

Comparative Ethnic Studies 131
Introduction to Black Studies
Days and Time: MWF 1310-1400
Room: TODD 334
Instructor: Frank King
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Office: Avery 359

Hours: Tu & Th 10:00am-12:00pm or by appt.

Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past
George Orwell

History is a clock that people use to tell their political and cultural time of day. It is also a compass that people use to find themselves on the map of human geography. History tells a people where they've been and what they have been, where they are and what they are. Most important history tells a people where they still must go and what they still must be. The relationship of history to a people is the same as the relationship between a mother and her child

John Henrik Clarke

History is the version of past events that people have decided to agree upon
Napoleon Bonaparte

History shouldn't be a mystery/ Our story's real history/ Not His Story
Chuck D

All art is political
Amiri Baraka

Overview

This class will discuss numerous issues concerning the experiences of people of African descent in America. The Black American experience spans over 400 years, from European expansion to the trans-Atlantic slave trade to the modern myth of a post-racial society. Racism has been, and still is, an essential part of America's political, social, and economic structure. To decipher any solutions to our systemic racial problems, intersections of race, class, gender, religion, and sexuality must be assessed. To fully understand this phenomenon, we must analyze the history of racial issues from the inception of what we call America to the present. This class will essentially be a look at the history of the present.

In this class we will look at alternative rhetorics that may go against everything that we have been convinced as gospel during our entire academic experiences. I only ask that you come to class with an open mind, look at the quotes at the beginning of the syllabus, and ask questions.

Required Texts

You will not have any materials to purchase for this class. The majority of the readings will be available via Angel. You will, however, be required to print out the materials as laptops and other mobile devices will not be permitted.

In addition, there will be other materials that will supplement course readings. These readings will be delivered to you in class or via email. **A Working WSU Email is required for this class.**

Course Requirements

Essential Terms:

It is understandable that many students will not know proper terminologies in discussing issues that may seem controversial and uncomfortable. Terms such as *Race* can be seen as pejorative. The only race is the *Human Race*. Race is not biological, but a social construct. Therefore statements like “The black race,” “The white race,” “The Asian race,” will not be used.

Also using the term “Colored” is not acceptable; it has been historically used to distinguish groups as inferior based on social AND biological determinants. The proper terminology is *People of Color* (as an overall term), or Black, Latino, Asian-American, White, Native American, etc.

This semester we will discuss some controversial issues; no issue is as controversial as the N-Word. Because it is the most heated word in the English language, for this class your instructor will be the only one permitted to say it.

In order for this class to be successful we must understand that the system of White supremacy is the problem and we need to address the system. There is no singular “White Man” causing problems, nor should there be any chastising of your fellow classmates. This class will not be about bashing White people. We are ALL victims of White supremacist systems, and this class will discuss how.

Attendance

Attendance will not be taken for this class, so **DO NOT** contact me if you miss any classes (unless you missed multiple days with a legitimate excuse). However, it is essential that you attend class and be active participants. You will be completely responsible to make up assignments (if permitted), notes, readings, etc. In other words, **DO NOT ASK ME WHAT YOU MISSED.**

If you are more than 10 minutes late, please do not come to class. It will cause a disruption.

Participation

In order for this class to be productive you will need to come to class every day prepared to discuss the material. This requires more than simply doing the reading, but arriving at class ready to discuss the issues for that day. Participating in class not only consists of

talking, but also includes listening so please do not talk while others are speaking, interacting with your peers, and contributing to our classroom energy (body language, being engaged – no newspapers, no laptops, and **NO CELL PHONES**). If there is a lack of participation I will “volunteer” individuals to discuss the materials for that day.

Cell Phone Policy

Don't do it, plain and simple. I will ask you nicely to put your cell phones away, but if this becomes a constant, I will create extra (and very extensive) assignments for the entire class.

