

INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND STUDIES

AFST 2300 - HIS 3329 – WS 3391

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Session: Spring 2020
Class: 10:30 am - 11:50 am, Tuesday and Thursday. LART 210
Office Hours: M and W, 3:00 - 3:45 pm; and Tuesdays: 1:30 - 3:00 pm
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Syllabus

This course is an introduction to African American Studies focusing on the history, literature, arts, and material culture of people of African descent in the United States. Textbook, articles, and films will assist us to understand the role that African American men and women have in the history of the United States. Our analysis will center on the political, cultural, social, and economic strategies developed to challenge social relations of power affecting Black individuals. Your instructor has selected activities to examine persisting inequalities affecting African Americans as well as accomplishments in the struggle for equality. Prominent themes include the origins of the African Diasporas; African civilizations, Reconstruction; migration; the development of the modern civil rights movement and its aftermath; intellectual and artistic developments; deindustrialization; and, contemporary struggles. The intersections of gender, race, and class will be repeatedly visited in our analysis of African American History with an emphasis on the intellectual production of Black feminists.

Only one section of this course under any department can be taken for credit, regardless of the term in which the enrollment took place. Students are responsible for dropping this course or a section to avoid duplication of credits. Students can retake this course, or another section, when a failing grade was recorded.

Objectives are:

- To **critically** analyze the social, cultural, and political development of the African American communities in a global context.
- To identify the contributions of African American individuals and communities to the history, economy, and culture of the United States.
- To assess the importance of Black feminists in the construction of notions of human and civil rights and intersectional systems of oppression.
- To recognize diversity in experiences derived from gender, race, and economic class differences.
- To read historical texts and documents in order to use them as sources for clear, accurate, and informed discussion (in class and in your written reports);
- To learn in a cooperative environment the *relationship* and *significance* of historical persons, events, ideas, and concepts.
- To reflect on strategies to become effective educators.

At the end of this course I would like my students to be able to:

- Think critically about the social, cultural, and political development of the African American communities.
- Recognize the contributions of the African American community to the economy, culture, and history of the United States.
- Understand that “race” and “gender” are social constructions.
- Understand that racism is a real social structure that determines the quality of life of residents of the United States, intersecting with other relations of power, such as gender.
- Evaluate past events and social processes as factors that shape our present.
- Develop strategies to improve independent study and academic writing skills.
- Become familiar with social science terminology.
- Determine social and individual responsibilities in the democratization of society.

Timely Submission of assignments and participation in group discussions and class activities are compulsory to pass this course. Late submission of journal entries will result in a deduction of 10% of the grade per day. Packback assignments will not be accepted if late.

Students are responsible for all information provided in their textbooks, lectures, audio recordings and documentaries. Students would be well advised to read several topics in advance of lectures and discussions. The primary textbooks for the course are:

Creating Black Americans: African American History And Its Meaning, 1619 to the Present, by Nell Irvin Painter. Oxford University Press, 2006. (CBA) 978-0195137569

and

Liberating Minds Liberating Society: Black Women in the Development of American Culture and Society. Edited by Lopez D. Matthews, Jr. and Kenvi C. Phillips. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014. (LMLS)

In addition to the two books assigned, other texts will be provided through our UTEP virtual data base and other media. The reading assignments are by no means exhaustive; they will, however, provide clues to more detailed treatments of the great majority of issues and questions to be raised in the introductory course in African American Studies and History.

Our study of African American history necessitates an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on paradigms and critical theories, and understanding the humanizing nature of learning about and eradicating racism and other “isms” damaging to people. Material will not be introduced in strict chronological order.

Note also that films and sections of videos will be used to heighten our appreciation of historical eras and issues. As new material is emerging, our list of this type of resources may change.

Course requirements are:

Journal	25%
Final examination	20%
Packback	15%
Team presentations	15%

Community service project	15%
Participation in classroom discussions	5%
AFST event attendance and report	5%

Assignments are designed to support your learning process in this class. When you do not submit your homework, your level of informed participation in the class is not the optimal. Missing more than five assignments, including journal entries and Packback submissions, will result in a failing grade or a withdrawal from the class.

