The mission of the Department of African Cultural Studies is to provide research and teaching in the languages and expressive cultures of Africa and Africans around the world.

The department is the only one of its kind in the United States. For those learning to conduct research in African expressive cultures, it offers curricula leading to both the master of arts degree and the doctor of philosophy degree. For those learning to teach African languages, it offers a terminal master of arts degree with an emphasis on pedagogy. Its students come from all over the world, including many African countries.