Classroom Etiquette

Along with cell phones and general consideration for your instructor and fellow classmates, please be respectful of all questions and comments during class. By analyzing alternative rhetorics, we will be discussing some controversial topics that will spark heated debates. Please respect the opinions of others, especially those you disagree with.

Contacting Instructor

Email is the best way to contact me. I will respond to emails within 24 hours. Since I will have four courses with over 100 students this semester, it is important that you follow these guidelines for email communication:

IN THE SUBJECT LINE PUT YOUR NAME, COURSE, AND TIME!

Failure to do so will result in a late response from me.

Persons with Disabilities

The Department of Comparative Ethnic Studies supports members of our community who request disability accommodations. Please notify me during the first two (2) weeks of class for any requirements needed for the course. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please visit the Disability Resource Center (DRC). All accommodations **MUST** be approved through the DRC (Washington Building, Room 217). Please stop by or call 509-335-3417 to make an appointment with a disability specialist. Late notification may result in the request being unavailable.

Academic Integrity

I encourage you to work with classmates on assignments. However, each student must turn in original work. No copying will be accepted. Students who violate WSU's Standards of Conduct for Students will receive an F as a final grade in this course, will not have the option to withdraw from the course and will be reported to the Office Student Standards and Accountability. Cheating is defined in the Standards for Student Conduct WAC 504-26-010 (3). It is strongly suggested that you read and understand these definitions.

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM AND SAFETY

WSU has made an emergency notification system available for faculty, students and staff. Please register at **myWSU** with emergency contact information (cell, email, text, etc). You may have been prompted to complete emergency contact information when

registering for classes.

Please refer to the University emergency management website: <http://oem.wsu.edu/emergencies> as well WSU ALERT <http://alert.wsu.edu> for information on WSU's communication resources WSU will use to provide warning and notification for emergencies. The entire WSU safety plan can be found at <http://safetyplan.wsu.edu>.

Washington State University is committed to enhancing the safety of the students, faculty, staff, and visitors. It is highly recommended that you review the Campus Safety Plan (<http://safetyplan.wsu.edu/>) and visit the Office of Emergency Management web site (<http://oem.wsu.edu/>) for a comprehensive listing of university policies, procedures, statistics, and information related to campus safety, emergency management, and the health and welfare of the campus community.

Assignments

Weekly Write-Ups

This will be given to you on a weekly basis and will entail anything from a write-up of the week's readings or an analysis of a specific issue. I will give the assignment on Monday and it will be due Friday of that week.

Points for Each Write-Up 25pts

Quizzes

Quizzes will be given randomly and they will not be made up. This is to see if you are doing the required readings and to ensure you are attending class.

Points for Each Quiz 10 pts.

In-Class Write-Up

Assignments will be given randomly and they will not be made up. Therefore it is crucial to attend class to ensure you do not miss any of the in-class quizzes or assignments.

Points for Each Write-Up 10 pts.

Mid Term

This will be a test of any and all material that we have discussed since the beginning of the semester. It will compose of multiple short answer questions.

Total Points 100pts.

Music Journal

As the semester progresses we will discuss music, which is the most recognizable contribution Blacks are given credit for. The most current genre of music is Hip Hop. During Spring Break you will analyze 10 Hip Hop songs that you listen to. You will also watch the documentary *Before the Music Dies* to look deeper into the commodification of popular music.

Total Points 100pts.

Final

The final will be the same as the midterm, but will consist of 6 questions pertaining to

any and all material we've covered throughout the semester. You will be required to answer any 4 of the questions in essay form.

Total Points 200pts.

Determining your grade

To figure out your grade any time during the semester, divide the points you have by the total points for the class. This way you can know what your grade is without asking me on a weekly basis.

Weekly Write-Up 25Pts Each

Quizzes/ In-Class Write-Up 10Pts Each

Music Journal 100Pts

Midterm 200Pts

Final Paper 400Pts

Late Paper Policy

Quizzes and In-Class Write-Ups will not be made up. However, there will be extra credit assignments given throughout the semester.

