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AAST 141H.01: Black - From Africa to Hip-Hop

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AAST 141HX - Black: From Africa to Hip-Hop

Tobin Miller Shearer

Autumn 2023

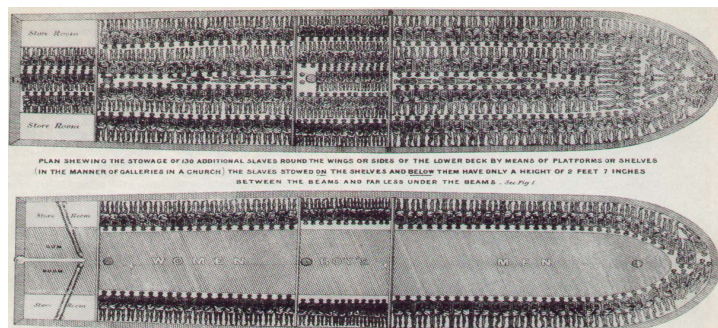
Tuesdays/Thursdays 9:30-10:50 a.m.,
JRH 202

Introduction

This course introduces students to the primary questions, themes, and approaches to African-American studies. For each major period examined, students will use a different lens to examine the African-American experience. Cultural and gender history will, for example, shape analysis of the slavery period while literary fiction will guide exploration of the latter twentieth century womanist movement. In addition to examining key historical periods such as Reconstruction, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Civil Rights era, students will encounter Hip-Hop, African-American film, African-American religion, and contemporary identity politics. This course concludes by discussing the reasons for and new directions in African-American studies including diasporic studies, Pan-Africanism, and post-colonial studies. Overall students will gain new insight into the social, cultural,



Alicia Garza is one of the co-founders of the Black Lives Matter movement. She is credited with coining the "blacklivesmatter" hashtag in early 2013.



A drawing of a cargo hold used to ship enslaved Africans to the Americas.

political, and intellectual experiences of a diverse people and into the history and contemporary perspectives in the United States.

Objectives

Students will be able to –

- *identify* the central queries that drive Af-Am studies;
- *explain* the significance of the major historical movements and periods in Af-Am history in order to synthesize ideas and information in order to understand the problems, causes, and consequences of historical developments and events;
- *analyze* Af-Am events and individuals from multi-disciplinary perspectives including literature, history, sociology, religious studies, music, and art; in order to place human behavior and cultural ideas into a wider (global/indigenous) framework, and enhance their understanding of the complex interdependence of nations and societies and their physical environments; demonstrate an awareness of the diverse ways humans structure their social, political, & cultural lives; and analyze and compare the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in the 21st century including those of their own societies and cultures;
- *synthesize* readings and lecture materials in order to critically analyze and evaluate primary sources – such as texts, pictorial evidence, oral histories, music, and artifacts- within their respective historical contexts and answer three key Af-Am studies questions:
 - What is the legacy and present experience of the color line?
 - How has double consciousness influenced African-American experience?
 - Resistance, accommodation, movement, or creation – which metaphor best defines the African-American experience?

Assignments

In addition to participating in daily discussions and other in-class activities, students will take nine brief online quizzes, take one mid-term, and take one cumulative final. Students will have ten minutes to answer ten short questions for the online quizzes. Both the midterm and the cumulative final include short identifications and short essays.

Books

- Butler, Octavia E. *Kindred*. Beacon Press, 2004.
- Larsen, Nella. *Quicksand*. New York: Knopf, 1928.
- Laymon, Kiese. *Heavy: An American Memoir*. New York: Scribner, 2018.
- White, Deborah Gray. *Ar'n't I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985.
- Williams, Thomas Chatterton. *Losing My Cool: Love, Literature, and a Black Man's Escape from the Crowd*. New York: Penguin Books, 2010.



