

**COURSE: LIT 3003 Section 098B**

**BEING AND BLACKNESS:**

Time: Tues. 2 (8:30 am- 10: 25 am) and Thurs. 3 (9:35 am- 10:25 am)

Place: MATHERLY 0100

Office: **4108, Turlington Hall**

Office Hours: Tues. 12 am- 1 pm, Thurs. 11:30-12:30pm, and by appointment

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**Course Description**

The course will address questions of Blackness in South Africa and the United States, two different but related contexts historically defined by racism, white supremacy, and black dehumanization. Despite the establishment, in both contexts, of ostensibly inclusive democracies, Blackness continues to be characterized by exclusion. The course will adopt an interdisciplinary approach: in addition to literary texts, we will focus on scholars who critically examine the enduring reality of race and racism in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. Students will examine how race functions as a social condition, inflects citizenship and identity and frames everyday life. The selected readings (literary and theoretical) collectively engage the ways racism affects black personhood. They help us understand the relationship between race and power, and how race is used to determine belonging to civil society. We will then reflect on the structural perpetuation of racism and the covert ways in which antiblackness persists. We will conclude the semester by reflecting on race in the contemporary moment. Ultimately, the course asks: in what ways do black identities struggle against being black on the one hand and citizens of nonracial and multicultural contexts on the other?

**BOOK LIST**

Beatty, Paul. *The Sellout*. Picador, 2016.

Fugard, Athol., Kani, John., and Ntshona, Winston. *Statements*. "Sizwe Bansi is Dead." New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1986. Print.

Matlwa, Kopano. *Coconut*. Cape Town: Jacana Media, 2007. Print

Mda, Zakes. *Ways of Dying*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1995. Print.

Mpe, Phaswane. *Welcome to Our Hillbrow: A Novel of Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011. Print.

Rankine, Claudia. *Citizen*. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2014.

**READINGS**

Fanon, Frantz (2010, 1952), "The Fact of Blackness", in *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*, edited by Les Back and John Solomos (London: Routledge), pp. 326-335.

\*Mbembe, Achille. "Necropolitics." *Public Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, Volume 15, Number 1, Winter 2003, pp. 11-40.

\*Patterson, Orlando. "Authority, alienation, and social death." *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.

\*Ferreira da Silva, Denise (2007), *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), pp. i-xiv; xvii-xli.

\*Sexton, J. "The Social Life of Social Death." In *Tensions 5* (2011): 1-47.

Sharpe, Christina (2016), *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), Chapter 1.

**Film:**

*Get Out*, Jordan Peele (2017)

**\*Starred texts will be provided on Canvas.**

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

- 1% - Thomas Center Exhibit Visit
- 20% - Reading Responses (4 total)
- 9% - In-class Quizzes
- 10% - Class Participation
- 10% - Round Table
- 15% - Short Paper, Close Reading (3-4 pages)
- 25% - Research Paper (FINAL) (10-12 pages)
- 10% - Electronic Media Project

**General Class Policies:**

**NB:** You must pass this course with a “C” or better to satisfy the CLAS requirements.

**Grading Scale**

A 4.0 93-100	930-1000	C 2.0 73-76	730-769
A- 3.67 90-92	900-929	C- 1.67 70-72	700-729
B+ 3.33 87-89	870-899	D+ 1.33 67-69	670-699
B 3.0 83-86	830-869	D 1.0 63-66	630-669
B- 2.67 80-82	800-829	D- 0.67 60-62	600-629
C+ 2.33 77-79	770-799	E 0.00 0-59	0-599

**Grade Meanings:** Here is the meaning behind the grades I assign to your papers (all papers are graded on a point scale that translates to a letter grade); you can use these statements to determine how you might work toward a higher grade:

- **A-** You did what the assignment asked for at a high-quality level, and your work shows originality, creativity, and critical insight.
- **B-** You did what the assignment asked of you at a high-quality level. Work in this range needs revision; however, it is complete in content, is organized well, and shows special attention to style.
- **C-** You did what the assignment asked of you. Work in this range needs significant revision, but it is complete in content and the organization is logical. The style is straightforward but unremarkable.
- **D-** You neglected some basic requirements of the assignment and completed it at a poor-quality level. Work in this range needs significant revision. The content is often incomplete and the organization is hard to discern. Attention to style is often nonexistent or chaotic.
- **E-** An E is usually reserved for people who don't do the work or don't come to class. However, if your work is shoddy and shows little understanding of the needs of the assignment, you will receive a failing grade.

