

SYLLABUS

History 41: African-American in History, Section No. 28978
(Same as African American Studies 4, Section No. 28979)

Fall 2017
West Los Angeles College
MW 1:00-2:25 in GC 350

Instructor: Anthony A. Lee
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Office Hours: By appointment

This is a warning! There will be a great deal of reading and writing required for this class. All exams will include essay questions. Students will be required to turn in frequent written responses to the reading assignments.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

This course is a survey of the political, legal, economic, and social position and role of African-Americans in the history of the United States. Special emphasis will be given to the contributions of African-Americans in all aspects of American culture.

CREDIT: Three units. Transferable to UC or CSU.

PURPOSE:

Africa has had a profound effect on our society. African ideas, African cultures, and African peoples have influenced Western civilization since ancient Egyptian times. The history of the Americas, in particular, owes a great deal to Africa, since the immigration of African peoples to the New World remained many times larger than European immigration until at least the nineteenth century. As a result, African-Americans have contributed to American ideas about art, music, dance, religion, food, family, government, and so forth. There is no aspect of American culture that has not been deeply influenced by African American peoples.

Until recently, the importance of that influence has gone largely unrecognized. In its place, our society has invented grotesque myths and stereotypes concerning black people. Until those myths are overcome, and we understand our African American past, we will not be able to understand ourselves.

This course will survey the history of African peoples in the United States, with special emphasis on the nineteenth century and ante-bellum slavery. Students will be encouraged to apply critical standards to all presentations of the African American past (including the textbooks) in order to recognize the obvious and subtle workings of our own cultural myths on ideas about Africa and black peoples.

GENERAL RULES:

1. No food or beverage should be brought into class.
2. Tape recording of lectures is not permitted.
3. Reading newspapers or other materials during class is not permitted.
4. Cell telephones are to be **turned off** during class sessions.
Please do not let your phone disrupt the class. **Texting** or using cell phones in any way during class is not allowed. Turn cell phones off. **No texting during class.**
6. Students must check their **campus e-mail address** regularly so that the instructor can remain in communication throughout the semester.

ABSENCES:

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class session. Class attendance is essential to the course, since the lectures will supplement your textbook reading assignments. If you must be absent from class for some reason, you will still be responsible for material covered in the lecture. So have a class friend take notes and pick up handouts for you.

Perfect attendance (no absences at all—for any reason; you have been here all the time) will be rewarded with 20 bonus points at the end of the course. If you have only one absence, you will receive 10 bonus points. Extra points earned for perfect attendance (or only one absence) **must be claimed** by the student at the end of the course in writing on the final exam or final paper.

It is the responsibility of students to attend classes regularly and apply themselves to the college studies in which they are enrolled. When students have been absent due to illness, they should report to their instructor to explain the absence. Students not in attendance or late for the first class meeting are subject to drop. Students who are absent in excess of 10% of the total class hours (3 classes) are subject to drop. Students who are absent during the course add period are subject to drop.

You are allowed only three absences. *You may be dropped from the class, at the instructor's discretion, after the third absence.* If you have some special problem that is going to keep you away from class for more than three sessions, please see me or call me beforehand to explain.

Please be on time for class!

WITHDRAWAL FROM CLASS;

If you wish to withdraw from the class, please talk to me first. You may have a problem that can be resolved some other way. Anytime you feel that you are behind in class, or that you are having serious problems with the assignments, **please see the instructor before taking any other action.** **November 17** is the last day to drop the class with a grade of W.

GRADING PROCEDURES:

Grades will be based on your performance on the following assignments:

Written Responses to Reading: Each student will be required keep a class journal that will consist of one-page (or more) responses to your reading. These will consist of thoughts on, and critical responses to, the weekly reading assignments. These journal entries will be turned in every week on Monday, at the instructor's discretion. These responses **must follow the instructions** in the Response Guidelines (provided below). Your completed journal (all responses collected together) will be turned in at the end of the semester for 100 points (max.). So, don't lose any of your responses. Normally, responses should be typed and be (at least) one page long. If you can't get to a computer, turn in a written response in black ink (no pencil). But responses should be typed.

