

LIT 4483: “Where, By the Way, Is This Train Going? The Origins, Issues and Politics of Black Cultural Studies.

Course Meeting Time: T4, R4-5

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Course Description: Named after Mae G. Henderson’s essay “Where, By The Way, Is This Train Going? A Case For Black (Cultural) Studies,” this course will introduce students to the complex history of Black Cultural Studies and issues the discipline seeks to address. The course will combine a historiography of Black cultural studies within and outside of the academy with African American literary texts to provide students with four units that illustrate the depth, diversity and rigor of Black Cultural Studies—elements that historically critics have claimed the discipline lacked. In the first unit, students will develop working definitions of culture and cultural studies as articulated by British cultural theorist Stuart Hall. This unit will also give students the tools to identify literary texts as cultural artifacts. Unit 2 will cover the advent of African American Studies in the academy. We will address the historical and methodological nuances between African American Studies, Black Studies and Black Cultural Studies and the often tense and tenuous relationship between Black cultural theorists and the academy. After understanding the goals and objectives of Black cultural studies, Unit 3 will encourage the students to identify the cultural issues in literary texts like *Of Mules and Men* and *Native Son*. Moreover, this unit will ask students to critically consider the authors of these texts as cultural theorists and the stakes of such a claim. The final unit, Unit 4, will assess a few of the current issues in Black cultural studies. Specifically, we will assess diaspora, hip hop culture and the digital age as influential forces shaping Black cultural studies currently.

The goal of this class is not for students to walk away with a complete understanding of Black cultural studies but rather to begin to comprehend the various tracks that that this train known as Black cultural studies is capable of traveling. Course assignments will include response papers, panel presentations and an exploratory final paper. Authors being considered include W.E.B. DuBois, Toni Morrison, Sista Souljah, Rinaldo Walcott, Russell Adams, Manthia Diawara and Wahneema Lubiano.

Required Texts:

DuBois, W.E.B. *Souls of Black Folk*. Oxford World’s Classic

ISBN:9780199555833

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Mules and Men*. Harper Perennial Modern Classics

ISBN: 0061350176

Morrison, Toni *Sula*. Vintage; Reprint Edition

ISBN:0452283868

Wright, Richard *Native Son*. Harper Perennial Modern Classics; Rev Abr. Edition

ISBN:9780060533489

Sister Souljah *The Coldest Winter Ever*. Pocket Star; 1st Edition.

ISBN:1416521690

All other reading assignments will be available via E-learning.

Course Expectations

Communication

The best way to get in contact with me is via email. Please allow at least 24 hours for me to respond to any inquiries. You can also meet with me during office hours and by appointment.

Classroom Behavior

In-class participation and discussion are **REQUIRED** in this class. Thoughtful participation in class discussion and completion of **ALL** writing assignments are the best ways to ensure success in this class. Any disrespectful or disruptive behaviors will not be tolerated and will result in dismissal from class.

Attendance

Consistent attendance is required. You are allowed three unexcused absences in this class. **After that, each unexcused absence will result in a ten point deduction from your grade. If you have more than six unexcused absences, you will fail this course.** Excused absences will not be counted against you, but only university sponsored events such as athletics, band, theater and religious holidays qualify as excused absences. All excused absences **REQUIRE** documentation. In the event of any absence, it is **YOUR** responsibility to find out any notes, assignments or syllabus changes you missed. Please contact one of your fellow students to find out what you missed in class. Additionally, being more than ten minutes late without proper notification will result in an unexcused absence.

Course Assignments

Contributions to the Black Cultural Objects /Black Cultural Theory List

50 Points

The class will compile a running list of suggested Black cultural objects and Black cultural theory texts. Each student is required to add 5 entries to the list, two of which must be theoretical texts. Students are allowed to add works by authors that we read in class, but they may not repeat a text covered in class. Students may add entries at their leisure up until Thanksgiving break. Once a student has added 5 entries, they must submit a document explaining why they chose to add each entry to the list (no more than a paragraph explanation per entry). All entry explanations must be submitted BEFORE Thanksgiving break. The explanation for all 5 entries must be at least 500 words.

In-Class Participation

150 Points

Students will be assessed on the quality of their oral participation in class. This includes both commentary and questions. Students who earn the most points will offer informed and relevant contributions to class discussions on a consistent basis.

Unit Response Papers

300 Points

At the end of units 1, 2 and 4, students will be required to submit a unit response paper worth 100 points, totaling to 300 points for all three responses. The response paper is an opportunity for students to work with and interrogate new terms introduced in the unit. Also, the response paper will allow students to synthesize a few of the works in the unit for a fuller understanding of the issues in Black cultural studies. Response papers that earn the most points will cite multiple texts directly from the unit and offer thorough, clear and thoughtful reflection on the unit. Response papers must be at least 500 words.