Journal entries: Journal entries consist of two parts: a) summaries of the texts assigned, b) a paragraph with comments. The main focus of our journal entries is *Liberating Minds*, in addition to other articles and films assigned for reading. Our journal **entries will not cover** *Creating Black Americans*. Journal entries usually include one chapter of *Liberating Minds*. They will be submitted through Blackboard, using the “Write submission” tab, not the comments tab, as in-text, not as an attachment. The summaries are the objective section of your journal entry (they are not essays), your comments’ paragraph may include opinions, reflections, and critiques. Every summary must have a length of 250 words (minimum). Start your summary by citing the name of the author, title, and argument or objectives. Provide the specific context (period and geographical location) for the person or event in question. Specific achievements, contributions to the democratization of our society, perspectives and theories must be detailed in your report. In addition, include the type(s) of social injustice issues the person or group in the text addressed. In your comments, which must consist of at least 150 words, state the relevance of the information to contemporary issues and your personal experiences or perspectives. Every summary must include at least two **footnotes** with citations following the Chicago/Turabian format, providing the publication information and page where we can locate the ideas you are referring to.

Do not get discouraged if you receive a low score. Your professor will provide feedback to improve your future submissions during our lab time using the assignment rubrics. You can also read her comments in the tab titled “my grades.” Call the helpdesk technicians if you are not able to read your professor comments posted on Blackboard. Students are required to read such comments and to write subsequent journal entries according to the feedback submitted. You will earn the opportunity to resubmit journal entries through adherence to her instructions to improve journal entries. When areas in need of improvement are not corrected after receiving feedback, your professors will not grant you the opportunity to resubmit your work for a higher grade. Informed responses to her comments will earn extra points.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated and journal entries with patchwork (pasting sentences which are directly copied from the texts) will earn zero points. Journal entries must be coherent and demonstrate understanding of the text as a whole. Five instances of late submission or omission will produce a failing grade. Journal entries submitted late will receive a 10% deduction per day.

It is highly recommended to visit Blackboard periodically. You can find your grades, post messages, form discussion groups and be reminded of tests, assignments, events, etc. through this platform. When your score is not perfect, make sure you read the feedback provided by your instructor in the field titled “my grades.”

Presentations: Every team will prepare one professional-level presentation consisting of three sections: 1) Main points of an assigned chapter from *Liberating Minds*; 2) a biography of an African American person or event (3%), approved by your professor in advance; and, and activity applying the concepts learned through the lecture part. The lecture portion will take a maximum of ten minutes. A power point presentation and a lesson plan is required and will be submitted at least two weeks before scheduled time for review. The last slide of your *Liberating Minds* presentations will contain an interactive exercise for

the group covering the main points and theories of the biography and the article. All members of the team will present information contained in each slide of the biography and the chapter. Slides will not be divided among the students. Presentations must be fluid; every member of the team must be familiar with the entire content of the presentation and able to answer questions during the Q and A session. Reading information from the slides is not an acceptable practice. The slides must contain *power points* with minimal text, and they should contain images (when appropriate). Your team activity should take about 10 minutes. A questionnaire is not an acceptable activity if it is not inserted in other activities. Each activity presented in class must be different from those planned by other teams. Submit your power point, along with a lesson plan through Blackboard two weeks before your presentation for approval and stay in communication with your professor to adjust the text and activities to the course requirements. Your PPT files must be free of grammatical errors, and the text must be original (not just a copy-and-paste paragraph). Citation of sources must be provided in a separate slide and in your lesson plan. Sources must be academic, considered reliable by your professor (not Wikipedia, ask.com, bio.com). Please, consult with your professor if you find information in internet that is important, when no other academic source validates the data.

When designing your PPT, list main ideas in very few words that can be read from the last row of the classroom, with a maximum of three slides. Videos should not exceed two minutes. It is the presenters' responsibility to make sure they complete this assignment as scheduled. If postponed, due to changes in our syllabus, students will present during the following session, with the other team scheduled for that session. All teams must present before the final exam date and must stay in contact with their professor to ensure they have a spot in our class sessions.

