

**The University of Texas at Austin
African and African Diaspora Studies
AFR 317D: The Politics of Black Identity – Unique #30585
Fall 2018**



Professor: Kevin O. Cokley, Ph.D.
Office: SZB 262N
Phone: 512-471-7498
E-mail: kcokley@austin.utexas.edu
Office Hours: T Th 1:00 – 2:00 pm or by appointment
Course Time: T Th 11:00 - 12:30 p.m.
Location: CMA 3.114
TA: Denzel Shabazz kingshabazz94@gmail.com

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.

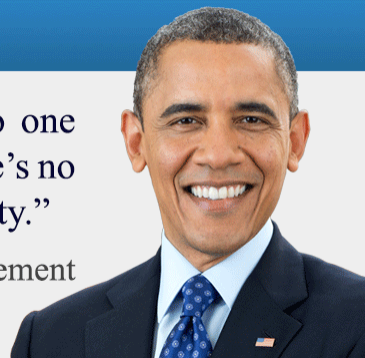
Required Texts and Readings:

1. Baker, H. (2008). *Betrayal: How Black Intellectuals have Abandoned the Ideals of the Civil Rights Era*. Columbia University.
2. Kennedy, R. (2008). *Sellout: The Politics of Racial Betrayal*. Vinate Books.
3. Toure. (2011). *Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness? What It Means to Be Black Now*. Free Press.
3. Canvas Readings

Quote of the Week

“Be confident in your blackness. There is no one way to be black. There’s no straightjacket, there’s no constraints, there's no litmus test for authenticity.”

— **President Barack Obama** at the commencement ceremony of Howard University, 5-7-16



I am black and happy to be so, but my identity is not my master. I’m my master. And I resent this civil rights leadership telling me what I should think and what issues I should support this way or that way. And that’s where, in black America, identity has become almost totalitarian... You [must] subscribe to the idea that the essence of blackness is grounded in grievance, and if you vary from that you are letting whites off the hook. And we’re gonna call you a sellout. We’re gonna call you an ‘Uncle Tom’... I was gonna have a life or I was just going to be a kind of surrogate for blackness... but you enter an exile where the group identifies you as someone who is a threat, and part of being black is despising or having contempt for people like me.

Shelby Steele

Back during slavery....there were two kinds of Negroes. There was that old house Negro and the field Negro. And the house Negro always looked out for his master. When the field Negroes got too much out of line, he held them back in check. He put 'em back on the plantation. The house Negro could afford to do that because he lived better than the field Negro. He ate better, he dressed better, and he lived in a better house. And he loved his master more than his master loved himself. But then you had some field Negroes, who lived in huts, had nothing to lose. They wore the worst kind of clothes. They ate the worst food. And they caught hell. They felt the sting of the lash. They hated their master. And today you still have house Negroes and field Negroes. I'm a field Negro. **Malcolm X**

Course Description:

While a common bond through skin color is assumed among people identified as Black, there exists a tremendous amount of diversity based on ethnicity, socio-economic status, values, political ideology, and beliefs around racial allegiance. Throughout history there has existed a tradition whereby Black individuals whose attitudes, behaviour, and politics differ from the Black majority have been labeled as Uncle Toms, negros, sellouts, and various other denigrating names. Underlying these labels is an orthodoxy of Black identity that prescribes what is, and isn't, authentic and normative Blackness. This course surveys the diversity and politics of Black identities and critically analyzes the idea that the behaviors, attitudes, and philosophies of certain Black celebrities, leaders, and intellectuals undermine or advance Black progress.

It is critically important that **all** assigned readings are completed prior to each class in order that a high-level, scholarly discussion will ensue. The nature of the topics addressed in this course is such that rote lecturing is minimized so that class discussion can take place. I expect that you will come prepared every class to engage in a focused exchange of ideas related to the various readings. I will facilitate these exchanges, making appropriate commentary as necessary.

Course Objectives: Upon completion of this course you will be able to:

1. Identify the origins and meanings of terms such as Uncle Tom, negros and sellouts.
2. Provide historical and contemporary examples of the tensions regarding Black identity politics.
3. Identify and problematize representations of Black identity including "Soul Food" and notions of "Good Hair."
4. Provide a critical analysis of the use of incendiary and pejorative labels regarding Black identity politics.

