

SYLLABUS**AAST/AMS 201 Introduction to African American Studies**

Dr. Lowell K. Davis

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Hours: MW, 8 a.m. – 9a.m.; TR, 12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. or by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Tracey Gholston

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Introduction:

The African-American experience spans four hundred years, from the initial settlement of the American continent by Europeans and the establishment of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and down through the present day. Throughout their sufferings and ordeals, the people of African descent who were brought involuntarily to this country found the courage and creativity to "make themselves." They constructed their own unique rituals, traditions and symbols; a distinct spirituality, music, art, dance and folklore; a rich cultural heritage, kinship and community; and a complex body of political and social ideas about the contradictory nature of American democracy and the position of black people within it. In effect, black Americans made their own history, although not always in the manner in which they chose, because they were encumbered by the constraints of institutional racism and white privilege.

This introductory course in the African-American experience is largely constructed around the voices and language used by black people themselves. The course is organized chronologically, with an emphasis on the ideas of black social thought, political protest and efforts to initiate social change. About one half of the course covers the historical foundations and background to the modern black experience, from the struggle against slavery to the Harlem Renaissance. The second half of the course focuses on the past seventy years, from the Great Depression to the twenty-first century.

During our course, we will talk about a wide spectrum of African-American leaders, intellectuals, organizations and institutions. Some have focused their energies primarily in finding ways for the black community to survive discrimination and oppression. Through the development of their unique cultural and social traditions, and the establishment of African-American organizations, black people have managed to sustain themselves in the face of almost constant adversity. Other African-Americans have advocated strategies of collective political change, challenging the barriers of inequality in white America. Yet, still others have resorted to more radical means, from the slave rebellions of the nineteenth century to the ghetto uprisings of the late twentieth century, to improve the conditions of the black people. Despite these differences, what brings together nearly all representatives of the black experience are the common efforts to achieve the same goals: the elimination of racism, the realization of democratic rights and

greater social fairness within a racially pluralistic society, and achievement of cultural integrity of the black community.

Through the course lectures, required readings and discussions, hopefully students will acquire a fuller understanding about the historical development and social construction of black America: what African Americans have thought about themselves and the larger society, how they have evolved as a community with a distinct culture from slavery to the twenty-first century, and where they may be going as a people.

Required Texts:

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Literature/Douglass/Autobiography/>

W. E. B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1994)

<http://www.bartleby.com/114>

Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*. (Harper Collins, 1984)

Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, eds., *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: Voices of Resistance, Reform and Renewal: An African-American Anthology* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

Juan Williams, *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965* (New York: Penguin, 1988).

Various Readings, designated with **(CR)** accessed through links in syllabus and under "Course Readings" **(CR)** on blackboard.

Course Requirements & Grade Distribution

Surprise Assessments (30%); Midterm (20%); Final Exam (25%); Active/Engaged Participation and Attendance (25%)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING POLICY:

Grades will be calculated on scale as follows:

| | |
|---|--------|
| A | 100-90 |
| B | 89-80 |
| C | 79-70 |
| D | 69-60 |
| F | 59-50 |

Pluses and minuses will be awarded accordingly.

Midterm examination (20%): will include objective questions, short answers and short essays.

Final examination (25%): All students must take the final examination for the course. The final exam will be comprehensive, covering the totality of information presented from readings, lectures, discussions, etc., and will consist of short essays. All students must bring their own pencils or pens to class on examination day. Students who fail to show up for the final examination, or students who arrive late and/or have no valid excuse, will not be given an opportunity to take a make-up test.

Active/Engaged Participation and Attendance (25%): This course is designed in a combination lecture/seminar fashion, thus class discussion and participation are paramount to both the success of this course and every student. This course has a significant reading load; students must read assignments **before** they come to class. Consideration will also be given for thoughtful and pertinent questions and comments during discussion periods. Keep in mind that there is no such thing as a “dumb question”: you do not have to have all the answers already to make a meaningful contribution to class discussion. (You should, however, make sure that your questions reflect your reading of assigned materials and attendance in class). Participation includes actively participating in class discussions and all class activities (inside and outside the classroom), and periodic in-class writing or group project assignments. Poor attendance, irresponsiveness, disruption, and detached/unengaged attendance will severely affect student grades. We welcome differences of opinion and lively debate about ideas, as long as they are presented in a respectful and thoughtful manner.

To pass this course, students must complete ALL assignments. Missing one assignment, even if its weight is minimal, will result in a failing grade—even if you have an “A” average.

