

Introduction to African American Culture Fall 2018

AFR 301 30545 | ANT 310L 31630 | AMS 315 31100

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*"Where are we and whose country is this anyway?"
June Jordan, 1985*

Course Description

This course is an exploration of African American culture that provides students with analytical tools to critically examine and consciously participate in the ongoing construction of African American culture, and with social and political skills to actively build communities committed to social justice. Particular attention is given to key terms such as race, culture, Blackness, hegemony, aesthetics, social privilege, and politics. Emphasis is placed on Black agency as demonstrated through the social, political, and representational choices made by African Americans.

Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to—

- *apply theories of race and racism to their experiences
- *identify specific political and aesthetic dimensions of Black cultural expressions
- *contribute their ideas in a large group setting
- *practice strategies for community-building

Readings

Painter, Nell. *Creating Black Americans: African American History and Its Meanings, 1619 to the Present*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. Available at the University Coop.

Southern California Library Course Packet

Available 1 October 2018 online

Must be used for Essay III

All other course readings are available on Canvas.

Assignments

Essay I

You will write a **self-reflexive essay** based on a **discussion held during class**. You may use any class discussion that peaks your interest. Your goal is to articulate your own position regarding the issue being discussed. Your position need not be definitive or singular; your position may be one of conflict and/or confusion. In discussing your position, you must **reference a concept/theory** presented in the course. The essay should consist of a **very brief summary of the discussion** from class (no more than one paragraph), and a detailed examination of the relationship between the class discussion and the concept/theory you are using as an analytical tool. You will be assessed on the clarity of your understanding of the concepts you have chosen, and on the quality of your writing. The essay must be 2-3 double spaced pages. Use footnotes, standard margins, and be sure to number your pages. The essay must be submitted via Canvas before 11:00 a.m. on **25 September**. Late papers will not be accepted.

Essay II

You will write an **analytical essay** based on your attendance at **an event** sponsored by a Black Studies unit at the University of Texas. A list of available events will be provided. The essay should consist of a **very brief summary of the event** (no more than one paragraph), and a detailed discussion of the relationship between the event and **two concepts/theories** presented in the course. You may not use a theory that you have already explored in Essay I. You will be assessed on the clarity of your understanding of the concepts you have chosen, and on the quality of your writing. The essay must be 2-3 double-spaced pages. Use footnotes, standard margins, and be sure to number your pages. Be sure to include **evidence of your attendance at the event**—a selfie at the event, a program signed by an organizer of the event, or another item agreed upon prior to your attendance at the event. This evidence will not be included in your page count. The essay must be submitted via Canvas before 11:00 a.m. on **6 November**. Late papers will not be accepted.

Essay III

You will write an **analytical essay** that examines the relationship between an African American **cultural artifact and two concepts**/theories from the course. This essay should demonstrate your ability to consider the relationship between aesthetics/expression and politics/power. You may choose only one concept that you have already used in your previous essays. In addition, you must include **source material from the Southern California Library Course Packet**. Your African American cultural artifact might be a poem, a fashion item, a piece of music, an African American celebration or event, a meal, a dance, a music video, a quilt, a garden or another possibility that is approved by the instructor. You will be assessed on the clarity of your understanding of the concepts you have chosen, on the quality of your writing, and your effective incorporation of material from the Southern California Library archive. The essay must be 2-3 double spaced pages. **If the artifact is visual or textual, you may attach this as an appendix to the essay which will not be included in the page count. If the artifact is sonic, include a link that allows the TA to experience the artifact.** The essay must be submitted via Canvas before 11:00 a.m. **on 6 December**. Late papers will not be accepted.

Quizzes

You will take short quizzes on Canvas that cover **the readings for the week**. You will complete each quiz **before** 10:59 a.m. on the date indicated on the Course Schedule. These quizzes are designed to ensure that you are completing the required readings.

Participation

Your participation in the course is divided into three areas:

1. Attendance at an Additional Black Studies Event
In addition to attending a Black Studies Event that will be analyzed in Essay II, you must attend another Black Studies Event. The goal is to offer you ample experiences with African American realities. You must provide evidence of your attendance at the event to your TA immediately after the event. Evidence of attendance at events will not be accepted more than two weeks after the event has occurred.
2. In-Class Discussion
Offering your comments in class is a vital way of developing your analytical skills. You will be encouraged to actively participate in class so that you build your confidence and clarity in expressing yourself with others.
3. In-Class Collaboration
A significant aspect of Black Feminist pedagogy and Black Activism requires community-building. In addition to developing your analytical skills, this course will give you opportunities to strengthen your ability to build

community across identity markers. You will be assessed on your ability to listen, to demonstrate radical empathy, to acknowledge how your privilege may be shaping an interaction, and to offer honest commentary with respect and humility.

Attendance

You must ensure that your TA knows you are present and arrive on time. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late to class or leave class early, you will be marked as absent. More than two unexcused absences will result in lowering your final grade for the course.