Course Requirements:

1. Student should come **PREPARED TO EVERY CLASS** having read class readings.
2. There will be **2 REACTION PAPERS** to the videos "Good Hair" and "Soul Food". The reaction papers should be 2 **full** pages, double-spaced using Times New Roman 12 pt font and will be based on your personal reaction to the video. This paper should not just be a summary of the videos. The grading criteria for the reaction paper will be as follows:

30 points	clarity, organization, and grammatically correct; proofread!
30 points	quality of personal reactions; your reactions should be supported by specific examples from the video and should be a critical analysis of the issues presented. For example, a substantive reaction might be "I think it is problematic that individuals alter the natural state of their hair" or "I do not think people should be judged based on their hairstyle".
3. There will be **8 pop quizzes**. Each quiz will consist of five multiple choice questions which will cover readings due for the day.

4. There will be **4 journals**. Each journal should be well-written, between 2-3 pages and will include your thoughts and reactions to the topics covered.
5. In the interest of contributing to research, you are expected to participate in **one research study**. If you do not want to participate in the study, you can complete a 4 page research paper.
6. There will be several prominent celebrity case studies involving Black identity politics. I will serve as the prosecutor and the class will serve as the jury. After each brief presentation of the facts the class will break up into small groups and deliberate. Each group will present its verdict supported by its critical analysis of the facts.
6. Consistent with the collectivistic orientation of Black culture, the **final exam** will be taken in small groups. Groups will be determined by the instructor.

Breakdown of Grades:

Points	Requirement
60 points	2 Reaction Papers worth 30 points each
80 points	8 Pop Quizzes worth 10 points each
40 points	4 Journals worth 10 points each
10 points	Research Participation
10 points	Class Participation
100 points	Final Exam

Points

285-300 = "A" 270-284 = "A-"
 265-269 = "B+" 255-264 = "B" 240-254 = "B-"
 234-239 = "C+" 225-233 = "C" 210-224 = "C-"
 204-209 = "D+" 195-203 = "D" 180-194 = "D-"

Do NOT ask me for an extra point if you are borderline (e.g., 239, 269) to boost your grade.

Attendance & Participation: This will be strictly enforced!

You are expected to attend and be prepared for every class period. Class discussion is usually based on the readings in the course. Therefore, you are expected to be an INFORMED participant in class discussion. You are allowed three absences (excused or unexcused) for the course. More than 3 absences will affect your final grade:

Fourth Absence: Loss of one letter grade (The best grade you can make in the course is a "B")

Fifth Absence: Loss of two letter grades (The best grade you can make in the course is a "C")

Sixth Unexcused Absence: Loss of three letter grades (The best grade you can make in the course is a "D")

Seventh Unexcused Absence: Automatic grade of "F"

If you are absent on the day of a pop quiz, you will be allowed one opportunity (no documentation needed) to make up the pop quiz. If you are absent more than once, you will

receive a 0 for each quiz (unless you have an excused absence from a doctor or some other authority, or unless you can document circumstances related to a personal tragedy).

Religious Holidays:

Religious holy days sometimes conflict with class and examination schedules. If you miss an examination, work assignment, or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day you will be given an opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence. It is the policy of The University of Texas at Austin that you must notify each of your instructors at least fourteen days prior to the classes scheduled on dates you will be absent to observe a religious holy day.

Policies

Carrying of Handguns

Students in this class should be aware of the following university policies:

- Individuals who hold a license to carry are eligible to carry a concealed handgun on campus, including in most outdoor areas, buildings and spaces that are accessible to the public, and in classrooms.
- It is the responsibility of concealed-carry license holders to carry their handguns on or about their person at all times while on campus. Open carry is NOT permitted, meaning that a license holder may not carry a partially or wholly visible handgun on campus premises or on any university driveway, street, sidewalk or walkway, parking lot, parking garage, or other parking area.

