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 society and history, with the aim of being able to write well-formed essays based on their “readings.”
Course Requirements and Evaluation
1. Attendance and Active Class Participation 15%
2. Four Short Critical Response Papers 20%
3. Midterm Take-Home Exam 25%
4. Final Research Paper 40%

1. 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. You will be allowed one unexcused absence; any subsequent absence(s) requires a note from an official source or agency, i.e. a doctor. Since we only meet 10 times in the quarter, more than one absence will result in a failing grade.
*Active participation means thoughtful engagement with the readings/lectures, meaningful contributions to class discussions, and respectful collegiality toward your classmates and instructor.
*Visits to my office hours will also count toward class participation.
*Please complete the readings prior to Monday the week they are assigned, and bring the text(s) we are covering that week to class. I recommend you print and bind all readings found on Blackboard/TritonEd.

2. Critical Response Papers: During the course each student will write four 250-300 word (double-spaced, 12pt. Times New Roman font) critical responses to their chosen week’s readings. Students must submit two responses prior to the end of Week 4 and two responses prior to the end of Week 9. These reflection/response papers must be submitted to me (at these two email addresses: gmendes@ucsd.edu & gnathaniel.mendes@gmail.com) by Monday at 9pm for the week you’ve chosen. Each response will be scored on a 5-point scale (0-5), 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(s) or editor(s) 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?
3. The **Midterm Take-Home** exam will consist of a short analytical essay (1000-1200, i.e. 4-5 pages double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman) 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 I will hand out in class on **Tuesday, Jan. 26**th. You must submit the essay to the Turnitin portal on Blackboard/TritonEd by **noon, Monday, Feb. 1**st. I will provide you with detailed guidelines for writing the essay well in advance of the assignment.

4. The **Final Research Paper** will consist of a 2000-2250 word critical analytical essay (8-9 pages) in which you explore one specific topic/theme within one journal’s published articles during one particular year. The Final Paper is due online at Turnitin (Blackboard/TritonEd) by **Tuesday, March 15**th at 5pm. Your essay must present a specific **thesis,** which **argues** for how best to **interpret** how the journal you select has addressed the topic/theme you’ve chosen to focus on. For instance how does the journal discuss Black Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, Liberalism, Feminism, Religion, etc. Please select one of the following journals devoted to the Black intellectuals’ thought and action:

- *The Journal of Negro Education*
- *Phylon: The Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture*
- *Black Scholar: Journal of Black Studies and Research*
- *Transition: An International Review*
- *Callaloo: A Journal of African Diaspora Arts and Letters*
- *Freedomways Magazine*
- *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture and Society*
- *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*

Each one of these journals has been a vital forum for Black intellectuals wrestling with the themes we examine in this course. And each of these journals are now available online through libraries.ucsd.edu.

We will have one session with the Ethnic Studies Librarian, Alanna Aiko Moore on **Tuesday, January 26**th to become familiar with the digital offerings for research in Black Intellectual History/Studies. We will meet at the **Geisel Library reference desk (Second Floor West) at 5:00pm, 1/26/16.**

**For both the Midterm and the Final Paper, I will provide considerably more details in a separate handout and discussion. Also I will not accept any late 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**
Many of these books are available digitally through the library.ucsd.edu portal. They can be purchased at the UCSD Campus Bookstore and are on reserve at Geisel Library.

**Listed in the order in which we will read them:**

**Week 4:** Gabriel N. Mendes, *Under the Strain of Color: Harlem’s Lafargue Clinic and the Promise of an Antiracist Psychiatry* (Cornell University Press, 2015: ISBN 080145350X)

**Week 5:** Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Charles Lam Markmann (Grove Press, 1967 [1952] ISBN 9780802150844)


**Week 10:** Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (Spiegel and Grau, 2015: ISBN 0812993543)

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 University Press, 2000). It will be available on

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1—January 5th:** Introducing the Modern Black Intellectual Tradition

**Required Reading:**


Week 2—January 12th: “What are we worth?”: Black Intellectuals at the Turn of the 20th Century

**Required Reading:**


Week 3— January 19th: New Negroes in the 20th Century

**Required Reading:**


Week 4—January 26th: Richard Wright’s Blues

**Required Reading:**
• Gabriel N. Mendes, *Under the Strain of Color: Harlem’s Lafargue Clinic and the Promise of an Antiracist Psychiatry* (Cornell University Press, 2015), **Required:** Introduction, Chapters 1, 3, Epilogue.