## **Attendance**

Attendance is required. You are allowed three absences without any direct effect on your grade. Your final grade will drop by a letter with each subsequent absence after your first three. If you reach six absences, you will automatically fail the course. Tardiness is considered a half-absence. Absences involving court-mandated events, such as jury duty or court testimony, military service, and university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays are excused, but you must notify me of your absence prior to the date that will be missed.

## **Cell Phone Use**

Turn cell phones off or set them to silent ring before you come into class. I turn mine off before coming into the classroom. I expect the same courtesy from you all. Whenever an electronic device is used in class, it should be used only for taking notes.

## **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits plagiarism and defines it as follows:

Plagiarism—A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Quoting oral or written materials including but not limited to those found on the internet, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
2. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.

(University of Florida, Student Honor Code, 8 July 2011)

University of Florida students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire Student Honor Code.

## **Statement of student disability services**

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>.

## **Statement on Harassment**

UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/>.

## **Communication with Your Instructor**

The best way to contact me is via email. Please allow at least 24 hours for me to respond to all requests/questions/inquiries. I also encourage you to meet with me during my office hours or to schedule an appointment with me for a different time.

## **Classroom Behavior**

Please be mindful that students come from diverse cultural, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage in controversial issues and opinions. Many ideas might differ from your own, therefore please have an open mind to diversity.

**Format of Written Work** It is important that your essays look neat and polished. All essays must be formatted in MLA style. This means that your paper must meet the following guidelines:

- Double-spaced
- 12 point, Times New Roman font

- 1-inch margins, on all sides
- MLA style headers with page numbers
- MLA style citations. For help with MLA format, find a copy of the MLA Handbook in the library or refer to the OWL Purdue website (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>).
- Do not use dictionaries, encyclopedias or other basic reference material as a critical/secondary reference in any of your work. This will lead to penalizations in your grade.
- Always make a backup copy of every paper you turn in.

## **ASSIGNMENT DETAILS**

### **Reading responses and class participation:**

This is a reading and discussion based class. As the success of the class depends on your participation, all reading is required on the day listed, without exception. Reading responses and short quizzes ensure that no one falls behind: please read carefully and thoughtfully. Please come to class prepared to discuss. Bring notes, questions that have arisen while reading, ideas on how the text engages with the topics and other texts we have been discussing.

### **Reading Quizzes**

We will have regular unannounced reading quizzes. The quizzes are intended to make sure everyone is reading and understanding the central themes and/or plot points for each text. They might be short answer, True/False, multiple choice, or a mixture of all three.

### **Reading responses:**

Each reading response will be in direct dialogue with a text or idea we have addressed in the class. They must be thoughtful interactions, in which you develop a central idea by engaging (especially using close readings) with the text(s). 1 page/ 300 words long.

### **Short Paper:**

Write a 4-5-page paper (double-spaced) in which you close read a short passage from *Ways of Dying or Welcome to our Hillbrow* alongside Achille Mbembe's *Necropolitics*. Think carefully about how your selected passage demonstrates Mbembe's point. This will set you up for writing a stronger final paper.

### **Long Paper:**

The student will explore the relationship between being and blackness, pair any novel read after the short paper with the theoretical material read in class. More specific directions will be provided in class and on canvas.

