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AAS 372.01: African-American Identity

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AFRICAN AMERICAN IDENTITY

COURSE SYLLABUS

Fall 2015

COURSE INFORMATION

- a. Course Number: AAS 372, Sec. 01
- b. Course Request Number (CRN): 74735
- c. Room# and time: NAC (Native American Center) 011, 9:10-10:00, MWF
- d. Prerequisites: none
- e. Credits: 3

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

- a. Instructor: Dr. George R. Price
- b. Office Hours and Location: MWF, 10:15-10:45, 1:00-1:45, 3:30-5:00, no appointment necessary, or other days and times *by appointment only*, in NAC (Native American Center) 203E
- c. E-mail: george.price@mso.umt.edu
- d. Office Phone: 243-2302

REQUIRED TEXTS

Graves, Joseph L., Jr., *The Emperor's New Clothes: Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium*, Piscataway, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 2001

Gomez, Michael A., *Exchanging Our Country Marks: the transformation of African identities in the colonial and antebellum South*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1998

Tatum, Beverly Daniel, *"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" and Other Conversations About Race*, New York, Basic Books, 1997, 1999, 2003

As noted in the Course Calendar at the end of this syllabus, some additional articles and research sources are posted on our AAS 372 Moodle page. Connect through your UM Online account. Important announcements, some articles (including some required readings), power point slides from the lectures, exam grades, web links and other information will also be put on this page throughout the semester. There is also a discussion board where you can raise questions and get feedback from the professor and your fellow students.

All lectures will be recorded and posted on YouTube and available to students enrolled in this class. This is a new service provided by UM, which will replace the iTunesU recorded lecture service and more information on this will be given in class.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Combining the disciplines of history, biology, sociology, anthropology, and psychology, this course is designed to explore and illuminate the multifaceted nature and development of African American group and individual identity. Using a variety of methods and materials, we will seek answers to such questions as, "What is 'African' about African Americans?," "What is the difference between race and culture?," "Is there only one African American culture?," "How much cultural variation is there today among Americans of African descent?," "How much of present day African American (and American) culture can legitimately be traced back to specific African cultural forms?,"

“Where did the idea of categorizing humans into four or five ‘races’ come from?” and many other vital questions. The course methodology combines lectures with discussions of the readings and audio/visual materials. As we explore and discuss the origin, perpetuation, and assumed validity of classifying humans into racial groups, we will also assess the societal consequences of such thinking in America, and explore alternative thinking on human identities.

COURSE OBJECTIVES and Learning Outcomes

- a. To familiarize students with the historical facts and circumstances that formed and directed the course of racialized thinking and identity formation in the United States.
- b. To assist students in forming their own assessments and analyses regarding the logic, validity, and usefulness of popularly-held ideas about the nature of humanity.
- c. To help students to think independently and move beyond the limitations of customary popular concepts.
- d. To increase student awareness of the significant African-American influences upon, and contributions to, the development of American society.
- e. To provide a context for understanding many of America’s current social problems.
- f. To familiarize students with some of the bibliographical and other sources of knowledge that are available for further study of the various topics that we will cover.
- g. To improve students’ research and writing skills. Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:
 - Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
 - Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
 - Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
 - Revise written work based on constructive feedback
 - Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
 - Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions
 - Demonstrate appropriate English language usage
- h. To provide students with opportunities for discussion and inquiry related to our topics.

ATTENDANCE

All students are individually responsible for acquiring information made available through lectures, reading assignments, and materials handed out in class. *Attendance and participation make up 10% of your grade* (see "Grading Criteria" section above). Verified excused absences will receive half-credit.

Disrespectful behavior, such as talking during a lecture or while another student is addressing the class, or playing with electronic devices during class, will result in loss of attendance and participation credit for that day.

The lectures will be recorded and available on YouTube, accessible from the UM One Stop webpage. Therefore, **on days when you don’t feel like sitting quietly and listening courteously to a lecture, PLEASE, out of respect for everybody else, DON’T GO TO CLASS!**

GRADING CRITERIA

I use a precise, numerical, percentage point grading system. No letter grades are assigned until after the final exam and all of the points are added up. Student grades will

be based on the combined scores of the writing assignments, in-class participation, and the three exams. The grading will be weighted as follows:

30% for the research paper		<u>Grade Scale:</u>	
24% total for the essays	92-100 = A	72-77.5 = C	
10% for the first exam	90-91.5 = A-	70-71.5 = C-	
10% for the second exam	88-89.5 = B+	68-69.5 = D+	
16% for the final exam	82-87.5 = B	62-67.5 = D	
10% for attendance and in-class participation	80-81.5 = B-	60-61.5 = D-	
	78-79.5 = C+	below 60 = F	

(The details for the writing assignments will be given separately from this syllabus.)

Extra credit opportunity: Two extra points for making a five minute presentation to the class regarding your research and/or writing experiences related to our topics.