Music Journal must be turned in on or before the specified due date or you will not receive full credit.

You must have a valid excuse for missing the Midterm to be able to schedule a make-up day. Due to scheduling restraints, you cannot make up the Final.

Weekly Write-Ups must be completed on the specified due date to receive full credit.

Course Reading Schedule

PLEASE NOTE: READING LIST AND SCHEDULE ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Please read the materials by the specified date:

Week 1 Jan 13-17

Reading: "The Racial Contract" and Begin Reading: *Things Fall Apart**

Mon: Intro, Syllabus Discussion.

Wed: Discussion: Race and Racism in America

Fri: Discussion: "The Racial Contract"

Week 2 Jan 20-24

Mon: MLK Day: No Class

Wed: Lecture: Pre-Colonial Africa

Fri: Discussion: *Things Fall Apart*

Begin Reading: "Columbus, Indians, and Human Progress"

Week 3 Jan 27-31

Mon: Lecture: Pre-Colonial Africa, Video: *Pyramid*

Wed: Discussion/Lecture: "Columbus, Indians, and Human Progress"

Fri: Lecture: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

Begin Reading: "Slavery Unwilling To Die"

Week 4 Feb 3-7

Mon: Video: *Sankofa*

Wed: Continue *Sankofa*
Fri: Discussion “Slavery Unwilling to Die”
Begin Reading: “Spectacle of the Other”

Week 5 Feb 10-14
Mon: Lecture: Slavery, Race, and Sex
Wed: Discussion Slavery, Race, and Sex
Fri: Discussion “Spectacle of the Other”

Week 6 Feb 17-21
Mon: Presidents Day: No Class
Wed: Midterm Review
Fri: Midterm

Week 7 Feb 24-28
Begin Reading: *Are Prisons Obsolete?** and “The New Jim Crow”
Mon: Video: *Black History: Lost, Stolen, or Strayed*
Wed: Continue: *Black History: Lost Stolen, or Strayed*
Fri: Minstrel Shows: Past and Present

Week 8 Mar 2-7
Mon: Lecture: Prison Industrial Complex: Then and Now
Wed: Lecture: Prison Industrial Complex: Then and Now/Racial Hoaxes
Fri: Discussion: “New Jim Crow” and *Are Prisons Obsolete?*

Begin Reading: “Fear of a Queer Soul Man” and “Prisons for Our Bodies, Closets for Our Minds” Due Monday, March 10!!!

Week 9 Mar 10-14
Mon: Discussion of Black Queer Identity: “Fear of a Queer Soul Man” and “Prisons for Our Bodies, Closets for Our Minds”
Wed: Video: *Pariah*
Fri: Continue: *Pariah*

Week 10 Mar 17-21
Spring Break

Week 11 Mar 24-28
Mon: Black Musical Progression
Wed: Black Musical Progression/Black Power/Black Arts Movements
Fri: Black Power/Black Arts Movements

Readings: “Old White Men (or, Who Owns Hip Hop)” and “Why White Kids Love Hip Hop”

Week 12 Mar 31-Apr 4
Mon: Hip Hop
Wed: Hip Hop

Fri: Discussion: “Old White Men (or, Who Owns Hip Hop)” and “Why White Kids Love Hip Hop”

Reading: “Urban Inspirational Metaphysics” and “Love Feminism but Where’s My Hip Hop?”

Week 13 Apr 7-11

Mon: Video: *Slam*

Wed: Continue: *Slam*

Fri: Discussion: Slam and “Urban Inspirational Metaphysics”

Week 14 Apr 21-25

Mon: Obama and the post-racial myth

Wed: Obama and the post-racial myth

Fri: Obama and the post-racial myth

Week 15 Apr 28-May 2

Dead Week: TBD

Week 16 May 5-9

Finals Week: TBD

***Indicates readings NOT to be printed out.**