**Introduction to Africana Studies:**

**Blackness in Global and Transnational Perspective, ASRC 1500**

Fall 2014

MW 2:55 – 4:10, Africana Studies and Research Center, Room B07

Course Instructor: Dr. R. Richardson

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**Diversity statement: This course aims to provide a safe, welcoming, supportive and tolerant environment for all students and respects the various forms of diversity that they bring, including differences related to race, gender, sexuality, class, nationality, geography, age, size, ability, etc.**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

At the inception of this department at Cornell University in 1969, the Africana Studies and Research Center became the birthplace of the field “Africana studies.” Africana studies emphasizes comparative and interdisciplinary studies of Africa, the U.S., the Caribbean and other diasporas. In this course, we will look at the diverse contours of the discipline. We will explore contexts ranging from modernity and the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and plantation complex in the New World to processes of decolonization and globalization in the contemporary digital age. Within this framework, we will also consider the concept of race and notions of racial formation, including newer concepts such as “post-blackness.” We will consider how blackness as a concept shapes cultural flows and exchanges in the global context and saliently impacts popular culture. Topics that we will explore include history, literature, music, art, education, politics, religion, economics, health and the prison industrial complex. Students will have opportunities to meet members of the faculty who are invited as guests to lecture in their specialized areas. This course is required for majors and minors in Africana studies. It also welcomes other students interested in gaining a general introduction to the fields of Africana studies and black studies. The course will draw on texts from social science and the humanities, including areas such as history, anthropology, political science, cultural theory and popular culture. The course is designed to immerse students in the study of a host of intellectual figures and key primary texts in the field. Students will gain a solid foundation for research and study in the field through a rigorous and engaged analysis of the diverse body of texts and multi-media that we examine. The course will reinforce students’ skills in critical thinking. It will advance their skills in writing, reading, listening, and speaking while drawing on various technologies. A vital component of this course will allow students to consult with the Director at Africana’s John Henrik Clark Library, Eric Acree, who has designed a Library Guide for this course, which can be accessed at the website <http://guides.library.cornell.edu/content.php?pid=550413&sid=4534312>. His outreach will introduce students to strategies of research in various formats (print, digital, film, etc.), along with archives in Africana studies.

**Texts:**

Achebe, Chinua. Things Fall Apart

Davis, Angela.  Are Prisons Obsolete?

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

Fanon, Franz.  The Wretched of the Earth

Jacobs, Harriet.  Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

Morrison, Toni. Sula

Murch, Donna.  Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther

Party in Oakland, California

Williams, Eric.  Capitalism and Slavery

**Selections from additional manuscripts that will be made available via Blackboard include:**

Gilroy, Paul. The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness

James, C.L.R. The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Overture and the Santo Domingo Revolution

Johnson, Walter. Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market

Kamari Maxine Clarke and Deborah A. Thomas, Ed. Globalization and Race: Transformations in the Cultural Production of Blackness

Rooks, Noliwe. White Money/Black Power: The Surprising History of African American Studies and the Crisis in Higher Education

Touré. Who’s Afraid of Post-Blackness?: What It Means to Be Black Now

We will also fully screen or draw on clips from several films and documentaries, including Henry Louis Gates, Jr.’s The Black Atlantic from The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross; Steve McQueen’s Twelve Years a Slave; Sam Pollard’s Slavery by Another Name; D.W. Griffith’s Birth of a Nation; Oscar Micheaux’s Within Our Gates; Louis Massiah’s W.E.B. DuBois: A Biography in Four Voices; Steven Spielberg’s The Color Purple; and Shola Lynch’s Free Angela and All Political Prisoners

Films and documentaries will be viewed in class, on the internet and at public screenings on campus.

**Suggestions for Achieving the Best Learning Outcomes from the Course:**

●**You are expected to do all the reading and are also urged to contribute thoughtfully and regularly to conversations in class**. I cannot stress the importance of these points enough. The undergraduate years are a prime time during which one should ideally build one's skills in verbal and written expression, communication skills that will be valuable across a spectrum of professions and in an increasingly competitive work force. Good communication has to do with speaking and listening thoughtfully. It has to do with processing, synthesizing and recording information well. Whatever their topic or content, which can vary greatly, undergraduate courses as settings are designed in many cases to foster the development of skills in critical thinking, speaking, listening and writing that are universally expected and required of well-trained adult professionals in our society. Therefore, a student does himself or herself a tremendous favor by claiming space to participate in the larger conversation in class if such a space is available. By having the willingness and generosity to share and exchange ideas, students also support, reinforce and enable their peers.