Please also review the following information:

- Students in this class who hold a license to carry are asked to review the university policies regarding campus carry:
 - [Overview](https://utexas.app.box.com/v/cc-info-sheet-students) - <https://utexas.app.box.com/v/cc-info-sheet-students>
 - [Full Policy](https://www.policies.utexas.edu/policies/campus-concealed-carry) - <https://www.policies.utexas.edu/policies/campus-concealed-carry>
- The instructor requests that students inform him if they intend to carry a handgun during course meetings. This information is requested because knowing which, if any, students are carrying handguns will help the instructor to effectively coordinate response to emergencies or threats to student safety. Disclosing this information is voluntary and at the discretion of the student.
- Per his right, the instructor prohibits carrying of handguns in his personal office (i.e., SZB 538D). Note that this information will also be conveyed to all students verbally during the first week of class. This written notice is intended to reinforce the verbal notification, and is not a “legally effective” means of notification in its own right.

UT 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.

Academic Integrity

You and other students are expected to "maintain absolute integrity and a high standard of individual honor in scholastic work" undertaken at the University ([Sec. 11-801](#), *Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities*). This is a very basic expectation that is further reinforced by the University's [Honor Code](#). At a minimum, you should complete any assignments, exams, and other scholastic endeavors with the utmost honesty, which requires you to: (1) acknowledge the contributions of other sources to your scholastic efforts; (2) complete your assignments independently unless expressly authorized to seek or obtain assistance in preparing them; (3) follow instructions for assignments and exams, (4) observe the standards of your academic discipline and (5) avoid engaging in any form of academic dishonesty on behalf of yourself or another student.

Students found guilty of academic dishonesty (including all forms of cheating) will receive a grade of 0 (note the academic dishonesty policy refers to all work and tests in the course, not just exams). For further information about academic dishonesty, please visit:

http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

Canvas:

This course uses Canvas, a Web-based course management system in which a password-protected site is created for each course. The readings that do not come out of the texts will be posted on Canvas. You will be responsible for checking the Canvas course site regularly for class work and announcements. As with all computer systems, there are occasional scheduled downtimes as well as unanticipated disruptions. Notification of these disruptions will be posted on the Canvas login page. Scheduled downtimes are not an excuse for late work. However, if there is an unscheduled downtime for a significant period of time, I will make an adjustment if it occurs close to the due date. Canvas is available at <http://courses.utexas.edu>. Support is provided by the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400 Monday through Friday 8 am to 6 pm, so plan accordingly.

University Email Notification Policy:

All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html>. In this course e-mail will be used as a means of communication with students. You will be responsible for checking your e-mail regularly for class work and announcements.

Disabilities:

Students with disabilities who require special accommodations need to get a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students (471-6259 voice or 471-4641) TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). This letter should be presented to the instructor in each course at the beginning of the semester and accommodations needed should be discussed at that time. Five business days before an exam the student should remind the instructor of any testing accommodations that will be needed. See website below for more information:

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/providing.php>

TOPICAL CLASS SYLLABUS AND READINGS (*= textbook **= Canvas readings)

Week 1 (8/30/18) Thursday

Introduction

“Uncle Tom”

ESPN Analyst Jalen Rose Documentary “The Fab Five”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLJHCvsSiMs>

Grant Hill’s Response to Jalen Rose

<https://thequad.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/03/16/grant-hills-response-to-jalen-rose/>

“Five ways to fix our community”

Don Lemon Agrees with Bill O’Reilly

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4z8EA_4YNvw

Week 2 (9/04/18) Tuesday

Black Diversity

Reading #1: Black Diversity in Metropolitan America**

Reading #2: A Diverse and Divided Black Community**

Reading #3: Study Shows U.S. Blacks Trailing**

(9/06/18) Thursday

Black Diversity

Reading #4: Toure “Tour(e)ing Blackness” - Foreword*

Reading #5: Toure “40 Million Ways To Be Black”**

Reading #6: Toure “Keep It Real Is a Prison”**

Week 3 (9/11/18) Tuesday

Black Diversity

Video: Two Nations of Black America

(9/13/18) Thursday **Journal #1 Due**

Video: 500 Years Later

Identity

Education
Reparations

Week 4 (9/18/18) Tuesday

Uncle Toms, Negroes and Sellouts

Reading #7: Randall Kennedy “Preface”, Ch. 1 “Who Is Black?”*

(9/20/18) Thursday

Uncle Toms, Negroes and Sellouts

Reading #8: Randall Kennedy Ch. 2 “The Idea of the Sellout in Black American History”*