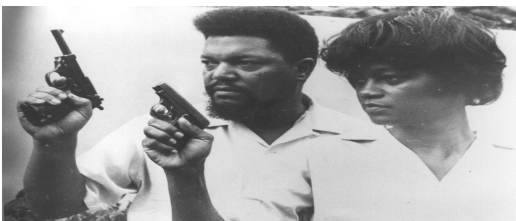
Fannie Lou Hamer, an important civil rights movement organizer, leading freedom songs.

Coursepack (available on course Moodle site)

- Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "The Case for Reparations." *The Atlantic*, June 2014. <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/05/the-case-for-reparations/361631/> (accessed February 19, 2016).
- Du Bois, W. E. Burghardt. "Reconstruction and Its Benefits." *American Historical Review* 15 (1910): 781-99.
- Fairchild, Halford. "Why Black History Is Not Just for Blacks." *Los Angeles Times*, February 5, 1995, M5.
- Hall, Stuart. "What is this 'Black' in Black popular culture?" In *The Black Studies Reader*, Jacqueline Bobo, Cynthia Hudley and Claudine Michel, eds., 255-63. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Honey, Michael. "The Popular Front in the American South: The View from Memphis." *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 30 (1986): 44-58.

Academic Honesty

Stealing someone else's ideas is the same as stealing someone's property. Cite others' ideas in standard footnote or endnote format (in written work and all projects). Paraphrase whenever possible. In general, a paraphrase uses no more than three of the same words in a sentence as the original source. See: <http://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students/default.php> for a full review of the [University of Montana's student conduct code](#).



Robert F. and Mabel Williams. Robert was a civil rights era advocate of armed self-defense.

- Kelley, Robin D. G. "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South." *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 1 (1993): 75-112.
- Pentony, DeVere E. "The Case for Black Studies (1969)." In *The African American Studies Reader*, edited by Nathaniel Norment, Jr., 9-15. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2007.
- Raboteau, Albert J., and David W. Wills. "Rethinking American Religious History: A Progress Report on 'Afro-American Religious History: A Documentary History Project'." *Council of Societies for the Study of Religion Bulletin* 20, no. 3 (1991): 57-61.

Accessibility

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and the Office For Disability Equity (OFDE). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with OFDE, please contact them in Aber Hall, First floor, or 406.243.2243. I will work with you and OFDE to provide an appropriate modification.

Grading

Participation – 30% Mid-term – 25%
Quizzes – 15% Final – 30%

This course is one of the elective classes that count towards the Major and the Minor in **Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies**. If you enjoy this course and would like to know more about the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program, please contact me or drop by the office, LA 138A-B, or visit the Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies website <http://hs.umt.edu/wgss/>

This course is also one of the core classes for the Major, Minor, and certificate in **African-American Studies**. If you enjoy this course and would like to know more about the African-American Studies Program, please contact me, drop by the AAST office, LA 262, or visit the African-American Studies website <http://hs.umt.edu/aas/>

Professor Contact

My office hours are Wednesdays from 1-3 pm and ten minutes before and after every class or by appt.
LA 251
406-243-6225 (voice only)
406-662-8227 (text and voice)
[Email: tobin.shearer@umontana.edu](mailto:tobin.shearer@umontana.edu)

A word on my teaching style

The scholarship on teaching and learning makes clear that we learn best by talking and writing about that which we have read, heard, and seen. This class is built on that basic research observation. In general the course is structured on a weekly two-part cycle. Day 1 will usually focus on lectures and integrated activities designed to enhance the lecture experience. Day 2 will usually involve extended discussion and activities designed to enhance the discussion experience. Thus, reading is indispensable to successful participation in this course. If you keep up with the readings and apply yourself in class, you will do well.

Two goals guide the manner in which I structure class time. I will:

- 1) seek to provide context for the primary documents, novels, movies, recordings, artwork, literature, and interpretive texts that you encounter in this course; and
- 2) guide you through analysis and evaluation of the readings.

Come to class each day prepared to engage in discussion, analysis, debate, and other creative teaching activities. Even on days that I lecture, I will regularly ask you to discuss a problem I am posing in my talk.

