we are thrilled to welcome our new colleague to the department, Dr. Tiffany Marquise Jones! She is teaching a new course on Linguistic Anthropology that we hope you will consider taking as a major elective. There are also a few courses in other departments that we count as major electives:

- SIS321: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Childhood taught by Amber Reed
- CWS 378 Black Queer Studies (CRN 95367) taught by Dr. Mahalia Little
- ENG/LMW 387 Writing about Culture (Ethnographic Writing) taught by Dr. Sarah Rudewalker

We are planning to publish this department newsletter monthly. If you are an alumni with news or life updates to share, please let us know so that we can feature you in our Alumni Spotlight. Here's to a wonderful start of the 2025-26 academic year!

Warm Regards,

Erica L. Williams

*Dr. Erica L. Williams, Anthropologist
Sociology and Anthropology Department Chair
ewill29@spelman.edu*

IN THIS ISSUE

WORDS FROM THE CHAIR
Dr. Erica Williams

SPOTLIGHT
Tiffany M. Jones, Ph.D.
Ruha Benjamin, Ph.D.
Ayiana Davis Polen

FALL 2025
Department Schedule
Department Contacts

NEWS - OPPORTUNITY - EVENTS

IMPORTANT DATES

SEPTEMBER 2025
25-26 Mid-Semester Exams
30 Student Verification Deadline

OCTOBER 2025
6-7 Fall Break - No Classes
9 Mid-Semester Thesis Presentations I
13 Advisement for Spring Begins
14 Mid-Semester Thesis Presentations II

NOVEMBER 2025
3 Registration Begins
26 No Classes
27-28 Holiday - No Classes

DECEMBER 2025
3 Last Day of Classes
4-5 Reading Period
8-12 Final Exams
12+ Semester Ens - Holiday - No Classes

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT...

Tiffany M. Jones, Ph.D.

Introducing Spelman's New Anthropologist

Dr. Tiffany Marquise Jones isn't stepping into Spelman to simply round out a faculty roster—she's here to shift conversations and spark change. A linguistic and cultural anthropologist with a Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina (earned in 2020), her work pushes past boundaries, digging deep into the intersections of language, identity, space, and Black cultural expression.



Dr. Tiffany Marquise Jones

Linguistic Anthropologist Working in Academia & Tech Industries with Focus on Higher Ed Instruction, Mentoring, Advocacy Research, Data Analysis, and AI / Machine Learning

What Does Dr. Jones Bring to Spelman?

- **Research with impact:** Her dissertation, *Place-Making Through Performance: Spoken Word Poetry and the Reclamation of "Chocolate City"*, examines how spoken word artists in Washington, D.C. reclaim community in the midst of gentrification—where poetry becomes both protest and home-making.
- **Teaching that connects:** She doesn't stop at theory. She builds classrooms where culture and practice meet, weaving in viral media, privilege walks, and lived experiences to challenge students to think critically. Her courses dive into African American Language & Verbal Art, the Anthropology of Race & Ethnicity, Gender & Sexuality, and other pressing, relevant topics.
- **Advocacy without apology:** She champions linguistic diversity and inclusion, mentors underrepresented students, and creates opportunities—like travel and fieldwork—that expand access for those often left out.
- **A broad cultural lens:** Beyond academia, she explores flamenco, belly dance, and Lindy Hop, immerses herself in film, and envisions an ethnographic film series to make anthropology accessible to public audiences.

Dr. Jones doesn't just study Black cultural expression—she amplifies it. Her presence at Spelman signals more than scholarship; it's a commitment to preparing students to challenge institutional silences, resist exclusion, and step boldly into spaces where their voices matter.

Let's welcome Tiffany M. Jones with the recognition she deserves: not as a name on the directory, but as a scholar, teacher, and advocate bringing fearless inquiry, radical inclusion, and a contagious energy that will shape the stories told here. **"Welcome to Spelman College, Dr. Tiffany Jones!"**

WWW.TIFFANYMARQUISEJONES.COM

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT...



Ruha Benjamin, Ph.D.

Spelman College Class of 2001, Alexander Stewart 1886
Professor of African American Studies at Princeton
University and Founding Director of the IDA B. WELLS Just
Data Lab

Ruha Benjamin, Ph.D.

C' 2001

As a Professor of African American Studies at Princeton University, Ruha Benjamin, Ph.D. studies how technology and society shape one another, and she's become a leading voice on the hidden inequalities baked into the systems we rely on every day. From job recruitment software to medical decision tools to security surveillance, she shows us how these technologies often mirror the very biases they claim to eliminate.

Benjamin has been interviewed by outlets such as NPR and The New York Times, and her lectures have filled rooms across the country. She has a unique ability to bring together scholars, activists, policymakers, and everyday community members into one conversation. She takes big, complicated issues and makes them feel urgent, relevant, and personal.

