

**Course Description and Overview**

The aim of this course is to develop a general reading knowledge of the traditions, contexts, and trajectories of Black intellectual discourse during the 20th Century, particularly from the time of the Great Migration of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North. The emphasis will be placed on foundational texts in the field, yet students can expect to engage a wide range of works representing the diversity of Black thought in the 20th Century. The work of contemporary historians and other scholars (secondary sources) will provide background and context to supplement our reading of the foundational texts (primary sources) in the field.

In the course we will trace the continuities and disjunctures in the texts produced by Black intellectuals in the so-called American century. Taking our cue from the questions Ralph Ellison posed back in 1944, we will explore how Black writers and political figures have fashioned unique sets of ideas and arguments aimed at addressing the condition of being Black in an anti-Black society—ideas and arguments that often focused on *the question of identity and the meaning of freedom*.

**This course has four specific objectives:**

1. To further develop students’ critical study of American culture and history through an interdisciplinary examination of such important topics as race and racism, class and economic inequality, gender and sexism, and how what we in the academy say about these topics matters.

2. To introduce students to the key terms of debate in the study of African American thought and culture(s) and to chart the significant impact of Black intellectual discourses on U.S. institutions, communities, and individuals.

3. To expose students to a wide range of writers and speakers in the Black intellectual tradition in order to aid you in developing well-grounded approaches to the study of the history of ideas and the social role of intellectuals in modern American society.

4. To guide students in strengthening their skills at “reading” American culture and history, with the aim of being able to write well-formed essays based on their “readings.”

**Logistics and Policies**

You can reach me by email, in my office hours, or by appointment at any time during the quarter. I respond to students’ emails by 10am every weekday; I do not answer students’ emails on weekends.
I do not accept late assignments. In case of a medical/personal emergency, you must produce a doctor’s note or other documentation in order for an exception to be made.

This syllabus is subject to change; any changes will be announced well in advance in class or by email.

I would prefer that you do not use computers during class sessions, even to take notes. If this is a problem for you, please let me know and we can discuss accommodations.

Turn off phones and refrain from text messaging during class. If I notice you texting, I will ask you to leave the classroom and that will count as an absence.

**Course Requirements and Evaluation**

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and Active Class</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<td>Weekly Critical Reflection Papers</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Take-Home Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Take-Home Examination</td>
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*Attendance and participation constitute a significant portion of your grade. Arrive to each class session on time and stay for its duration. Tardiness and absences will be noted and result in the lowering of your grade. Since we only meet 20 times in the quarter, more than three absences will result in a failing grade.*

*Active participation means thoughtful engagement in the readings/lectures, meaningful contributions to class discussions, and respectful collegiality toward your classmates and instructor. **Please complete the readings prior to Tuesday the week they are assigned, and bring the text(s) we are covering that week to class.** Visits to my office hours will also count toward class participation.*

*During the course each student will write a one-page (double-spaced, 12pt. Times New Roman font) critical response to each week’s readings, except for those weeks when another assignment is due. These reflection/response papers are due at the end of each week and must be sent to gmendesethnusp@gmail.com by noon on Fridays. Each response will receive a credit or no credit, depending on evidence of engagement with the week’s readings. Some possible questions to consider each week are:*

1. What was the general argument or point the author or editor made?
2. What major premises, themes, and concepts of culture or race, did the author employ?
3. What evidence did the author use? (i.e. scientific, ethnographic, personal experience)
4. How were ideas about “America” or the ideology of democracy engaged?
5. Who was the audience, why was that audience chosen, and how was it received?
6. What intellectuals (or schools of thought) was this author engaged in a dialogue with or drew from?

*The Midterm exam will consist of a short essay (4-5 pgs double-spaced) in response to a question I pose that addresses key themes in Black intellectual discourse drawn from the readings of the first half of the course. Students will be able to choose between two questions/prompts, which will be handed out in class on Thursday, Jan. 28th, and be due in my office by noon, Friday, Feb. 5th.*

*The Final exam will consist of a longer essay (6-7pgs double-spaced), which will synthesize material from the whole course. Students will have a choice of answering one of three questions/prompts. **I will hand out the Final at the last class, on March 11th, and it will be due in my office on Tuesday, March 16th, 11:30am—2:30pm.**