Grade Changes or Drops

Unless in the case of a documented major life emergencies (death of a loved one, extended illness, etc.), this class may not be dropped and grading options may not be changed after the university's announced deadline.

Grade Scale

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
A+	98%+
A	97-93%
A-	92-90%
B+	89-87%
B	86-83%
B-	82-80%
C+	79-77%
C	76-73%
C-	72-70%
D+	69-67%
D	66-63%
D-	62-60%
F	≤59%

Missed quizzes and exams

Make-up quizzes and exams will not be offered unless they are arranged along with appropriate documentation from medical, athletic, cultural, or administrative officials.

Missed Classes

Class absences can be excused if proper document from medical, athletic, cultural, or administrative officials is supplied. You will be counted as late if you are more than five minutes late for class and be marked down for that day's class participation grade. Attendance is recorded weekly on the class Moodle site. For a full description of the university's cultural and ceremonial leave policy, see: <http://catalog.umn.edu/academics/policies-procedures/>



Alice Walker, a Pulitzer-prize winning novelist and poet.

Classroom Behaviors

I expect that all students will join me in creating an effective learning environment by:

- turning off all cell phones (and thus doing no texting, e-mailing or instant messaging);
- using laptops only for note taking;
- not doing crosswords, reading newspapers, or engaging in other recreational activities;
- not talking with fellow classmates unless instructed to do so.

During lectures, I will give you my complete attention. I ask the favor of the same from my students. We will decide together what the consequences will be for failing to follow these guidelines. Should a student's behavior (such as texting or talking in class) continue after those consequences have been implemented, the student will be issued a warning in writing and docked a letter grade on his or her most recent quiz. Any subsequent disruptive behaviors will be turned over to the University's disciplinary committee.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Quiz
Students are responsible to have completed each week's assigned readings and take the quiz before class meets on Thursday. Quizzes are available from after class on Tuesdays until class begins on Thursdays. Quizzes are open book and study guides are provided but students have only ten minutes to take the quiz.				
1	8/29, 8/31	Why study African-American Studies?	Fairchild, Pentony	
2	9/5, 7	Africa (3150 BCE-1440 CE) and the Maafa (1441-1808) – Pan-Africanism <i>and</i> Diaspora Studies	White, 1-91	
3	9/12, 14	The Experience of Slavery (1441-1865) – Continuity <i>and</i> Disruption; Resistance <i>and</i> Survival	White, 92-190	1
4	9/19, 21	Reconstruction (1865-1877) – Change <i>and</i> backlash	Du Bois	2
5	9/26, 28	Harlem Renaissance (1915-1929): Methodologies (art, history, etc.) How to reach the core of a people?	Larsen	3
6	10/3, 5	Popular Front (1930-1939) – Racial Uplift <i>and</i> Racial Revolution	Honey	
7	10/10, 12	Civil Rights Movement (1944-1978) – Civil Rights <i>and</i> Black Power	Kelley	4
8	10/17, 19	Hip Hop Movement (1973-today) – Politics <i>and</i> Culture	Laymon	5
9	10/24, 26	Black Film – Propaganda <i>and</i> Art		Mid-term [on weeks 1-8]
10	10/31, 11/2	Womanist challenge – Women <i>and</i> men	Butler	6
11	11/7, 9	Contemporary Thought I – Sociology <i>and</i> Psychology	Williams, Chapters 1-6	
12	11/14, 16	Contemporary Thought II – The future <i>and</i> the past	Williams Chapters 7-9; Epilogue	7
13	11/21 (no class on Thursday, Thanksgiving Day)	Black Religious Experience – Islam	Raboteau and Wills	
14	11/28, 30	Identity Politics – Individual <i>and</i> group	Hall	8
15	12/5, 7	The Future of Reparations – Academics <i>and</i> Politics	Coates	9
Final exam (cumulative through the semester): Tuesday, December 12, 2023, 10:10 a.m. – 12:10 p.m., regular classroom				