African American Intellectual History, 20th Century
CULANTH 175

This course is framed by W.E.B. Du Bois' prophetic declaration at the dawn of the 20th Century that the problem of the century will be 'the problem of the color line.' At the beginning of this century, ideas about race, culture, and identity still shape strategies for African American empowerment while securing the ideals of democracy in the United States remains elusive.

We will read "classic" texts from most decades of the 20th century and explore the location of the authors' work within its historical and political contexts. Particular attention will be given to the texture of (debates within) African-American intellectual heritage.

The authors that we read each addressed issues contemporary to their experiences; therefore, the student gleans a unique “insiders” perspective on U.S. history from each decade of the 20th century. During the last month, we will pay particular attention to the contemporary writers.
**Course Requirements:** You will be required to write thirteen 3-4 page analytical review essays or one review for each reading assignment.

The essays should address these specific questions:

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

These questions do not form a template for your review essays. You may want to address other issues and some will not be particularly relevant for specific texts. These questions, however, should help structure your reading, note-taking in class, and your essays.

**Grades:** Each essay is worth 10 points. I will add up all of your points at the end of the semester and divide that number by 130.

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If you consistently come prepared and participate in class, you will get a bonus point (i.e. B+ to A-). Notice: The only way you can get a letter grade increase is if you consistently come to class and participate.

**Course Protocol**

**Attendance:** Students are advised not to miss class -- this is a personal responsibility. Roll will occasionally be taken to help me determine who earns a bonus point (I will tell you now, I usually take attendance on those wonderful spring days that seem so off). Lecture material is also required for the review essays. A major consideration in grading the essays will be your ability to integrate various arguments and perspectives found in the readings, lectures, and discussions into a thoughtful statement.

**Reading Assignments:** Reading assignments are to be completed and ready for discussion the day of class. I will be calling on individuals to facilitate discussions using the above questions. Please keep in mind that I have selected books that build on each other. Therefore, class discussions and writing assignments should engage books previously assigned.

**Writing Assignments:** While the principal goal of this course is the acquisition of knowledge, students should be aware that clear and effective writing is an integral part of the learning process. Although these assignments will not be graded on a strict curve, they are competitive. You will be competing with your peers. You will have the option to re-write two of your essays that you earned a B or better. You must hand in both the original and the revised copy.

All assignments must be handed in (not e-mailed) the day they are due by 4:00pm.

A late paper will only be accepted with an excuse form your academic dean addressing the obstacle that impeded your responsibility.
Assignment Schedule

Wells-Barnett, Ida B.
Salem, NH: Ayer Company.
Pages 1-199

Reading Due: January 15
Essay Due: January 17

Washington, Booker T.

Reading Due: January 22
Essay Due: January 24

Du Bois, W E. B.

Reading Due: January 29
Essay Due: January 31

Hurston, Zora N.

Reading Due: February 5
Essay Due: February 7

Frazier, E. Franklin

Reading Due: February 12
Essay Due: February 14

Woodson, Carter G.

Reading Due: February 19
Essay Due: February 21

King, Martin Luther, Jr.

Reading Due: February 26
Essay Due: February 28
Cleaver, Eldridge  

Reading Due: March 5  
Essay Due: March 7 (Spring Break Begins)

Davis, Angela Y.  

Reading Due: March 19  
Essay Due: March 21

Pattillo-Mccoy, Mary.  
1999 Black Picket Fences : Privilege and Peril Among the Black Middle Class  
Chicago: University of Chicago Press.  

Reading Due: March 26  
Essay Due: March 28

Jackson, John L.  

Reading Due: April 2  
Essay Due: April 4

McWhorter, John H.  

Reading Due: April 9  
Essay Due: April 11

hooks, bell  

Reading Due: April 16  
Essay Due: April 18