

Course Syllabus
Afro 1011
Introduction to African American Studies

Professor Rose M. Brewer
Spring Semester 2018

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the study of people of African descent in the United States with linkages to Africa and connections to the African diaspora. We will explore why people of African descent have occupied an oppressed position in this culture and globally and how they have resisted this oppression creating social change. Our major form of analysis is historical sociology, as well as the arts and humanities. We will examine changes over time and employ sociological, economic, cultural, and political tools for understanding the historical and contemporary positioning of African Americans. We will be centrally concerned with how domination, race, gender, and class shape Black life in the U.S. and how resistance and change have occurred. In our analyses we take seriously the deep intersectionality of systems of oppression as well as historic resistance to oppression. Critical race theory and Black feminist theory are important frames for our work. Moreover, the significance of the cultural creativity of African peoples is foundational to our understanding. We must be concerned with how Black people see themselves today. How social change is imagined in the 21st century informs our work.

A major assumption for us is that African Americans have maintained a cultural integrity which is distinctive but deeply reflective of life in the United States and globally. This cultural integrity is also exemplified across the African diaspora. This integrity is often reflected in a service tradition, a commitment to community, a struggle for democracy, decolonization and freedom. These values are the foundation of African American Studies. This means that the expansion and creation of a more democratic reality in the U. S. and globally has been deeply connected to the demands and activism for full citizenship and democratic participation by Black people in the U.S and globally. Crucial issues around citizenship and democracy are centered in this course.

To be engaged, to take on the issues of the day in an informed way, are central assumptions informing our analyses. The focus here is to meaningfully prepare students, whether from an historically excluded group or not, to infuse citizenship and service with theory and practice. The historical and sociological understanding you acquire this semester will be expressed in a final portfolio project. Portfolios are representations with visuals and sample materials which capture the active learning component of the course. I will provide a written handout on exactly what is expected in this assignment.

EVALUATION and GRADES

Assignment	Percent of Course Grade
Two- 2 page short critical reaction papers	10%
Two- 5 page longer critical reaction papers	20%
Exam 1/Midterm exam/final take-home exam	40%
Classroom participation, attendance, Written reflections, discussion	15%
Final portfolio-explorations in engagement and social change	15%

Percentages will correspond to letter grades:

Grade	Percent (%)
A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72

D+	67-69
D	60-66
F	below 60

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

It is expected that students will attend all classes and turn in assignments on time. It is also expected that we are all here by the scheduled time. Readings are to be completed by class time and by everyone. We will all bring ideas, insights, and questions to the discussions. Our hope is that we will create a dynamic learning community. Everyone will follow a news source to stay up to date on current world events. These will be shared through short written analyses and tweets with fellow class members (if something of interest arises).

The in-class exams are essay and objective in format. Early in the semester I will give you additional information on the portfolio project. I have a strict policy on late assignments. Papers are **due on time or they will not be accepted**. Attendance is as important as assignments turned in on time. Both attendance and on-time assignments are calculated into your final grade. Excessive unexcused absences (5 or more) will translate into a full grade lower.

Grading Policy: Late papers will not be accepted except under the most exceptional circumstances. Papers should be your original work. Plagiarism is a serious offense. Be careful to appropriately cite the ideas of others. We will discuss proper citation procedures in class. Confer with me if you are unsure about citation protocols for your papers.

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty is defined by Student Judicial Affairs as “submission of false records of academic achievement; cheating on assignments or examinations; plagiarizing; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement.” Scholastic dishonesty in any portion of the academic work for a course shall be grounds for awarding a grade of F or N for the entire course. More precisely, plagiarism occurs when students turn in work that is not their own. Plagiarism occurs when written work 1) fails to cite quotations and borrowed ideas from outside sources, including the World Wide Web and other student work, 2) fails to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks, and 3) fails to put summaries and paraphrases in the writer’s own words. The definition of plagiarism was derived from Diana Hacker’s *A Writer’s Reference*, Fourth Edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1999.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota Student Conduct Code governs all activities in the University, including this course. Students who engage in behavior that disrupts the learning environment for others may be subject to disciplinary action under the Code. This includes any behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability to teach or student learning. The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities. Students responsible for such behavior may be asked to cancel their registration (or have their registration canceled).

Disability Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities on an individualized and flexible basis. Disability Services determine appropriate accommodations through consultation with the student. See the instructor for information about contacting Disability Services or call DS Student Services at 612-626-1333.

Harassment

The University of Minnesota is committed to providing a safe climate for all students, faculty, and staff. All persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation. Reports of harassment are taken seriously, and there are individuals and offices available for help. Contact the Department Chair, 883 Social Sciences Tower, 612-624-8012, or the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 419 Morrill Hall, 612-624-9547.

Complaints Regarding Teaching/Grading

Students with complaints about teaching or grading should first try to resolve the problem with the instructor involved. If no satisfactory resolution can be reached, students may then discuss the matter with the Department Chair, 883 Social Sciences Tower, 612-624-8012, who will attempt to mediate. Failing an informal resolution, the staff in the AA&AS departmental office will facilitate the filing of a formal complaint.

Complaints Regarding Advising

Students with complaints about advising should first try to resolve the problem with the advisor involved. If no satisfactory resolution can be reached, students take the matter to the CLA Office of the Assistant Dean, 106 Johnston Hall, 612-625-3846, asstdean@class.cla.umn.edu (e-mail).