Panel Presentation

200 Points

In Unit 3, we will be reading four literary texts that are significant to Black cultural studies in one way or another. With a guiding question prepared by the instructor, students will prepare a panel paper that identifies the text's and/or author's significance to Black cultural studies and highlights the Black cultural issues raised in the text. Students will present their papers on panels of 3 or 4. The panel papers will be the catalyst for class discussion on the days they are given. Panel presentations must be at least 750 words.

Final Exploratory Paper

300 Points

Students will be required to write a final paper for the course. This paper will be a culmination of the previous assignments. In the paper, students will use both literary texts and critical essays to illustrate their understanding of Black cultural studies. Students will not be graded on their ability to develop a definition of Black cultural studies. Instead, students must demonstrate attention to the complexity and diversity of Black cultural studies in its history and methodology. Final papers that earn the most points will be thorough, critically engaging, effectively-cited and detailed. Final papers must be at least 1500 words.

Grading Scale

A 930-1000	C 730-769
A- 900-929	C- 700-729
B+ 870-899	D+ 670-699
B 830-869	D 630-669
B- 800-829	D- 600-629
C+ 770-799	E 0-599

Schedule

Unit 1: What is Cultural Studies Anyway?

8/26- Overview of Course Syllabus, Policies and Guidelines

8/28- Hall, *et. al* “Subcultures, Culture and Class: A Theoretical Overview”

Literature as Culture Lecture

9/2- Hall, “Origins of Cultural Studies” Lecture Transcript

9/4-Johnson, “What is Cultural Studies Anyway”

Hall, “Cultural Studies & Its Theoretical Legacies”

UNIT 1 RESPONSE PAPER DUE

Unit 2: Where, By The Way, Is This Train Going? Black Studies in the Academy

9/9- Giovanni, “I Fell Off the Roof One Day (A View of the Black University)”

Black Power, Black Arts and Black Studies Lecture

9/11- Adams, “Black Studies Perspectives”

“Intellectual Questions and Imperatives in the Development of African American Studies”

Documentary: “45 Years of Triumph & Struggle: African American Studies at the University of Florida” Created by Dr. Patricia Hilliard-Nunn (UF)

9/16- Diawara, “Cultural Studies/ Black Studies”

9/18- Henderson, “Where, By The Way, Is This Train Going? A Case for Black (Cultural) Studies”

Lubiano, “Mapping the Interstices Between Afro-American Cultural Discourse and Cultural Studies”

UNIT 2 RESPONSE PAPER DUE

Unit 3: Black Literature As Cultural Studies

9/23- DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk*

Panel Presentation Demo

9/25- DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk*

9/30- DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk*

10/2- DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk*

PANEL PRESENTATION #1

10/7- Hurston, *Of Mules and Men*

10/9- Hurston, *Of Mules and Men*

PANEL PRESENTATION #2

10/14- Hurston, *Of Mules and Men*

10/16- Hurston, *Of Mules and Men*

PANEL PRESENTATION #3

10/21- Wright, *Native Son*

10/23- Wright, *Native Son*

PANEL PRESENTATION #4

10/28- Wright, *Native Son*

10/30- Wright, *Native Son*

PANEL PRESENTATION #5

11/4- Morrison, *Sula*

11/6- Morrison, *Sula*

PANEL PRESENTATION #6

Unit 4: Current Issues in Black Cultural Studies

11/11- No Class Veteran's Day

11/13- Walcott, “Beyond the ‘Nation Thing’: Black Studies, Cultural Studies & Diaspora Discourse (Or The Post- Black Studies Moment)”

Nugent, “Smoke, Lilies, and Jade”

11/18- Souljah, *The Coldest Winter Ever*

11/20- Souljah, *The Coldest Winter Ever*

11/25- Souljah, *The Coldest Winter Ever*

11/27- Thanksgiving Holiday

12/2- Dunn, “The New Black Cultural Studies: Hip Hop Ghetto Lit, Feminism Afro- Feminism, and Black Love *The Coldest Winter Ever*”

UNIT 4 RESPONSE PAPER DUE

12/4- “The Fire!!! This Time: Black Studies and the Digital Revolution”

12/9- Class Wrap-Up

FINAL PAPER DUE

Course Policies

Statement of Student Disability Services: The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. For more information, please see <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Academic Honesty: All students are required to abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, please see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits and defines plagiarism as follows: Plagiarism: A student shall not represent as the student’s own work all or any portion of a work of another. Plagiarism includes: (but is not limited to)

a. Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.

b. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.

Please see: University of Florida Student Honor Code:
<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcode.php>

All acts of plagiarism will result in failure of the assignment. Every case is different, but plagiarism on an assignment could result in failure of the entire course. **All work must be your own!** Work from another class is not acceptable. Have integrity; be responsible, organized, and honest about your work. Do not claim ignorance. Be sure to talk to the instructor about any questions you may have with regard to plagiarism, academic honesty and proper citation methods.