**Week 5—February 2nd—The Radical Dis-Alienation of the Colonized Black**

**Required Reading:**
• Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Charles Lam Markmann (Grove Press, 1952), Introduction, Chapters 1 & 5-8. Conclusion.


**Recommended Viewing:** *Home of the Brave*. Directed by Mark Robson (United Artists, 1949), FVLV-462-1, Geisel Library.

**Week 6—February 9th—Race, Nation, Gender, Class and the 20th Century Black Freedom Struggle I**

**Required Reading:**
• Lorraine Hansberry, *Raisin in the Sun* (1959)


**Week 7—February 16th—Race, Nation, Gender, Class and the 20th Century Black Freedom Struggle II**

**Required Reading:**
• **Required Listening:** Malcolm X, “Ballot or the Bullet” (1964) and “Message to the Grassroots” (1963)

Week 8—February 23rd—“Some Alternatives to the Folklore of White Supremacy”

Required Reading:


Week 9—March 1st—“Ain’t I a Woman?: Black Women and Feminism”

Required Reading:


Week 10—March 8th—What is the Meaning of Progress?

Required Reading:


**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.

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

**Computers of any type are not allowed in this class.**

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.

**ADA Statement:** If you have a disability or condition that compromises your ability to complete the requirements of this course, **you should inform me as soon as possible of your needs**. I will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate you. If, as a result of a disability, you cannot accept the content or terms of this syllabus, you need to notify me in writing within one week of receiving it.

**Policy on Late Papers and Make-up Assignments:** Excepting emergencies, I do not allow late papers and do not allow make-up assignments. You have the syllabus well enough in advance to know what is due and when.

**Primary Ground Rules:** (a) The number one ground rule to which we will all adhere is to engage in respectful and considerate debate and discussion in the classroom. You will be expected to approach this course with a patient, open mind, ready to absorb new facts and new ideas about topics that are, by their nature, subjects of controversy and disagreement. A good classroom environment should stimulate you to think for yourselves and raise critical questions based upon a thorough survey of the evidence before you. **Please take note that abusive and harsh language will not be tolerated in this classroom.** These ground rules are reflected in the UCSD Principles of Community to which we are all expected to adhere (http://www-vcba.ucsd.edu/principles.htm).

(b) Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in any form. This means plagiarism and other forms of dishonesty such as producing assignments for others. Please become familiar with the UCSD Policy on Academic Integrity (http://senate.ucsd.edu/manual/Appendices/app2.htm). Any academic work that you submit in this course, which violates the UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship will automatically receive an “F” for the assignment and may result in you failing the course.

**Other Ground Rules:** All phones and portable electronic devices (PDA/ Smartphones/ iPads/etc.) must be turned off and may not leave your bag in the classroom. With the exception of students with a documented need for accommodation, laptop computers cannot be used in lecture or section. Students with permission to take notes on their laptops must mute all sounds, disable their wireless connections, and sit in the front row of class. For all cases of students texting/facebooking/instant messaging, I have a zero tolerance policy; you will promptly be asked to leave class and your participation/attendance grade will drop 5 points. The same goes for students who are sleeping or reading. Rest assured, I will notice. You are not invisible and not anonymous in my classroom.

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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 Daisy Rodriguez, Ethnic Studies Department Undergraduate Advisor, at 858-534-3277 or d1rodriguez@ucsd.edu.