Absence for Religious Observance

The University of Minnesota permits absences from class for participation in religious observances. Students who plan to miss class must:

1. Inform instructors of anticipated absences at the beginning of the semester;
2. Meet with instructors to reschedule any missed labs or examinations; and
3. Obtain class notes from other students.

Instructors are required to assist students in obtaining course materials and assignments distributed during class sessions and to make arrangements for taking missed examinations.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend class. Attendance and participation are averaged into your final grade. More than **five** absences during the semester will result in a full lowered grade.

OFFICE HOURS

Monday 2:30-4:00 p.m. and by appointment

brewe001@umn.edu

612-624-9305

REQUIRED BOOKS

Matthew Desmond and Mustaf Emirbayer, *Race in America*

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *How We Get Free*

W.E.B. DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk*

Michael Gomez, *Reversing Sail*

Patricia Hill Collins, *Black feminist Thought*

Ta Neishi Coates, *Between the World and Me*

COURSE TOPICS/READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS (Note that readings are to be completed by class time for each session and late assignments are not accepted)

Readings/Assignments

**Unit I
The Field of African American Studies**

Week I –January 17

1/20

I. Introduction to the field of African American Studies

Administrative matters, introductions to key concepts

African American Studies exercise

Week II-January 22-January 24

1/22

Theoretical Issues: The Field, Engaged Scholarship, Diaspora Thinking, and Interdisciplinarity

Readings

Reversing Sail, “Introduction”, pp. 1-6

1/24

Readings

Robin Kelley and Tiffany Patterson, “Unfinished Migrations” link

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/S0002020600036283>

Black Studies, “Black Studies at the Crossroads” video (selections)

**Unit II
Historical Context
Old and New Worlds: Creating African Diaspora(s)**

Week III-January 29-January 31

January 29

Readings

1/30

Reversing Sail, chapter 1, “Antiquity,” pp. 7-17

1/31

Video on Africa

Week IV**February 5-February 7****Readings****2/5***Reversing Sail*, chapters 2, “Africans and the Bible”; “Africans and the Islamic World,”**2/7***Reversing Sail*, chapter 3, “Africans in the Islamic World.”**Week V****February 12-14****New World Realities and Africa America(s): Creating Race and Anti-Black Racism****2/12****Readings***Reversing Sail*, chapter 4, “Transatlantic Moment,” pp. 59-81.*Race in America*, “The Invention of Race,” pp. 46-68.**Receive exam I study guide****Five page paper #1 due****2/14 (research day, no class)**

Work on your portfolio proposal

Week VI**February 19-21****2/19****Readings***Reversing Sail*, chapter 5, “Enslavement,” pp. 82-108

Angela Davis, “The Role of Black Women in the Community of Slaves” (scanned hand-out).

2/21**Exam I****Homework: Bring two issues from *Souls of Black Folks* that stood out for you. Why are these issues important to you? Discuss****Due: February 26****Week VII****February 26-February 28****Readings****2/26**DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk*, first ½**Homework due**

2/28

Dubois video (selections)

DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 2nd 1/2

Week VIII

March 5-7

3/5

Video "13th"

Engaged scholarship portfolio check #1

3/7

Reversing Sail, "Reconnecting," pp. 162-192.

Unit III

Into the Present: Blacks in the U.S and Across the African Diaspora

Week IX—March 12/18—Spring Break

Week X

March 19-21

The Impact of Migration, Urbanization, Science, Art and Culture

3/19

Readings

Race in America, chapter 8, "Race and Art..." pp. 280-313

Receive study guide for Exam II

3/21

Building Black Institutions and Creative Production

Cultural Presentations

#1 Short 1-2 page reflection paper due on culture to accompany your cultural favorite

Bring samples of your Black cultural favorites to class: music, art, dance, literature, spoken word, etc.

Unit IV
**Multiple Perspectives/Multiple issues: Racism, Feminism
 Inequalities, Resistance**

Week XI

March 26-28

3/26

Readings

Race in America, chapter 1, “Race in the Twenty-First Century”.

Race in America, chapter 3, “Politics,” 88-127

3/28

Exam II

Week XII

April 2-4

Black Resistance, Representation, and Black Women’s Feminist Thinking

4/2

Black Feminist Thought, “Introduction” and chapters 1 and 2

4/4

Readings

Black Feminist Thought, chapter 3-4

**Homework: Select one issue from three of the chapters from 5 to end of the book.
 Why do these issues stand out for you? Due April 9.**

Week XIII

April 9-11

Readings

4/9

Black Feminist Thought, chapters 5-6

Black Feminist Thought, chapters 7-9

Crenshaw Ted talk on “intersectionality”

Homework Due

4/11

Black Feminist Thought, chapters 10-12

Black Feminist Thought, concluding chapters

Week XIV**April 16-18****Readings****4/16**

Race in America, chapter 4, “Economics” and “Housing” pp. 128-144; pp. 152-166; 168-186.

Race the Power of an Illusion, part 3 video

2nd 5 page paper due

4/18**Readings**

Race in America, “Education,” pp. 244-258; pp. 27

Week XV—April 23-25**The Long Road to Freedom: 21st Century and Beyond****Readings****4/23**

Reversing Sail, chapter 8, “Movement People and epilogue, pp. 193-220

Africans in Latin America video

4/25

Between Me and the World (read all)

#2-- 2 page critical reflection on the book due

Week XVI**April 30-May 2****5/1****Readings**

Race and America, “Toward Racial Democracy,” pp. 392-421

How We Get Free (read all)

5/2

Portfolio project due; short presentations on project

Debrief and evaluation

Receive Take-Home Exam

Return exam 5/9 by 4:30, 810 social sciences mailbox

