

**LAH 350/ AFR 372D/ SOC 321K:**  
***African American Families in Historical and Contemporary Context***

**Course ID:** 30145/30545 /44285

**Instructor:** Monique Pikus

**Office Hours:** Mondays 9-11am, by appointment

**Email:** mpikus@austin.utexas.edu

**Meeting Times:** TuTh 11:00am -12:30pm

**Location:** CBA 4.342

**Office Location:** RLP 2.104

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

From the time of slavery when their marriages and families were not recognized to the present where many are considered pathological, African American families have been under almost constant attack in the United States. Yet, a close examination of the changing African American family in the United States does not demonstrate its pathology but rather its resilience and adaptability to societal constraints. In this class, we will examine how African Americans managed to maintain a sense of family from the time of slavery to the present trend of mass incarceration. We will analyze how different perspectives on gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class and the family have been applied to African American families. In addition, we will discuss the importance of single parent and multigenerational households, extended family, fictive kin and the entire community in raising African American children. Finally, we will critique and evaluate the impact of the portrayal of African American families in academic research, politics, and the media.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

It is my hope that students will set their own goals for the course. Nevertheless, by the end of the course, all students should be able to:

- 1) Analyze existing theories on families and how they relate to our understanding of a family in general and African American families in particular.
- 2) Appreciate how African American families have adapted and maintained a sense of family despite the inequities and structural constraints they have experienced throughout U.S. history.
- 3) Recognize how historical experiences shape the lives of contemporary African American families.
- 4) Critique orally and in writing representations of African American families in different genre and articulate how such depictions have influenced African American families' lived experiences.
- 5) Articulate the current social issues and inequities faced by African American families.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Class Participation (20%).** I believe that learning is an interactive sport. Therefore class participation is critical to the success of the course for the class will consist mainly of guided discussion with brief lectures as needed. Students are expected to attend every class on time

prepared to discuss the materials assigned for that date. Students are allowed two unexcused absences without penalty. However, students' class participation grade will decrease with each additional absence. If a student has more than 10 unexcused absences, they will automatically fail the course. Finally, peer review (50% of participation grade) is an important part of the class. Students are expected to provide the following peer reviews: 1) written feedback on 2-3 classmates' first position papers; 2) written feedback on fellow group members' abstracts; and 3) evaluations of fellow group members' contribution to the group's edited volume introduction and presentation.

**Position Papers (20%).** Writing is an essential way to assist students in engaging in the reading materials on a deeper level. Students are required to write four 700-800 word essays in Canvas summarizing and responding to the major argument(s) of the readings. Students are required to revise their first position paper based on the feedback provided by their peer review team and the instructor. The total number of position papers submitted will be four original and one revised paper.

**Edited Volume and Presentation (Total: 60%).** It is important to understand how past depictions of African American families influence current representations and the lived experiences of African American families. Students will work with a group to develop an edited volume (a collection of work with each chapter written by a different author) on African American families in a specific historical time period. The volume will use theory and research to understand the portrayals of African American families within the time period and how they may have impacted African American families during that era and the present. The volume should also explore how the representation of African American families relates to traditional views of family.

**Abstract and Annotated Bibliography (10%).** Students are required to submit a 500 word abstract of their individual chapter for their edited volume. The abstract should briefly explain the genre under study, the theories that will be explored, and the potential impact of the chosen portrayal of African American families. The abstract will include an annotated bibliography (50 word summary each) of at least 5 outside sources.

**Revised Abstract and Annotated Bibliography (5%).** Students will submit a revised abstract based on the instructor and group member's feedback.

**Group Presentation (10%).** Each group will be responsible for giving a 40-50 minute PowerPoint presentation on their edited volume. Presentation slides should be posted to Canvas by 10pm the day before the class presentation. Presentation grades will be based on the instructor's overall group grade and each member's individual contribution as determined by fellow group members.

**Edited Volume Introduction (10%).** Students will work with their group to write a 4-5 page double-spaced introduction to their edited volume. The introduction should outline the central unifying argument(s) of the volume. Each student should also provide a paragraph summary of their chapter that will be included in the introduction. Final grades will be based on the overall group grade and each member's individual contribution as determined by fellow group members.

**Chapter of Edited Volume (25%).** Each student is expected to complete an 8-10 page double spaced chapter for the edited volume created by their group. The chapter will use theory and research to analyze the portrayal of African American families in a particular genre (literature, film, television, social science research, etc.) during the specific time period that is the focus of the edited volume. Each chapter should represent a different genre so students must work with their group members to determine individual genre selections. Each chapter should consider the following: 1) how the genre portrays African American families; 2) how said depiction reflects the lived experiences of African American families during the chosen period; 3) how the portrayal relates to traditional views of the family; and 4) the potential short and long-term impact of such representations on African Americans during that time and the present.

