

9-2012

AAS 141H.01A: Introduction to African-American Studies

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Recommended Citation

Shearer, Tobin, "AAS 141H.01A: Introduction to African-American Studies" (2012). *Syllabi*. Paper 931.
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AAS/HSTA 141H Introduction to African-American Studies

Autumn 2012 Tobin Miller Shearer

Tuesdays/Thursdays SS356

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, 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 African-American studies;
- explain the significance of the major historical movements and periods in African-American history;
- analyze African-American events and individuals from multi-disciplinary perspectives including literature, history, sociology, religious studies, music, and art;
- synthesize readings and lecture materials in order to answer three key African-American studies questions:
 - o What is the legacy and present experience of the color line?
 - o How has double consciousness influenced African-American experience?
 - o Resistance, accommodation, movement, or creation – which metaphor best defines the African-American experience?

Teaching method:

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.

Assignments:

In addition to participating in daily discussions and other in-class activities, students will take ten brief in class quizzes, take one mid-term, and take one cumulative final. The ten, in-class quizzes will be given on the dates identified below. Students will have ten minutes of class time to answer ten short questions. Both the midterm and the cumulative final include short identifications and short essays.

Grading:

Participation – 15%

Mid-term – 30%

Quizzes – 15%

Final – 40%

Grade scale:

A+ 98-100 A 93-97 A- 90-92 B+ 87-89 B 83-86

B- 80-82 C+ 77-79 C 73-76 C- 70-72 D+ 67-69

D 63-66 D- 60-62 F ≤59

Classroom etiquette:

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 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. Should a student's behavior (such as texting or talking in class) interrupt our learning environment, he or she will first be given a private verbal warning, then be given a public warning. Should disruptive behaviors continue following two warnings, the student will be issued a warning in writing and docked a letter grade on his or her most recent project. Any subsequent disruptive behaviors will be turned over to the University's disciplinary committee.

Instructor contact:

I hold weekly office hours as posted on the course website. You are also welcome to contact me by e-mail. I aim to respond within 24 hours. In case of emergency, you may contact me by phone as listed on the course website.

Missed deadlines:

My goal is always to encourage your best work in the midst of multiple classroom demands and real life emergencies. Limited deadline extensions can be arranged if the student makes advance contact. Unless arranged in advance, late papers or projects will be marked down 1 grade level/day. Quizzes may be made up within one week of their original offering. Make-up exams will not be offered unless they are arranged along with appropriate documentation from medical, athletic, or administrative officials.

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://ordway.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/name/StudentConductCode> for a full review of the University of Montana's student conduct code.

Accessibility:

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154 or visit their website

<http://www.umt.edu/disability>. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

Readings:

- Butler, Octavia E. *Kindred*. Beacon Press, 2004.
Chang, Jeff. *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-hop Generation*. Macmillan, 2005.
Du Bois, W. E. Burghardt. *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1935, 1963.
Larsen, Nella. *Quicksand*. New York: Knopf, 1928.
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.

Course pack (available on course website):

- 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.
Hine, Darlene Clark. "The Black Studies Movement: Afrocentric-traditionalist-feminist Paradigms for the Next Stage." In *The African American Studies Reader*, edited by Nathaniel Norment, Jr., 311-20. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2007.
Honey, Michael. "The Popular Front in the American South: The View from Memphis." *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 30 (1986): 44-58.
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.

Schedule:

Students are responsible to have completed each week's assigned readings before class meets on Thursday unless class does not meet that day in which case the assigned reading will be due before class meets on Tuesday.

Week 1 – August 28 and August 30: Why study African-American studies?
Fairchild. Pentony.

Week 2 – September 4 and 6: Africa, Middle Passage – Pan-Africanism vs. Diaspora Studies
White, 1-91

Week 3 – September 11 and 13: The Experience of Slavery (1441-1865) – Continuity vs. Disruption and Resistance vs. Survival
White, 92-190
Quiz #1 (on Thursday)

Week 4 – September 18 and 20: Reconstruction (1865-1877) – Change and backlash
DuBois, Chapter One (3-16), Chapter Seven (182-236), Chapter Ten (381-430), Chapter Sixteen (670-710), and the following pages (22-25, 28, 32, 39, 48, 51, 57, 63, 67, 79, 82, 325-327, 330-334, 344, 346-347, 577, 624)
Quiz #2 (on Thursday)

Week 5 – September 25 and 27: Harlem Renaissance (1915-1929): Methodologies (art, history, etc.) How to reach the core of a people?
Larsen
Quiz #3 (on Thursday)

Week 6 – October 2 and 4: Popular Front (1930-1939) – Racial Uplift vs. Revolution
Honey
Quiz #4 (on Thursday)

Week 7 – October 9 and 11: Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement (1944-1978) – Integration vs. Nation
Kelley
Quiz #5 (on Thursday)

Week 8 – October 16 and 18: Black Religious Experience – Christianity vs. Islam

Raboteau and Wills
Midterm (on Thursday)

Week 9 – October 23 and 25: Black Film – Propaganda vs. Art
Chang, Chapter One (7-19), Chapter Three (41-65), Chapter Four (67-85), Chapter Nine (167-187), Chapter Ten (189-211)
October 25 – No regularly scheduled class; must sign in and attend one Day of Dialogue workshop at least 50 minutes in length. See: <http://life.umt.edu/dod/>

Week 10 – October 30 and November 1: Hip Hop Movement – Politics vs. Culture
Chang, Chapter 11 (215-229), Chapter 12 (231-261), Chapter 14 (299-329), Chapter 15 (331-353), Chapter 16 (357-379)
Quiz #6 (on Thursday)

Week 11 – (No class on November 6) November 8: Womanist challenge – Women vs. men?
Butler
Quiz #7 (on Thursday)

Week 12 – November 13 and 15: Contemporary Thought – Sociology vs. Psychology
Williams
Quiz #8 (on Thursday)

Week 13 – Study week (no class on Tuesday, November 20, or Thursday, November 22)

Week 14 – Nov. 27 and November 29: Identity Politics – Individual vs. group
Hall
Quiz #9 (on Thursday)

Week 15 – December 4 and 6: The Future of African-American Studies/Black Studies – Focus vs. Dispersion
Hine
Quiz #10 (on Thursday)

Final exam: Tuesday, December 11, 10:10 a.m. -12:10 p.m. regular classroom