At a time when artificial intelligence and automation seem to be racing ahead of laws and ethics, Benjamin's work is both timely and necessary. She pushes us to ask tough but vital questions: Who truly benefits from technological progress? What risks are we overlooking? And how can we design tools that expand freedom instead of restricting it?

For anyone searching for a thinker who can both challenge and inspire, Ruha Benjamin is a voice worth following. She reminds us that we all have a hand in shaping the future of technology.



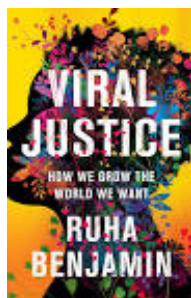
2013



2019



2021



2022



2024

WWW.RUHABENJAMIN.COM

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT...

AYIANA DAVIS POLEN

Spelman College C' 2024 | New York University Graduate Student



HONORS & AWARDS:

Hispanic Scholarship Fund Scholar - Jan 2023

Abramson Foundation Scholar - Aug 2020

Comité Noviembre Scholar - Aug 2020

Economic Club of Washington Scholar - Aug 2020

National Puerto Rican Day Parade, Inc. Scholar - Aug 2020

PUBLICATIONS:

Dress Coded: Black Girls, Bodies, and Bias in D.C. Schools
National Women's Law Center · Apr 24, 2018

DRESS CODED II: Protest, Progress and Power IN D.C. Schools
National Women's Law Center · Sep 4, 2019

Ayiana Davis Polen graduated from Spelman College in 2024, where she double majored in Sociology & Anthropology and Music Performance. During her time at Spelman, she dedicated herself to understanding race, culture, and identity in Latin America, as well as the social inequalities found within arts education.

Upon graduating from Spelman College, she continued her education at New York University, where she is now a candidate for a Master of Arts in Latin American & Caribbean Studies as a Foreign Language and Area Fellow studying Haitian Kreyòl. She is committed to centering her work in Puerto Rican decolonial studies as she seeks to contribute to research that examines the sociopolitical status of Puerto Rico and its relationship with the United States. She is currently working on her M.A. research, which focuses on understanding how collective memory is formed and maintained in Puerto Rico, both on a state level and within community-based contexts.

She spent her summer preparing for and conducting fieldwork research in Old San Juan, Puerto Rico on how a former prison, known for harsh punishments against those fighting for independence in the mid-20th century, is represented today to the public on a state level. Additionally, during her time there, she observed how culture is promoted and commodified on the island by the state, often without a critical examination of the history of its sociopolitical status and its relationship with the United States, in contrast to how it is understood and examined at community and local levels. Ayiana will complete her program in December 2025 and will continue to live in New York City as she prepares to apply to law school.

[LINK WITH AYIANA DAVIS POLEN](#)

SOCIOLOGY & ANTHROPOLOGY CONTACTS & SCHEDULE

SOCIOLOGY COURSE SCHEDULE (FALL 2025)

Course #	Course Title	Credits	Instructor	Day(s)	Time	Building	Room
SSOC 330 1	ST: Sociology of Education	4	Brown, Bailey	T, Th	08:00 AM - 09:15 AM	Giles	222
SSOC 335 1	Survey of Research Methods	4	Brown, Bailey	T, Th	09:25 AM - 10:40 AM	Giles	203
SSOC 352 1	Urban Sociology	4	Brown, Bailey	T, Th	01:00 PM - 02:15 PM	Giles	305
SSOC 431 1	Independent Study in Sociology	1 to 4	Brown, Bailey	TBD			
SSOC 201 1	Intro to Sociology 4 non-major	4	Cuthbert, Jessica	M, W	10:00 AM - 11:15 AM	Giles	321
SSOC 275 1	Introduction to Criminology	4	Cuthbert, Jessica	T, Th	01:00 PM - 02:15 PM	Cosby	LL32
SSOC 275 2	Introduction to Criminology	4	Cuthbert, Jessica	T, Th	02:25 PM - 03:40 PM	MacVicar	113
SSOC 430 1	ST: Comparative Criminal Justice	4	Cuthbert, Jessica	M, W	11:30 AM - 12:45 PM	Giles	210
SSOC 334 1	Multivariate Analysis	4	Lee, Celeste	M, W	10:00 AM - 11:15 AM	Giles	318
SSOC 407 1	Race Relations	4	Lee, Celeste	M, W	11:30 AM - 12:45 PM	Giles	203
SSOC 432 1	Sociology Thesis	4	Lee, Celeste/Daria, James	T	01:00 PM - 02:15 PM	Giles	222
SSOC 491 1	Honors Sociology Thesis	4	Lee, Celeste/Daria, James	T	01:00 PM - 02:15 PM	Giles	301
SSOC 204 1	History of Social Thought	4	Phillips, Mona	T	04:30 PM - 07:00 PM	Cosby	103
SSOC 422 1	Contemporary Sociological Theory	4	Phillips, Mona	W	04:30 PM - 07:00 PM	Giles	110
SSOC 203 1	The Sociological Imagination	4	Spence, Cynthia	T, Th	08:00 AM - 09:15 AM	Giles	223
SSOC 435 1	Sociology Internship	4	Spence, Cynthia	TBD			