Incompletes

Incompletes will be given at my discretion, and then only in an extreme emergency of which you have contacted me prior to the end of the course.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance & preparation: You are responsible for completing all the assigned reading before class, preparing assigned discussion questions, and bringing your book to every class. In fact, completing the reading is such a significant part of this course that students can lose points when they come to class unprepared. If a student is called upon and demonstrates s/he has not read the texts for that day, that student will have one point deducted from her/his final course point total. If this situation occurs repeatedly, that student will be dropped from this course.

Because class discussion is central to the success of this course, attendance significantly affects a student’s grade. Thus, students are allowed only **three (3)** absences (including “legitimate” or “excused”). Your fourth absence will result in lowering your final grade by one half grade. For example, a grade of “A” will be automatically lowered to a grade of “A-.” Upon your fifth absence, you will be dropped from this course. **Do not expect to pass the course if you miss more than four sessions.** It is your responsibility to get notes from one or more classmates for any classes you miss. Excessive tardiness and/or early departures will negatively affect students’ grades as well.

In addition to the textbook, it is strongly suggested students bring the following materials to class: a pocket dictionary and thesaurus; and a folder to keep all papers and any handouts from class.

Outside Class Activities:

There will be class activities scheduled either off campus or outside the normal course day and time. While these are volunteer activities, it is strongly suggested students make every effort to attend. Students will be required to see Dr. Cornel West.

Extra Credit: There **may** be opportunities for extra credit by attending designated lectures and/or writing a one complete page (single-spaced) response. These responses must be a thoughtful, reflective response, NOT A SUMMARY of the event. These papers are due the class period immediately following the lecture. As they arise, I will announce what lectures are extra credit opportunities. For each extra credit assignment, student final grades will increase 1 to 5 points. Students are allowed up to five extra credit assignments.

Late work: All work is due at the date and time specified on the syllabus. Missed exams may be made up only in cases of a documented emergency; in that event, contact me as soon as possible to reschedule. (For religious holidays or documented participation in university-sponsored activities, you must arrange to take exams or turn in papers *before* the due date.)

Academic Integrity: All students are expected to read and understand the specific provisions of the Student Code of Conduct and Academic Honor Code (<http://www.sa.ua.edu/campusactivities/Handbook9.htm#Codes>).

Violations of academic integrity include but are not limited to

- **Plagiarism:** representing the words, data, works, ideas, computer program or output, or anything not generated in an authorized fashion, as one's own. Students are responsible for knowing the rules governing the use of another's work or materials and for acknowledging and documenting the source appropriately. This course requires outside research you must cite them in MLA or APA documentation style.
- Using unauthorized notes or assistance on examinations.
- Submitting the same work for more than one course without the express permission of both instructors.

Penalties for academic dishonesty may include suspension or expulsion from the university and/or failure of the course.

Special needs: Students who require accommodations or services related to a disability must be registered with the Office of Disability Services (ods.ua.edu) who will assist you in completing the process for a formal request for accommodations. Please contact me as early as possible in the semester in order to ensure that any necessary accommodations can be made in an appropriate and timely manner.

Electronic Devices: Cell phones, ipods/mp3 players, and other electronic communications devices will be turned off or on silent during class time. Do not open or use laptops during class. If you do not adhere to this policy, you may be asked to leave the class for the remainder of the day.

Questions? Concerns? Suggestions? Please feel free to contact Dr. Davis during office hours or via email if you have questions, need help, or have suggestions about how to improve the learning environment of the class.

Because some subjects we discuss may be controversial to some students, all remarks made in class must be based solely on fact. Personal opinion and theological beliefs should not be brought into class discussions unless they are specifically requested. Please be aware some students may find some course materials sensitive.

Special Notes/Graduate Teaching Assistant: The GTA for this class is Tracey Gholston. She will assist you with your academic needs and help keep track of your progress. If you encounter problems, please see her after class or by appointment. You can also reach her by email at tmgholston@bama.ua.edu . Office hours are Wednesday, 1-3. Location: _____.

COURSE SCHEDULE
(Subject to adjustment as necessary)

Week 1 Course Introduction – August ,2010

Non-graded assignment for Thursday, August 21:

Email me @ lkdavis2@sa.ua.edu

Name

Year/ Classification

Hometown

Major

Whether you play for a sports team

Anything you would like me to know

Review Syllabus

If you are a Freshman, create profile on InsideUA.UA.EDU

Week 2- What is African American Studies?

August , 2010

African American Studies: The Future of the Discipline

What is a Narrative?

