

Malcolm X

Professor Nadeen Kharputly (nkharputly@wlu.edu)

Office hours: Mondays 1:30-3:30 and Fridays 11:30-1:30 & by appt (schedule through Canvas)

Weekly class Zoom meeting: Wednesdays 11:30-12:35

Course description

Malcolm X was one of the most significant civil and human rights activists in the world, and yet few among us in the United States remember or acknowledge the fullest scope of his legacy. This class will offer an in-depth study of his literary, cultural, political, and religious impact, from his encounters with his contemporaries (Martin Luther King Jr., James Baldwin, Muhammad Ali, John Lewis, Yuri Kochiyama) to his effect on hip hop culture. Texts will include the *Autobiography of Malcom X*, speeches by Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr., James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, and other select primary and secondary sources.

An important note

It is important for us to approach a variety of issues from a range of perspectives and to challenge any one way of understanding and moving through the world. Reading and engaging with the materials in this course is only the first step towards becoming active, engaged, and empathetic citizens of the world. Our conversations will thus be grounded in critical analyses of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, politics, and more. Many of us are not well versed in having such conversations, as these topics are often avoided for the sake of "politeness." However, it is crucial that we all learn to become fluent in the practice of holding space for difficult conversations so that we are better equipped to address the injustices that persist in our societies.

Objectives and learning outcomes

Students majoring in English will learn how to

- write clear, persuasive analytical essays driven by arguments about texts;
- read closely, recognizing subtle and complex differences in language use;
- seek out further knowledge about literary works, authors, and/or contexts, and document research appropriately, adhering to the highest standards of intellectual honesty;
- derive pleasure and edification from a broad range of texts;
- in optional creative writing courses, create literary texts and revise them to convey greater power and control.

Assignments

- Two essays (#1 1500 words min. + #2 2000 words min.)
- Three self-assessments
- Journal posts (200 words minimum per post)
- Final exam

Required texts

The Autobiography of Malcolm X, as told to Alex Haley (1965)

James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (1963)

All other texts are available through Canvas.

Grading policy

Rather than using a traditional grade breakdown (where each component of the class is worth a certain percentage of the overall grade), I'm relying on the following guidelines in order to provide more flexibility for you during these extraordinary circumstances.

An A will be given to students who demonstrate the following:

- Meet the requirements for all assignments in this class. Basically, show me that you have a) understood the purpose of the assignments (this includes the essays, Canvas posts and/or exercises, self-assessments, and so on), b) completed them in a timely manner, in good faith, and with your best efforts, c) with careful attention to the particular requirements of each assignment and to the key concepts and specific examples we cover in class.
- Demonstrate a significant improvement in your progress over time with the end result of producing high quality analysis, writing, and engagement & participation.
- Demonstrate regular, thoughtful engagement with the material and with our class community - this means contributing meaningfully to our conversations and community on Zoom and Canvas, making specific and knowledgeable references to our class material in your writing and discussion, acknowledging and working with feedback you receive on your assignments (i.e., are you revising your writing and analysis specifically with the feedback in mind; if not, do you articulate a good reason for not doing so?). If struggling to participate in class, communicate with me early and regularly in order to draw up and commit to a plan for improvement.
- Treat our class space with seriousness and respect by demonstrating a conscientious and appreciative approach towards our subject matter, our materials (including assignments), and most importantly, your classmates and professor.

Meet most of these requirements and you'll get a B, do the bare minimum and you'll get a C, and so on. Serious breaches of trust and community will result in a failing grade.

Letter grades will be provided only for a) your essays b) midterm grade (if you are eligible as a first year student and/or are on probation) and c) final class grade. I will provide qualitative feedback on your midsemester self-assessment, which will give you the opportunity to evaluate your progress, articulate your standing in the class to me, and make any necessary changes for improvement moving forward. I will also provide regular feedback on your Canvas posts.

Class policies

While this syllabus lays out everything you need to know for this class, please understand that our present circumstances demand a certain level of flexibility. If any changes to the class arise, I will let know you ASAP. This policy applies to you as well: there are certain expectations that you need to meet for this class, but your situation may require flexibility from me. Therefore please maintain communication with me should any changes or emergencies arise in your situation and we can work together to address them. Please check your W&L e-mail at least once a day to keep up to date with any possible changes to our schedule. Expect responses to your e-mails within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours over the weekend.