## **GRADING SCALE**

Final scores will be rounded to the nearest whole number.

100 – 98	<b>A[+]</b>	77 – 72	<b>C</b>
97 – 92	<b>A</b>	71 – 70	<b>C-</b>
91 – 90	<b>A-</b>	69 – 68	<b>D+</b>
89 – 88	<b>B+</b>	67 – 62	<b>D</b>
87 – 82	<b>B</b>	61 – 60	<b>D-</b>
81 – 80	<b>B-</b>	59 – 0	<b>F</b>
79 – 78	<b>C+</b>		

## **CLASSROOM DECORUM**

Academic freedom is a hallmark of higher education. In this class, we will discuss opposing viewpoints on difficult topics. Some students may find these opposing views personally offensive. All students should feel free to voice opinions in a respectful manner without fear of reprisal. Perspectives should be combatted with evidence. Personal attacks will not be tolerated in this class. Finally, confidentiality is a requirement of this course. Students are not allowed to record, discuss with non-classmates, and/or post on social media classroom discussions or negative opinions of fellow students.

## **WRITING FLAG**

“This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers’ work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.” (Retrieved August 15, 2017: <https://ugs.utexas.edu/flags/faculty-resources/teaching/syllabus>).

## **CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

“This course carries the flag for Cultural Diversity in the United States. Cultural Diversity courses are designed to increase your familiarity with the variety and richness of the American cultural experience. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one U.S. cultural group that has experienced persistent marginalization.” (Retrieved January 12, 2018: <https://ugs.utexas.edu/flags/faculty-resources/teaching/syllabus>)

## **POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

“Students who violate University rules on academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and / or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct>.” (Retrieved August 15, 2017: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/facultyresources.php>).

## **STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

“Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 512-410-6644 (Video Phone) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations.” (Retrieved August 15, 2017: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/critical-ways-faculty-can-support-all-students-with-disabilities/>).

## **RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS**

Students who will miss class to observe a religious holiday may have the absence excused. Please contact the instructor a week before the absence to learn how to make up missed work to get the absence excused.

## **COURSE READINGS**

Given the nature of the course, students will read and discuss materials that may contain offensive language and viewpoints and/or examine upsetting topics. If you are having difficulty with the readings and/or class discussion because of this, please contact the instructor.

### **Book List**

Books are available at the University Co-Op

Baldwin, James. 2002. (1974). *If Beale Street Could Talk*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Franklin, Donna and Angela James. 2015. *Ensuring Inequality: The Structural Transformation of the African American Family, Revised Edition*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Jacobs, Harriet. 2001 (1861). *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (Dover Thrift Editions) Reprint Edition*. Mineola, NY: Dover Thrift Editions.

Pattillo, Mary. 2013. *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril among the Black Middle Class, Second Edition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Stack, Carol. 1983 (1974). *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

## Article List

Links to all articles are provided on Canvas.

### Theory

Burton, Linda M., Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Victor Ray, Rose Buckelew and Elizabeth Hordge Freeman. 2010. "Critical Race Theories, Colorism, and the Decade's Research on Families of Color." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72, 3: 440-459.

Ferree, Myra Marx. 2010. "Filling the Glass: Gender Perspectives on Families." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72, 3: 420-439.

Few-Demo, April L., Áine M. Humble, Melissa A. Curran, and Sally A. Lloyd. 2016. "Queer Theory, Intersectionality, and LGBT-Parent Families: Transformative Critical Pedagogy in Family Theory." *Journal of Family Theory & Review* 8: 74-94.

Hill, Shirley A. 2002. "Teaching and Doing Gender in African American Families." *Sex Roles* 47, 11/12: 493-506.

Hooper, Lisa M. 2007. "The Application of Attachment Theory and Family Systems Theory to the Phenomena of Parentification." *The Family Journal* 15, 3: 217-223.

James, Anthony G., Stephanie Irby, Mark A. Fine, and Duane Rudy. 2018. "The Central Roles of Race and Racism in Reframing Family Systems Theory: A Consideration of Choice and Time." *Journal of Family Theory and Review* 10: 419-33.

Wilson, Melvin N. 1986. "The Black Extended Family: An Analytical Consideration." *Developmental Psychology* 22, 2: 246-258.

### The History of African American Families

Berger, Alan S. and William Simon. 1974. "Black Families and the Moynihan Report: A Research Evaluation." *Social Problems* 22: 145-161.

Bloome, Deirdre and Christopher Muller. 2015. "Tenancy and African American Marriage in the Postbellum South." *Demography* 52:1409-30.

Fouquier, Katherine Ferrell. 2011. "The Concept of Motherhood Among Three Generations of African American Women." *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 43, 2: 145-53.