Special arrangements for taking the exams at other than the designated times must be made in advance and approved by the instructor. Only very dire, unavoidable circumstances will be considered. Students with University-recognized disabilities who are enrolled with Disability Services for Students (DSS) will be accommodated according to University regulations. Such students should communicate with the instructor as early in the semester as possible about their special needs.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Plagiarism is the misrepresentation of another person's writing as one's own. Plagiarism is a violation of the University of Montana Code of Student Conduct, and the professor can give a student who plagiarizes an assigned paper a failing grade for the course. The UM leaves it up to each professor to decide if such action is appropriate. I choose to give a failing grade (no credit) *for the particular assignment that was plagiarized, and no opportunity to re-do the assignment.* That could lead to failing grade for the course, but not necessarily, depending on how the student does with the rest of the graded items for the course. We professors are aware that there are a growing number of internet websites that sell "research papers" to students who are susceptible to that kind of scam. But there are several websites that we can use to detect such papers and find their point of origin. Using such internet aids, I have caught several students over the years who turned in plagiarized works, and it is never a pleasant situation for either of us. Consider yourselves to be kindly forewarned.

Exams will be monitored and students must work individually. Talking to other students during the exam, copying another student's paper, or other forms of cheating, will result in an "F" grade for that exam.

COURSE OUTLINE/ CLASS CALENDAR (may be subject to minor revisions)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Lecture Topic</u>	<u>Reading Assignments</u>
Aug. 31	Introduction to the course	Tatum, ch.10, pp.194-202
Sept. 2&4	Origins and purpose of the myth of "race"; Video excerpt, "Race: the power of an illusion" (when reading Graves, it's OK to skip some of the highly technical scientific material)	Graves, Intro.
" 7	LABOR DAY HOLIDAY- NO CLASS	
" 9	Discussion and comments on first week's lecture topics; definitions of terms from our course vocabulary list (TBHO); discussion of Graves, pp. 23-43	

COURSE OUTLINE/ CLASS CALENDAR, continued

<u>Date</u>	<u>Lecture Topic</u>	<u>Reading Assignment</u>
Sept. 11	Race: how is it both real and not real? Video excerpt, "Race: the power of an illusion"	
" 14	The roots of "scientific" racism, pre and post Darwin; the myth of the superiority and inferiority of human cultural groups	Graves, pp. 43-85
" 16-21	"Eugenics" and the intensification of racial consciousness in America, 1877-1940 (The "Jim Crow" era); video, cont.	Graves, 86-139
" 23&25	Finish discussion of previous lecture and video; the dismantling of "scientific" racist theories during the mid and late 20 th century	Graves, pp. 140-154
" 25	Review outlines for first exam distributed	
" 28&30	The various commonly-held racial notions in present-day America	
Oct. 2	Some reasons for the myth of innate Afro-American athletic superiority Closure of unit on race theory and Graves' book. Review for first exam, Q & A	Graves 155-200
" 5	First Exam	
" 7	Introduction to African cultures and identities	Gomez, Intro.
" 9	Previous lecture continued; First essay due	
" 12&14	Indigenous African religious/spiritual beliefs and identity Includes slides and music samples of indigenous African cultures	Gomez, ch. 3, 5, 6
" 16	Muslim African beliefs and identity; excerpt from video, "Wonders of the African World"	Gomez, ch 4
" 19-23	the transformation of Africans into African Americans: impact of slavery and Jim Crow on African American self-identity; video excerpts on AfAm religion, spirituality	Gomez, ch 7,8,9, 10
" 26	closing lecture/discussion on Gomez' book	
" 28	AfAm culture and identity development outside of slavery Review outlines for second exam distributed	(articles, TBHO)
" 30	African American self-definition during the "Harlem Renaissance," lecture/discussion	(articles to be handed out)
Nov. 2	Review, Q & A for second exam	
" 4	Exam Two	
" 6	Extra credit opportunity for students to share and discuss their essays	
" 9	AfAm identity developments after the Harlem Renaissance through the 1960s	
" 11	Veterans Day Holiday- NO CLASS	
" 13	The legacy of the "Civil Rights" movement, current issues in AfAm identity, including "affirmative action," other "remedies," and their impact on African American identity Submit research paper topics to the professor for approval and/or suggestions (if you have not yet already done so)	McWhorter article (TBHO)
" 16-18	problems with Tatum's definition of "racism"; the realities regarding "white privilege" Video excerpt on the impact of racial discrimination in housing	Tatum, ch. 1 McIntosh article (TBHO)
" 20	The dynamics of dominant/subordinate group relations; Last (second or third) essay due	Tatum, ch.2
" 23	The difference between race and culture; reasons for "self-segregation" (or, "separatism"), pros and cons: Do we really need racial identities? (moderated discussion)	Tatum, ch. 3,4,5
" 23	Recommended deadline for rough drafts of research papers.	
" 25-27	THANKSGIVING VACATION- NO CLASSES	
" 30	The extent of racism today (lecture/discussion)	McWhorter article

COURSE OUTLINE/ CLASS CALENDAR, continued

<u>Date</u>	<u>Lecture Topic</u>	<u>Reading Assignment</u>
Dec. 2	Economic conditions and crime as an alternative economy (including the myth of poverty as the African American norm)	(article, TBHO)
2	Final deadline for rough drafts of research papers.	
" 4&7	"Equally What?" is race irrelevant to the current global crises?	(article, TBHO, "Equally What?")
" 7-11	Students' choice (class will decide together) topics for final lecture and discussion (small and/or large group discussions) These days can include past topics that you would like to discuss some more. Extra credit presentations	
11	Review for Final (Q and A)	
" 11	Research Papers and late essays due.	
" 15	Final Exam, Tuesday, December 15th, 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.	

If you know in advance that you will not be able to take the exam at this time and date, please make arrangements with the professor in advance to take the exam at another time during Finals Week. UM policy is that final exams can only be taken during Finals Week.