### **Roundtable: Groups assigned in class**

There have been a series of debates about race and racism in South Africa. As a group, you will agree on a topic of debate based on a race related news media issue in the past five years. I will share links to various news portals, including newspapers and video material. Each student in the group will prepare a 1-page position paper and read it aloud in class. The position paper will introduce the news issue, what problem it elucidates, and what the student's argument concerning the issue is. Once positions have been presented, the entire class will interrogate more deeply the positions presented by the group by asking questions (especially about the implications of these positions), offering comments, and pushing the conversation further. Roundtables are intended to help students engage reflectively on contemporary manifestations of race in South Africa.

## **Electronic Media Project**

The purpose of this assignment is to have you produce digital media contents related to the class. All contents must be publicly put online, therefore you must be mindful of the personal information you include. I want this to be a fun assignment designed by you. Your digital media assignment must be imaginative and inventive, publicly engage a race-related issue/topic. Minimum two posts, maximum 5. Have a main topic or central issue.

**Considering the notion of covert black terror exhibited in Jordan Peele's film *Get Out*, create a digital media vlog, blog, or Instagram series about overt and/or covert experiences of anti-blackness in every life, media, or governance. Please consult me if you have any difficulty understanding this assignment. More detailed instructions on Canvas.**

## **SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1 (August 22/24)**

Tuesday~ Syllabus Overview

Thursday~ An overview of race in South Africa

[Worden, Nigel. "The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Segregation and Apartheid."

The English Historical Review, vol. 111, no. 443, 1996, p. 1016+.

PowerPoint on Canvas and email]

### **Week 2 (August 29/31)**

Tuesday~ Visit Uncontainable Exhibit at the Thomas Center:

<http://www.historichomascenter.org/art-galleries/current-exhibitions/>

Thursday~ Post-apartheid South Africa

[Class prepared using: Reddy, Thiven. *South Africa, Settler Colonialism and the Failures of Liberal Democracy*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2015.

Mamdani, Mahmood. *Citizen and Subject*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996.

PowerPoint on Canvas and email]

### **Week 3 (September 5/7)**

Tuesday~ Patterson, Orlando. "Authority, alienation, and social death."

Thursday~ *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*

### **Week 4 (September 12/14)**

Tuesday~ *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*

Thursday~ *Ways of Dying*

### **Week 5 (September 19/21)**

Tuesday~ *Ways of Dying*

Thursday~ Mbembe, Achille. "Necropolitics."

### **Week 6 (September 26/28)**

Tuesday~ Sharpe, Christina (2016), *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*

Thursday~ *Welcome to our Hillbrow*

### **Week 7 (October 3/5) \*\*\*Short Paper Due on Canvas**

Tuesday~ *Welcome to our Hillbrow*

Thursday~ Reddy, Thiven. *South Africa, Settler Colonialism and the Failures of Liberal Democracy*.

### **Week 8 (October 10/12)**

Tuesday~ \*\*\*Roundtable 1

Thursday~ *Coconut*

**Week 9 (October 17/19)**

Tuesday~ *Coconut*

Thursday~ Fanon, Frantz (2010, 1952), "The Fact of Blackness"

**Week 10 (October 24/26)**

Tuesday~ \*\*\***Roundtable 2**

Thursday~ *Citizen*

**Week 11 (October 31/November 2)**

Tuesday~ *Citizen*

Thursday~ Sexton, J. "The Social Life of Social Death."

**Week 12 (November 7/9)**

Tuesday~ \*\*\***Roundtable 3**

Thursday~ *Get Out* (Movie)

**Week 13 (November 14/16)**

Tuesday~ \*\*\***Roundtable 4**

Thursday~ *Sellout*

**Week 14 (November 21/23)**

Tuesday~ *Sellout*

Thursday~ **HOLIDAY!!!**

**Week 15 (November 28/30)**

Tuesday~ \*\*\***Roundtable 5**

Thursday~ Media Project Showcase/Screening

**Week 16 (December 5)**

Tuesday~ \*\*\***Submit Final Paper**\*\*\*