Conventions of the Slave Narrative

Terms to Know: Multiculturalism; Afrocentrism; Black Cultural Nationalism; Radical Democratic Multiculturalism, Cultural Studies; Racial Essentialism; Black Women's Studies; Black Feminism; Molefi K. Asante

August , 2010

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (Preface by Garrison & Phillips and Chapter 1)

Terms to Know: Bondage, Abolitionists, Emancipation, Oppressed, Fugitive, Slave Code, Self-Emancipated, Brandings, Mutilations, Scourging, Emancipation Proclamation, Spirit, Affection, Field Hand, Mulatto, Cudgel, Market

Week 3- Slave Narrative & Spirituals, "Ain't Got Time to Die"

September , 2010

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (Chapter 2)

Pearl Williams-Jones *Afro-American Gospel Music: A Crystallization of the Black Aesthetic*

September , 2010

John Lovell, Jr. *The Social Implications of the Negro Spiritual.*

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (Chapter 3)

Terms to Know: Fiendish, Barbarity, Blasphemy, Dearborns, Barouches, Supposition,

START READING DuBOIS, *THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK*

Week 4- Slave Narrative

September , 2010

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (Chapters 4-9)

Terms to Know: Obdurate, Impudence, Maxim, Debasing, Homage, Musket, MUSH, Divine Providence, Emaciated, Stratagems, Chattel, Urchins

September , 2010

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (Chapters 10 & 11)

Week 5 –

September , 2010

Marable and Mullings, eds. *Let Nobody Turn Us Around*, Numbers 6, pp. 41-42; Number 16, pp. 87-91; " pp. 119-124 and Numbers 9-10, pp. 173-178.

Dr. DoVeanna Fulton, Chair African American Studies

September , 2010

Validation of Slave Narrative-**Test over Douglass**

Week 6- The Free Black Community

September , 2010

Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, "The Forethought," pp. v-vi; Chapter 5

September , 2010

Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk* Chapter 6, pp.47-67; and Chapter 10, pp. 115-125.

Week 7- War, Reconstruction and Reaction

September , 2010

Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, Chapter 3, pp. 57-74.

October , 2010

Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Chapter 2, pp.9-24; and Chapters 7-8, pp.69-98.

Week 8- Accommodation v. Reform: Washington, Du Bois, Wells-Barnett and Trotter

October , 2010

Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, Chapters 1, pp. 17-31; and Chapters 4-7, pp. 75-131.

Marable and Mullings, eds., *Let Nobody Turn Us Around*, Section Two: Document Number 8, pp. 167-172; Numbers 11-14, pp. 181-212; and Number 16, pp. 227-230.

October , 2010

NO CLASS!

Week 9- The New Negro

October , 2010

Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Chapter 1, pp.1-8; Chapters 3-4, pp.25-45; Chapter 9, pp. 99-113; and Chapters 11-13, pp. 127-153, Chapter 14, pp. 155-164.

October , 2010

Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, Chapters 8-11, pp. 135-197.

Week 10- Depression, World War II and the Cold War

October , 2010

Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, Chapters 7-9, pp. 199-258.

October , 2010

Williams, *Eyes on the Prize*, Chapters 1-2, pp. 2-57

Week 11- The Second Reconstruction, 1954-1962

October , 2010

Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, Chapter 15, pp. 261-275.

October , 2010

Williams, *Eyes on the Prize*, Chapters 3-5, pp. 60-161.

Week 12- The Second Reconstruction, 1962-1967

November , 2010

Williams, *Eyes on the Prize*, Chapter 6, pp. 164-207.

November , 2010

Williams, *Eyes on the Prize*, Chapter 7, pp. 207-251

Week 13- The Black Power Rebellion

November , 2010

Williams, *Eyes on the Prize*, Chapter 8, pp. 251-287

November , 2010
Movie: Four Little Girls

Week 14-Contemporary African American Thought: the 1970s

November , 2010
Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, Chapter 16-18 pp. 277-335

November , 2010
Marable and Mullings, eds., *Let Nobody Turn Us Around*, Section Five:
"Introduction," pp. 511-518; and Document Numbers 1-3, pp. 519-535.

Week 15-Contemporary African American Thought: the 1980s

November , 2010
Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, Chapters 19-20, pp. 337-357.
Marable and Mullings, eds., *Let Nobody Turn Us Around*, Section Five:
Document Numbers 4-9, pp. 535-577.

November , 2010
NO CLASS- Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 16- Where Do We Go From Here?

December , 2010
Marable and Mullings, eds., *Let Nobody Turn Us Around*, Section Five: Numbers
10-18, pp. 577-633.

December , 2010
Review for Final Exam