•**Good students usually take good and detailed notes not only on the course readings, but also while they are sitting in class, demonstrating that they are actively engaged in the processes of learning**. Good notes are an indispensable resource in studying for exams. Good notes are one indicator of engaged and active listening in class. Indeed, the failure to record class notes is sometimes read as a signal of idleness in class, indifference, disengagement and a lack of focus. Do not count on being able to memorize every detail mentioned in class. The wise student will create an organized, detailed and concrete record by writing down information, including information from class discussions, for later reference. Note-taking in class both reflects and facilitates good study habits. Note-taking on laptops is definitely permitted in class.

●A work such as Jonathan Monroe’s anthology Local Knowledges, Local Practice: Writing in the Disciplines at Cornell speaks to the rich history of writing instruction that has unfolded on this campus since William Strunk and E.B. White’s publication of the now classic The Elements of Style in 1918. As is the case in a range of other disciplines on this campus, reinforcing writing skills is an important aspect of the pedagogies in the Africana Studies and Research Center. You will reinforce your writing skills in this class by working with the genealogies and textual repertoires of black and Africana studies. Even some of the texts we are reading in this course, I would argue, provide inspiration for building skills in writing.

**●We will also draw on technology some in this course and discuss its responsible uses in research.**

● Please be forewarned that some of the materials that will be addressed in the course, as well as in the lectures, reflect traumas such as the slave trade that are difficult and painful to think about-even in the present era. Slavery in the case of people of African descent has been a topic of ongoing debate, especially in the field of history. But its basic facts are now better understood as a result of decades of meticulous scholarly research, and are available in a host of monumental studies. It is naive, unhelpful, and frankly, anti-intellectual, to treat materials of history with denial or evasion, as if one could single-handedly alter them by refusing to deal with the details. In general, in an environment where differences exist in terms of ethnicity, race, gender, class, sexuality, etc., as well as political leanings (i.e. conservative, liberal, Left, Right, etc., categories that can certainly in and of themselves feel reductive because they are highly ambivalent or even intertwined for some individuals), debate is welcome. Please be tolerant and respectful of others.

●**This course is reading intensive and it is therefore crucially important that students not allow themselves to fall behind in the readings.** **Students are expected to do all of the reading and to be able to draw on it in class discussions and assignments.** The most reading intensive moments will occur during the times that we will be examining entire works, beginning with Donna Murch’s Living for the City. You should consider taking up these longer works ahead of time. One should not presume that the work is done after an initial reading. Indeed, you may feel the need to re-read many of the selections, and I especially recommend a second reading of shorter selections.

**Course Requirements:**

**Papers:**

You are responsible for three papers this semester.  The first is a short reflection paper (2-3 pp.) **due Paper 1 due Monday, September 22**.  Topics will be distributed in class; this paper is a non-graded diagnostic exercise in writing.  The second paper (4-5 pp.) is **due Wednesday, October 29**. This paper will count for 15% of your final grade.  **The first two papers are due at the beginning of class on their respective deadlines.**You will also be assigned a topic for this paper.  However, you may choose your own topic for your third paper (8-10 pp.).  Develop a thesis around one text that we are studying, but attempt to treat no more than two.  I encourage you to share your work in progress with me and to make use of the resources provided at the John Henrik Clark Library. Also feel free to dialogue with other members of the class. **You must submit a prospectus of no more than 250 words for this paper at the beginning of class on Monday, November 17.** In this prospectus, you should provide an overview of the major points that you plan to address in your paper, a preliminary thesis statement, and a preliminary bibliography that lists at least four secondary critical sources, along with annotations for them. Annotations are several lines that briefly indicate what a text is about. **Your prospectus is not complete without these source annotations**. **This third paper will count for 25% of your grade and is due December 12, by 5 p.m. in the office in the Africana Center**.

**•Late papers will be marked down.**  Papers should be typed and double-spaced.  Please make sure that your type/print is clear and readable (i.e. not blurry or excessively light), and that you proofread papers for spelling and grammar errors.  Please use the Modern Language of Association of America style (MLA) or the Chicago Manual of Style.

●Note that the Learning Strategies Center located in 420 Computing and Communications Center (CCC, 607 255-6310, www.clt.cornell.edu/campus/learn) provides supporting in writing, reading, taking exams, time management, and note-taking.  Please do not ever be shy, or worse, too smug, about using such campus support services.  One should never presume that one does not “need” tutorial support.  For these resources can make more of a difference than students imagine.  For instance, one of my colleagues was on an interviewing committee for a prestigious undergraduate fellowship at my former university.  She was astonished that eight out of ten people who won it had one thing in common:  they regularly visited and consulted our learning skills center on campus.  In general, it is extremely important to seek out good and effective advising throughout one's undergraduate career.