Mid-term Exams: There will be two (2) mid-term exams as listed on the Assigned Reading Schedule (below). Each exam will consist of short-answer identification questions and a longer essay question. The exam will be written in class, though the questions will be provided beforehand. Each mid-term exam will be worth a maximum of 100 points.

Book Reviews: Instead of writing examinations in class, the student may choose to turn in a book review *at the time* of the exam. Each review must be typed, five to ten pages long, and answer the questions on the Book Review Guidelines (see below). Each review will be worth a maximum of 100 points. No late book reviews will be accepted.

Reviews may be written for the assigned or optional readings, or for **any other book** concerned with the African-American past (within our time period) **that is approved by the instructor.**

Research papers: Instead of taking the mid-terms, the student may choose to turn in a research paper *at the time* of the exam. Each paper must be typed, five to ten pages long, and answer the questions on the Research Guidelines (see below). Each review will be worth a maximum of 100 points. *No late papers will be accepted.*

Also: For various reasons, family history (including stories passed down from generation to generation within families) has played a more important role in African-American culture than it has for most other American groups. These stories are also an important source of African-American history. A student may elect to do a **family history research paper** instead of taking the mid-term exams. Research papers must follow the guide-lines on the research guide. Papers must be turned in *on the day* of the exams, and *no late papers will be accepted (ever).*

Students may do a Research Paper on any topic of African American history, **with the instructor's permission.**

Group Projects: At some point during the first two weeks of the semester the class will be divided into groups of three or four students. Each group will give two presentation to the class as a whole and will participate in other cooperative projects.

Final Examination: There will be a comprehensive final examination given during finals week **on Monday, December 11, 1:45-3:45**. The exam will consist of essay questions and identification questions. **The final exam must be taken in order to obtain a passing grade in this class.** It will be two hours in length and is worth a maximum of 100 points. Students may turn in a final paper in lieu of the exam.

Additional Points: Fifty (50) additional points will be given by the instructor based on class attendance and participation. 20 bonus points are given for perfect class attendance; 10 bonus points for no more than one absence.

Make-up Exams: Make-up exams may be arranged with the consent of the instructor, but they must be taken within two weeks of the exam missed; and they will be marked down by 10 points (one full grade). However, book reviews and research papers *may not* be turned in late.

Extra Credit: In general, extra credit work will not be assigned or accepted. However, if you are concerned about raising the grade you are getting in the class, please consult with the instructor.

Total Points for Course (This is only approximate.):

Mid-Terms, Book Reviews, or Research Papers	200
Final Examination	100
Reading Responses	100
Class Presentations	50
Quizzes and misc. assignments	50
Class Participation	<u>50</u>
Total (Approximately)	550

CHEATING:

Plagiarism or cheating of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in severe penalties. Copying paragraphs or sentences from the Internet and putting them in your papers without proper citation is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious violation of college rules and will result in a failing grade. It is also extremely easy to recognize and to trace.

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS:

Among others, this course is intended to teach the following academic skills: (There are also lots more, but this is enough for now.)

1. Critical thinking about the past: the ability to understand how history is written and what influences there are on the construction of history;
2. The evaluation of texts: the ability to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a text in terms of date, author, language, audience, purpose, tone/style, provenance, and so forth.
3. The ability to recognize various forms of texts, including images, works of art, film, performance, the presentation of the body, etc.
4. The capacity to assess multiple points of view: the ability to understand, appreciate, and articulate multiple and differing opinions about the past.
5. An understanding of culture and the history of culture: the ability to study cultural influences on the past and the present.
6. Problemicizing the past: the ability to identify themes, issues, ideas, and historical problems as they are studied academically as part of history.
7. Writing skills: the ability to respond critically, and in writing, to an academic text.
8. Composing an essay: the ability to formulate an argument in writing and to support that argument with evidence gleaned from the course materials.
9. Discussion: the ability to engage verbally in a scholarly discussion of the past, to understand the arguments presented and to respond to those arguments critically.