Week 5 (9/25/18) Tuesday

Uncle Toms, Negroes and Sellouts

Reading #9: Randall Kennedy Ch. 3 “The Idea of the Sellout in Contemporary Black America”*

(9/27/18) Thursday

Uncle Toms, Negroes and Sellouts

Reading #10: Randall Kennedy Ch. 4 “The Case of Clarence Thomas”*
p. 87-117

Week 6 (10/02/18) Tuesday **Journal #2 Due**

Uncle Toms, Negroes and Sellouts

Reading #11: Randall Kennedy Ch. 5 “Passing as Selling Out”*
p. 118-143

(10/04/18) Thursday

Uncle Toms, Negroes and Sellouts

Reading #12: Randall Kennedy “Epilogue”*

Week 7 (10/09/18) Tuesday

Moral Dilemmas of Black Identity Politics – Case Studies

Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill – Alleged Sexual Harassment

Mike Tyson and Desiree Washington – Alleged Rape

O.J. Simpson and Nicole Simpson – Alleged Murder

R. Kelly and Minor – Alleged Child Pornography

Chris Brown and Rihanna – Physical Abuse

(10/11/18) Thursday

BEEF: What Responsibility Do Black Artists Have? – Case Studies

Spike Lee vs. Tyler Perry

Angela Bassett vs. Halle Berry

Aaron McGruder vs. BET

Week 8 (10/16/18) Tuesday **Journal #3 Due**

Black on Black Intellectual Crime in Prime Time (Debates on Obama)

Cornel West and Tavis Smiley vs. Al Sharpton and President Obama

Steve Harvey vs. Cornel West and Tavis Smiley

(10/18/18) Thursday

Black on Black Intellectual Crime in Prime Time (Debates on Obama and Trump)

Michael Eric Dyson vs. Cornel West

<https://newrepublic.com/article/121550/cornel-wests-rise-fall-our-most-exciting-black-scholar-ghost>

Paris Dennard vs. Keith Boykin (Joseph Pinion and Sara Sidner)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzKFR5aWTKo>

Week 9 (10/23/18) Tuesday

Barack Obama

Reading #13: Ron Walters “Barack Obama and the Politics of Blackness”**

(10/25/18) Thursday

The Politics of Black Hair

Reading #14: Cynthia Robinson “Hair as Race: Why ‘Good Hair’ May Be Bad for Black Females

Week 10 (10/30/18) Tuesday

The Politics of Black Hair

Video: Chris Rock Documentary “Good Hair”

(11/01/18) Thursday **Black Hair Reaction Paper Due**

The Politics of Black Hair

Video: Chris Rock Documentary “Good Hair”

Week 11 (11/06/18) Tuesday **Research Participation Due**

Black Intellectual Beef: Betrayal

Reading #15: Houston Baker “After Civil Rights: The Rise of Black Public Intellectuals”

(11/08/18) Thursday

Black Intellectual Beef: Betrayal

Reading #16: Houston Baker “Have Mask, Will Travel: Centrists from the Ivy League”

Week 12 (11/13/18) Tuesday 7

Black Intellectual Beef: Betrayal

Reading #17: Houston Baker “A Capital Fellow From Hoover: Shelby Steele”

(11/15/18) Thursday **Journal #4 Due**

Black Intellectual Beef: Betrayal

Reading #18: Houston Baker “Reflections of a First Amendment Trickster: Stephen Carter”*

Week 13 (11/20/18) Tuesday

Reading #19: Houston Baker “Man Without Connection: John McWhorter”*

(11/22/18) Thursday

Thanksgiving Break

Week 14 (11/27/18) Tuesday

Soul Food and Black Cultural Identity

Reading #20: Laretta Henderson “Ebony Jr! and ‘Soul Food’: The Construction of Middle Class African American Identity through the use of Traditional Southern Foodways”

(11/29/18) Thursday **Soul Food Reaction Paper Due**

Soul Food and Black Cultural Identity

Video: Soul Food Junkies

Week 14 (12/04/18) Tuesday

Wrap-Up. Course Evaluations.

(12/06/18) Thursday **Final Exam**