ANTHROPOLOGY SCHEDULE (FALL 2025)

Course #	Title	Credits	Instructor	Day(s)	Time	Building	Room
SANT 203 3	Introduction to Anthropology	4	Jones, Tiffany	M, W	11:00 AM - 12:15 PM	Giles	110
SANT 203 4	Introduction to Anthropology	4	Jones, Tiffany	M, W	04:30 PM - 05:45 PM	Cosby	217
SANT 230 2	ST: Intro to Linguistic Anthro	4	Jones, Tiffany	T, Th	05:15 PM - 06:30 PM	Giles	109
SANT 305 1	Cross-Cul Perspectives Gend	4	Williams, Erica	M, W	01:00 PM - 02:15 PM	Giles	301
SANT 316 1	Feminist Ethnography	4	Williams, Erica	M, W	11:30 AM - 12:45 PM	Giles	321
SANT 336 1	Ethnographic Methods	4	Daria, James	T, Th	02:25 PM - 03:40 PM	Giles	301
SANT 344 1	Food and Culture	4	Daria, James	T	04:00 PM - 06:30 PM	Giles	203
SANT 430 3	ST: Black Food Geographics	4	Jackson, Kimberly/ Heynen, Nik	W	11:00 AM - 01:30 PM	LLC II	B-B
SANT 431 1	Ind Study in Anthropology	1 to 4	Daria, James	TBD			
SANT 433 1	Anthropology Thesis	4	Lee, Celeste/Daria, James	T	01:00 PM - 02:15 PM	Giles	203
SANT 492 1	Honors Anthropology Thesis	4	Lee, Celeste/Daria, James	T	01:00 PM - 02:15 PM	Giles	203

SOCIOLOGY & ANTHROPOLOGY CONTACTS



Erica L. Williams, Ph.D.
ewilli29@spelman.edu

Mondays, Tuesdays
2:30pm-4:00pm

Wednesdays
10:15-11:15am

calendly.com/ewilli29



Cynthia N. Spence, Ph.D.
cspence@spelman.edu

Email for Hours/Appt



Mona Phillips, Ph.D.
mphillip@spelman.edu

Email for Hours/Appt



James Daria, Ph.D.
jamesdaria@spelman.edu

Thursdays
11:00am - 2:00 pm

Email for Appt



Celeste Lee, Ph.D.
cleee@spelman.edu

Mondays
1:00pm-2:30pm

Wednesdays
3:00pm - 5:00pm

calendly.com/clee_officehours



Bailey A. Brown, Ph.D.
baileybrown@spelman.edu

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays
10:00am - 11:30am

tinyurl.com/bbrownphd



Jessica Cuthbert, Ph.D.
jessicacuthbert@spelman.edu

Mondays, Wednesdays
1:00pm - 2:00pm

Email for Appt



Tiffany Jones, Ph.D.
tiffanyjonesl@spelman.edu

Email for Hours

tinyurl.com/tjonesphd

NEWS – EVENTS – OPPORTUNITIES

Please use discernment and seek advice from proper sources regarding events/opportunities.

GO, DR. WILLIAMS!

Let's give a round of applause for Erica Williams, Ph.D., the current Department Chair for Sociology and Anthropology at Spelman College. She recently received the Faculty Excellence Recognition Award Global Education from the Office of the Provost for her exceptional leadership in international education, advancing global learning and engagement, and fostering cross-cultural understanding.

THESIS STUDY OPPORTUNITY

For more info: <https://calendly.com/nailahsaintlouis> OR nailahsaintlouis@spelman.edu

MOREHOUSE COLLEGE HUMAN RIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL | SEPT 23–27, 2025

For more info, [click here](#).

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN ANTHROPOLOGY AT UMD

Now accepting applications for Fall 2026 admission.

- For more info: <https://anth.umd.edu/graduate/graduate-admissions>
- Open House Wednesday, October 15 at 12 pm (EST) (<https://tinyurl.com/umd-anthro-fall-2026>)

BE FEATURED IN SPEL-SOC-ANTHRO NEWS!

We're here to highlight the experiences and achievements of current Sociology and Anthropology Students, Alumni, and Faculty. Each newsletter is a part of Spelman history just like you! When you have a new accomplishment, news update, event, opportunity or just want to share a life experience, [contact us!](#)

link with us @



[linkedin.com/company/spelsocanthro](https://www.linkedin.com/company/spelsocanthro)

ABOUT US

The Spel-Soc-Anthro Newsletter is our department's monthly update from Sociology and Anthropology at Spelman College. Each issue spotlights the work and achievements of our students, faculty, and alumni, while also sharing upcoming events, research highlights, and opportunities you won't want to miss. It's our way of keeping the Spel-Soc-Anthro community connected, celebrating the great things happening in the department, and making sure everyone stays in the loop.