Point Values

Essay I	Self-Reflection on In-Class Discussion	20 pts.
Essay II	Analysis of Black Studies Event	25
Essay III	Analysis of African American Artifact	30
Quizzes	Review of Readings	10
Participation		
	Attendance at Additional Black Studies Event	5
	In-Class Discussion	5
	In-Class Collaboration	5
TOTAL		100 pts.

Course Guidelines

Classroom Protocols

*You must display your name card during each class. If you do not have your card, you must make a new one. If it is not displayed, you will be counted as absent.

*No electronic devices may be used during class time. NONE!

*Students engaged in non-class activities during class time will have a reduction in their overall grade for the course.

*We will create and observe guidelines for hearty, respectful discussion.

*When asked for a response, you must respond. "I don't know," "No," and "I don't know what that means" are not acceptable responses. Appropriate responses might be—"I didn't do the reading. Would you like me to still think through a response?," "I'll give it a try, but could you clarify what you mean?" or "Could you come back to me with the next question?"

*When emailing the instructor or the Teaching Assistants, use a salutation to begin the message such as “Hello Dr. Jones,” or “Dear Beth,” or “Good Morning Khy.” “Hey” is not an appropriate salutation in professional correspondence.

For Assignments

*Students will observe the University of Texas Honor Code: The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

*Students plagiarizing papers will be reported to the Dean of Liberal Arts for academic sanctions. If you are suspected of plagiarizing, you will not receive a grade for the questionable paper.

*Late assignments will not be accepted.

*Emergencies and illness that prevent you from attending class or submitting assignments must be documented.

*Teaching Assistants will strive to grade and return your assignments within two weeks.

*Grade disputes must be initiated within seven calendar days from the receipt of the grades. After that time, disputes will not be considered.

Course Support

*The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 512-471-6259 (voice), or 512-410-6644 (video phone), or at <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>

*Sanger Learning Center: <https://ugs.utexas.edu/slc>

*University Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

*Counseling & Mental Health Center: <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>

*Student Emergency Services: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

*Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050

NOTE 1

On the Course Schedule, use the following key—

*Readings listed by **last names** refer to authors whose work can be found on **Canvas**.

*Titles in **quotation marks** indicate chapters which can be found in ***Creating Black Americans***.

NOTE 2

The course schedule is a guide to our work this semester. Readings and dates may change as we allow for spontaneous, rigorous, necessary classroom discussions.

Course Schedule

WEEK 1 FOUNDATION, PROTOCOLS, BLACK FEMINIST PEDAGOGY

Aug 30 Introduction to the Course

WEEK 2 AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURE?

Sep 4 Discuss Nell Irvin Painter's Commonwealth Club Conversation
<https://www.c-span.org/video/?190807-1/creating-black-americans>

Read: "Hard Working People;" "Epilogue"

6 View: *Ethnic Notions* In Class

WEEK 3 AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURE?

11 Read: Begley; Angier; Williams **QUIZ I**

13 Read: DuBois; Kelly; hooks; Hurston

WEEK 4 RACE AND PRIVILEGE

18 Read: McIntosh, Wilkerson

20 View: *Dear White People* Season 1, Chapter V In Class

WEEK 5 RACE AND PRIVILEGE

25 View: Excerpt from *Get Out* In Class **ESSAY I DUE**

27 Read: Lipsitz

WEEK 6 CREATING AFRICAN AMERICANS

Oct 2 Read: "Africa and Black Americans;" "Those Who Were Free" **QUIZ II**

4 View: *Africans in America: Part I, The Terrible Transformation* In Class

WEEK 7 CREATING AFRICAN AMERICANS

9 Read: "Captives Transported" **QUIZ III**

11 Read: Holloway; Perry; "A Diasporic People"

WEEK 8 CREATING AFRICAN AMERICANS

16 View: *Daughters of the Dust* In Class

18 View: *Daughters of the Dust* In Class

WEEK 9 GENDERED AND SEXUALIZED REALITIES

23 Read: Combahee River Collective; Cohen

QUIZ IV

25 View: *A Place of Rage*

WEEK 10 GENDERED AND SEXUALIZED REALITIES

30 View: Janelle Monae's "Django Jane," and "Pynk" In Class

Nov 1 Read: Gordon

WEEK 11 CLASS AND RESPECTABILITY

6 View: Scenes from *A Raisin in the Sun* In Class

ESSAY II DUE

8 Read: Brooks; Browne

WEEK 12 AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL ARTIFACTS: MUSIC

13 Guest Lecture: "The Makings of Black Music"—Dr. Charles Carson

15 Listening Party: Student Music Contributions

WEEK 13 AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL ARTIFACTS: DANCE

20 Guest Lecture: "The Makings of Black Dance"—Assoc. Prof. Charles Anderson

22 NO CLASS Thanksgiving Break

WEEK 14 THE RETURN?

27 Read: Commander; Tinsley; Hartman; Ngugi

QUIZ V

29 Guest Lecture: "The Makings of Black Art"—Mr. Phillip Townsend

WEEK 15 SUMMATION

4 Discussion of Student Essays

6 Review of the Course

ESSAY III DUE