For both the Midterm and the Final, I will provide considerably more details in a separate handout and discussion. Also I will not accept any late exam submissions.
Grading Standards:
A Superior performance; meets assignment requirements, and demonstrates exceptional execution of those requirements; reflects outstanding insight and depth; grammatically and stylistically excellent; would be considered a model example of assignment completion.
B Good, solid performance; meets assignment requirements, and demonstrates competent execution of those requirements; reflects insight and depth; grammatically and stylistically strong; may have one or more problem areas.
C Average performance; meets assignment requirements, minimally; grammatically and stylistically adequate; may have two or more problem areas; paper has more than two errors per page.
D Below average performance; does not meet minimal assignment requirements; has several fundamental problem areas; has several errors throughout the paper.
F Inferior performance; does not meet assignment requirements; not deserving of credit.

Required Books
These books can be purchased at the UCSD Campus Bookstore and are on reserve at Geisel Library.


Required Course Reader – available for purchase from University Readers online at http://www.universityreaders.com/students or call 800 200 3908. [These readings will be marked in the course schedule with the letters CR]

Several copies of the reader will also be on reserve at Geisel Library.

Several of the assigned readings will be available on the course WebCT.

For those of you wish to have a further grounding in African American history the following text is a useful reference: To Make Our World Anew: A History of African Americans, edited by Robin D.G. Kelley and Earl Lewis (Oxford; New York : Oxford University Press, 2000).

Course Schedule

Week 1—January 5th—7th
The Task: Modernity and Its Discontents


Recommended:
Week 2—January 12th—14th
“The Negro’s Modernity” and the Meaning of Migration & Urbanization

Optional:
Gabriel N. Mendes, “This Burden of Consciousness: Richard Wright and the Psychology of Race Relations, 1927-1947” in A Deeper Science: Richard Wright, Dr. Fredric Wertham, and the Fight for Mental Healthcare in Harlem, NY 1940-1960 (Forthcoming). WebCT

Week 3—January 19th—21st
Black Intellectuals and the World Crisis: World War II and the Cold War
Ralph Ellison, Editorials, The Negro Quarterly, (Summer 1942 and Winter 1943) [CR]


Recommended:

Week 4—January 26th—28th
Civil Rights and Black Nationalisms
Lorraine Hansberry, A Raisin in the Sun (1959)


Audio Recording: Malcolm X, “Ballot or the Bullet” (1964) and “Message to the Grassroots” (1963)

Recommended:
Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter From a Birmingham Jail” (1963) WebCT
James Baldwin Interview by Kenneth B. Clark. WebCT

Week 5—February 2nd—4th
Black Power and the Black Arts Movement


Optional:
Black Power, Statement by the National Committee of Negro Churchmen (1966), in Wilmore and Cone, eds., Black Theology: A Documentary History (1979), 23-29. WebCT
MIDTERM DUE NOON, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5TH

Week 6—February 9th—11th
The Politics of Gender & Race in Black Women’s Thought


Paula Giddings, When and Where I Enter: the Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America (1984), 299-324, 383-84. [CR]

Optional:

Week 7—February 16th—18th
What is the Meaning of Progress?

Shelby Steele, “Being Black and Feeling Blue,” from The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America (St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 37-55. [CR]


Recommended:

Week 8—February 23rd—25th
Afrocentricity and the Politics of Black Cultural Production


Hip Hop Selections: Public Enemy, KRS-ONE, Queen Latifah, X-Clan, Brand Nubian

Week 9—March 2nd—4th
Black Cultural Studies and Its Critics


Week 10—March 9th—11th
**Black Intellectuals in the Age of Obama**

**PAPER DUE MARCH 16TH 11:30AM-2:30PM**

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**Majoring or Minoring in Ethnic Studies at UCSD**

Many students take an Ethnic Studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a social science, non-contiguous, or other college requirement. Often students have taken three or four classes out of “interest” yet have no information about the major or minor and don’t realize how close they are to a major, a minor, or even a double major. An Ethnic Studies major is excellent preparation for a career in law, public policy, government and politics, journalism, education, public health, social work, international relations, and many other careers. If you would like information about the Ethnic Studies major or minor at UCSD, please contact Yolanda Escamilla, Ethnic Studies Department Undergraduate Advisor, at 858-534-3277 or yescamilla@ucsd.edu.