Frazier, E. Franklin. 1939. "The Brown Middle Class." Pp. 420-446 in *The Negro Family in the United States* by E. F. Frazier. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Frazier, E. Franklin. 1948. "Ethnic Family Patterns: The Negro Family in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 53, 6: 435-438.

- Kelley, Robin D. G. 1993. "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South." *The Journal of American History* 80, 1: 75-112.
- Mumford, Kevin J. 2012. "Untangling Pathology: The Moynihan Report and Homosexual Damage, 1965–1975." *The Journal of Policy History* 24, 1: 53-73.
- U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Policy and Planning. 1965. *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action (Moynihan Report)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Policy and Planning.
- African American Families in Contemporary Times
- Carpenter, Tracy R. 2012. "Construction of the Crack Mother Icon." *Western Journal of Black Studies* 36, 4: 264-275.
- Glass, Valerie Q. and April L. Few-Demo. 2013. "Complexities of Informal Social Support Arrangements for Black Lesbian Couples." *Family Relations* 62: 714 – 726.
- Hunter, Andrea G. and James Earl Davis. 1992. "Constructing Gender: An Exploration of Afro-American Men's Conceptualization of Manhood." *Gender & Society* 6, 3: 464-79.
- Mays, Vickie M., Linda M. Chatters, Susan D. Cochran, and Joanna Mackness. 1998. "African American Families in Diversity: Gay Men and Lesbians as Participants in Family Networks." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 29, 1: 73-87.
- Patterson, Robert J. 2011. "'Woman Thou Art Bound': Critical Spectatorship, Black Masculine Gazes, and Gender Problems in Tyler Perry's Movies." *Black Camera* 3, 1: 9-30.
- Reid, Megan and Andrew Golub. 2015. "Vetting and Letting: Cohabiting Stepfamily Formation Processes in Low-Income Black Families." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 77: 1234–1249.
- Roberts, Dorothy E. 2012. "Prison, Foster Care, and the Systemic Punishment of Black Mothers." *UCLA Law Review* 59, 6: 1474-1500.
- Western, Bruce and Christopher Wildeman. 2009. "The Black Family and Mass Incarceration." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 621, 1: 221-242.

## COURSE SYLLABUS

Class Dates	Readings	Written Assignment
<b>Theory</b>		
Tuesday, January 22	Course Overview	
Thursday, January 24	Hooper; James, et al.; Wilson	
Tuesday, January 29	Burton, et al.; Few-Demo, et al.	
Thursday, January 31	Ferree; Hill	
<b>The History of African American Families</b>		
Tuesday, February 5	Film: Uncle Tom's Cabin; Franklin & James: Ch. 1	<b>Position Paper #1</b>
Thursday, February 7	Jacobs: Note, pp. 1-79	
Tuesday, February 12	Jacobs: 80-167	<b>Peer Comments PP #1</b>
Thursday, February 14	Franklin & James: Ch. 2; Bloome & Muller	
Tuesday, February 19	Franklin & James: Ch. 3-5 ; Kelley	<b>Revised PP #1</b>
Thursday, February 21	<i>Field Trip to Ransom Center</i> ; Franklin & James: Ch. 5-6; ; Frazier (1939); Frazier (1948)	
Tuesday, February 26	Moynihan	
Thursday, February 28	Berger & Simon; Mumford	<b>Position Paper #2</b>
Tuesday, March 5	Stack: Intro, Ch. 1-3; Fouquier	
Thursday, March 7	Stack: Ch. 4-8, Appendices	
Tuesday, March 12	Baldwin pp. 1-89	
Thursday, March 14	Baldwin pp. 90-197	<b>Position Paper # 3</b>
<b>African American Families in Contemporary Times</b>		
Tuesday, March 19	SPRING BREAK	
Thursday, March 21	SPRING BREAK	
Tuesday, March 26	Franklin & James: Ch. 7-9	
Thursday, March 28	Pattillo: Ch. 1-5	
Tuesday, April 2	Pattillo: Ch. 6-9, Conclusion, Epilogue	
Thursday, April 4	Franklin & James: Ch. 10: Reid & Golub	<b>Position Paper # 4</b>
Tuesday, April 9	Tyler Perry Film; Patterson	
Thursday, April 11	Tyler Perry Film	<b>Abstract &amp; Annotated Bibliography</b>
Tuesday, April 16	Roberts; Western & Wildeman	
Thursday, April 18	Glass & Few-Demo; Mays, et al	<b>Group Comments on Abstract</b>
Tuesday, April 23	Carpenter; Hunter & Davis	
Thursday, April 25	<b>Presentations</b>	<b>Revised Abstract</b>
Tuesday, April 30	<b>Presentations</b>	
Thursday, May 2	<b>Presentations</b>	
Tuesday, May 7	<b>Presentations</b>	
Thursday, May 9	<b>Evaluations &amp; Final Thoughts</b>	<b>Edited Volumes Due</b>