**Exams:**

The midterm counts for 15% of your grade and will cover readings discussed up to that point.  It will be held in class on **Wednesday, November 5**.  The date for the course’s final exam will be announced after September 19, when the university’s schedule is available. The final examination will count for 25% of your final grade and will be comprehensive.  Please use an official essay-exam writing booklet, which will be distributed in class, for the essay sections of both the midterm and the final. No alternative dates for the midterm or final will be offered and no early or late midterms or finals will be administered, though makeup exams are allowed in the case of emergencies.  Students with disabilities should mention any special needs that they may have in order to be accommodated properly.

**Attendance:**

Attendance is required. Class attendance will be monitored and will count for 10% of your final grade.  Attendance will be taken during each session and you should sign the sheet that is circulated. You are allowed a maximum of two unexcused absences. Any additional absences must be documented officially with an excuse. You are expected to arrive punctually and class will begin on time.

**Class Participation:**

Good class participation is consistent and committed**.**  Sustained class participation is expected of all students throughout the semester. As one aspect of class participation, you will be assigned oral reports to present individually or in a group.  This oral report will count for 10% of your final grade. This session is an important aspect of class participation. Some students, for instance, might opt to collaborate and screen selected films assigned in the course, such as Twelve Years a Slave, and to make them report topics.

**General Course policies:**

●You are expected to attend class.

●You should arrive on time and prepared to engage fully in the class session.

●Please refrain from excessive talking in class.  It is distracting and will not be tolerated.  Moreover, there should be absolutely no cell phone use, texting, sleeping, or extraneous dialogues in the classroom during the lesson.  Please come to class ready to be engaged, focused, attentive and participatory.

•Please think and plan ahead, for I am not available to respond to emails sent at the last-minute, on weekends, late at night, and during vacations.

●All behaviors in the course should be in accordance with Cornell University’s Code of Academic Integrity and Acknowledging the Work of Others, which may be found at www.policy.cornell.edu/CODE\_of\_Academic\_Integrity.cfm.  There will be absolutely no tolerance for disrespect toward anyone or for academic dishonesty, including cheating on exams and plagiarism (passing off another person's words and thoughts in your writing as your own and not naming the source).

●To ensure a final grade at the end of the semester, please be sure that you submit all assignments and exams.

**Course Schedule:**

August 27 Introductions; Syllabus Overview

September 3 Course Introduction; “James Turner, Africana Studies and Epistemology”; Robert L.

Harris, Jr. “The Intellectual and Institutional Development of Africana Studies”

**Part I. Black Power, Black Panthers and Black Student Activist Movement**

September 8 Donna Murch, Living for the City

September 10 Donna Murch, Living for the City

September 15 Donna Murch, Living for the City

September 17 Noliwe Rooks, from White Money/Black Power (Blackboard)

**Part II. Theorizing Blackness: From Deconstructing “Race” to the Post-racial**

September 22 Touré, from Who’s Afraid of Post-Blackness?; **Paper 1 due**

**Part III.** **Slavery, Modernity and the Black Atlantic**

September 24 Eric Williams, Capitalism and Slavery; pre-screen The Black Atlantic on PBS

website at the address

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/video/page/2/#414>

September 29 Eric Williams, Capitalism and Slavery; C.L.R. James, The Black Jacobins

Locksley Edmondson, “Trans-Atlantic Slavery and the Internationalization of

Race”; “The Invention and Dynamics of Race”

(Blackboard) Guest via video: Professor Locksley Edmondson

October 1 Kamari Maxine Clarke and Deborah A. Thomas. Selected essays from

Globalization and Race; from The Black Atlantic, Paul Gilroy (Blackboard)

October 6 Angela Davis, Are Prisons Obsolete?

October 8 Session with Eric Acree, Director of the John Henrik Clark Library

October 13 **Fall Break 15-18, No Classes**

October 15 Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

October 20 Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl;

October 22 Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl; Walter Johnson, from Soul by

Soul: Inside the Antebellum Slave Market (Blackboard); screening of scene in

class from Steve McQueen’s Twelve Years a Slave; slide show of art images by

Kara Walker

**Part IV. Black Intellectual Models in Africa and the Diaspora**

October 27 W.E.B. DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk

October 29 W.E.B. DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk; **Paper 2 due**

November 3 Screening in class of W.E.B. DuBois: A Biography in Four Voices

November 5 **Midterm Examination**

November 10 Screen Slavery by Another Name on your own on PBS site at the address

<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/watch/> ; screening in class of

scenes from D.W. Griffith’s Birth of a Nation and Oscar Micheaux’s Within Our

Gates

November 12 Franz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth

November 17 Franz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (Guest: Professor Grant Farred);

**prospectuses for Paper 3 due**

November 19 Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart; John Parker and Richard Rathbone, from

African History: A Short Introduction (Blackboard)

November 24 Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart (Guest: Professor Murkoma Ngugi)

**Thanksgiving Break November 26, No Classes**

December 1 Toni Morrison. Sula

December 3 Toni Morrison. Sula; screening in class of scene from The Color Purple; **conclusion**