Dawna M. Thomas, Assistant Professor of Africana Studies and Women's Studies  
B.A., University of Massachusetts, Boston; M.S., University of Massachusetts, Boston; Ph.D., Northeastern University

Dawna M. Thomas teaches in Simmons’s Africana and women’s studies departments, as well as the Gender/Cultural Studies program and the multidisciplinary core program, Culture Matters. She has taught classes on research methods, health and disability, and violence in the family. Her research encompasses the areas of disability policy, economic disparities for individuals with disabilities, community-based research, race and gender disparities in health care, and the development of cultural identity. Her doctoral work, *Understanding Disability in the Cape Verdean Community: An Analysis of Race and Disability in Massachusetts*, was the first study of its kind conducted within the Cape Verdean community.

Thomas is a co-founder of Common Threads, a grassroots community cultural initiative dedicated to the preservation and celebration of the cultural and historical traditions of the Cape Verdean Diaspora in the United States and the transnational Cape Verdean community. She has co-authored several publications in reference to cultural relevancy in education, disability policy, and psychology. Currently, she is working on a new book, *Serving the Cape Verdean Community: A Handbook on Cultural Understanding for Health Care Providers*.

Thomas grew up in Boston’s Roxbury neighborhood. Today she remains involved in the community as both a resident and an activist, fighting discrimination and promoting social equality.

**Speaking topics:**

- Racial and gender disparities in health service
- Developing culturally competent service delivery
- Health and disability in the Cape Verdean community