Zoom policy

Please develop a setup that works best for you for our meetings: you can use virtual backgrounds or turn off your camera if a genuine need arises. Whether your camera is on or off, I expect you to stay engaged and be ready to respond to any question I pose to the class. Do stay on mute until it is your turn to speak in order to minimize background noise. Keep distractions (such as phones) out of sight in order to minimize distractions. Pet sightings are highly encouraged.

Accommodations

Students requesting accommodation will need to provide appropriate documentation of: (1) a disability, which is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; and (2) a need for accommodation, by virtue of the specific functional limitations

of the disability, to have equal access to educational opportunities. It is the responsibility of a student with a physical or mental disability who may require any type of accommodation to make the accommodation request in a timely manner. In order to ensure sufficient time for the eligibility and accommodation decision process and to make arrangements for appropriate accommodations, a student should contact the Title IX Coordinator and Director of Disability Resources, Elrod Commons 212, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia 24450, (540) 458-4055 and submit the documents required for consideration of disability accommodations during the first month of the fall or winter academic terms. Requests submitted after the first month of either of those academic terms, or requests submitted with incomplete documentation (including insufficient testing data), could result in a delay of consideration and action on the request until the the following academic term. The student will need to complete a "Request for Accommodation of Disability" form, obtain a copy of the most recent medical or cognitive testing documentation, and schedule an interview with the designated administrator.

Honor system and plagiarism

Students will be held to the standards of the W&L Honor System. The inclusion of your name on all assignments indicates that you have understood and abided by the pledge, whether you write the pledge or not. Plagiarism is a serious offense. It is imperative that you review the university's statement on plagiarism before turning in any assignments: <https://libguides.wlu.edu/plagiarism> and <https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/citation-documentation-and-plagiarism>

Plagiarism consists of but is not limited to the following: presenting another person's ideas or language as if they were your own, copying (words AND ideas) from the Internet, and failure to acknowledge and properly cite the sources of the language and/or ideas presented. Re-using language from a paper you have previously written for another class is unacceptable. If you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, please check in with me ahead of time. It is your responsibility to be aware. You may find this plagiarism test useful: <https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/test.html>. Another test you can take is to e-mail me a photograph of your pet(s) (or a random animal) so that I know you've read this syllabus carefully.

Writing resources

The Writing Center on campus is not a tool for remedial purposes, but a crucial resource for writers across every skill and background. Good writing relies on feedback from other perspectives; I encourage you to visit the Center frequently in order to solicit feedback and improve your writing. **The Writing Center will be operating entirely online due to the pandemic.** <https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/writing-center>

The Writing Program website (<http://www.wlu.edu/writing-program>) offers a good list of resources for your essays. Use right hand side menu/tabs for:

Resources: <https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/resources>

Specific Types of Writing: <https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/specific-types-of-writing>

Writing in Different Disciplines: <https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/writing-in-different-disciplines>

International Students: <https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/international-students>

Schedule	Topic	Reading	Assignment
Week 1 Jan 20-22	Introduction	None	Intro video on Flipgrid
Week 2 Jan 25-29	Malcolm's early life	Autobiography of Malcolm X (chapters 1-5, including Introduction (Foreword optional))	Initial self-assessment due Fri
Week 3 Feb 1-5	Detroit Red	Autobiography (chapters 6-10)	Journal post due Fri
Week 4 Feb 8-12	Minister Malcolm and the Nation of Islam	Autobiography (chapters 11-16)	Journal post due Fri
Week 5 Feb 15-19	El Hajj Malik El Shabbaz	Autobiography (chapter 17-end [including epilogue])	Essay 1 due Fri
Week 6 Feb 22-26	The orator	Malcolm's speeches: "Eulogy for Ronald Stokes," "Message to the Grassroots," & "The Ballot or the Bullet"	Midsemester self-assessment due Fri
Week 7 Mar 1-5	No class	No class	No class
Week 8 Mar 8-12	Malcolm and Martin	Martin Luther King Jr.'s speeches: "Letter from Birmingham Jail," "Beyond Vietnam: A Time To Break Silence," & "The Other America"	Journal post due Fri
Week 9 Mar 15-19	James Baldwin's perspective	James Baldwin, <i>The Fire Next Time</i> and "Malcolm and Martin" in <i>Esquire</i>	Essay 2 due
Week 10 Mar 22-26	Malcolm X and Hip Hop culture	Spotify playlist, <i>Return of the Mecca</i> exhibit	Journal post due Fri
Week 11 Mar 29-April 2	Other interlocutors and influences	From the Black Panther party to Beyoncé: contemporary influences	Journal post due Fri
Week 12 April 5-9	Conclusion	None	Final exam and final self-assessment due 4/16