Packback assignments:

Participation is a requirement for this course, and the Packback Questions platform will be used for online discussion about class topics, starting the second week of the term. Packback Questions is an online curiosity community where you can be fearlessly curious and ask BIG questions about how what we're studying relates to life and the real world.

Writing amazing questions and answers on Packback will:

- Help you develop writing skills necessary for any career path
- Reinforce the imperative skill of justifying thoughts and claims with credible evidence- and then citing the evidence!
- Enhance critical thinking sought out by employers
- Deepen your understanding of the course content by gaining diverse insights and perspectives from your peers

Your participation on Packback will count towards 15% percent of your final grade.

In order to receive your points per week, you must post **1 Question and 2 Answers per week relevant to our assigned Packback reading** per week.

Before you start posting, be sure to read the [Community Guidelines](#) found in the tutorial on Packback. If your post doesn't follow the Packback Community Guidelines, there is a chance it will be removed and you won't receive points for that post.

There will be a **Sunday 11:59 PM deadline** for submissions in your community each week. **Note:** it takes 24 hours for the Packback team to moderate a post and send a coaching email. In order to get credit for a moderated post, you must edit and re-publish by the deadline. This is why it is important that you complete your Packback questions and responses far before the deadline in case your post is moderated

We will spend time in class highlighting discussions from Packback, encouraging feedback and recognizing top students!

You will receive a welcome email from holla@packback.co prompting you to finish registration and payment. Packback has already created an account for you with your school email, all you need to do is reset your password. This email may be directed to spam or filtered out, so make sure you do a thorough scan of your inbox if you can't find the email.

If you search your inbox and still can't find the welcome email, or if you are new to the course, you may manually register by following the instructions below:

1. Navigate to <https://Packback.co/questions> and click “Register as a new student”.

Note: If you already have an account on Packback you can login with your credentials.

2. Make sure to register with your SCHOOL email address and real first name and last name.

3. Enter our class community’s access code into the “Join a new Community” module on your dashboard.

Our Community access code: 98ab9c36-3749-4b3b-aa45-95c213c901b8

4. Follow the instructions on your screen to finish your registration.

If you have ANY questions or concerns regarding Packback throughout the semester, please contact the customer support team at holla@packback.co!

For a brief introduction to Packback Questions and why we are using it in class, watch this video: vimeo.com/packback/Welcome-to-Packback-Questions

Exam. Students will present a final exam. There is no mid-term exam. Students must submit responses that include the historical significance of the event, persons, communities described. Responses must be formulated in the student’s own words. Significance of each event, process or person must be provided to obtain full credit for the answer. The objective is to reflect on the information learned and to establish connections with contemporary social processes.

AFST event attendance and report. Students will attend an event organized or sponsored by the African American Studies program and submit a report describing the event and the historical/cultural importance of its celebration. 750 words, minimum.

Participation in class discussions must generate respectful conversations. Avoid replying directly to other students and wait until all other students speak to take again your turn, even if the conversation takes a different direction. Conversations will always be unfinished as our aim is to generate permanent reflection on the topics at hand and to reflect as we are learning through our readings, lectures, and documentaries. Academic terminology to describe communities must be practiced. When in doubt about a term, consult with your professor. We may disagree with other person’s opinion but the objective is to ponder other perspectives. Participation points will not be accrued when students are absent or when exhibiting a disrespectful demeanor.

Community project. Students will transcribe an oral history provided by the Institute of Oral History at the University of Texas. This is a team project requiring a distribution of responsibilities to complete the

transcription. Each team will be in charge of transcribing a maximum of twenty minutes in total.

Information on the functions and importance of this archive may be found here:

<https://www.utep.edu/liberalarts/oral-history/> In addition to the transcription, students will submit a team report with a summary of the transcription and the historical importance of the oral history transcribed. The report will have an extension of 500 words, minimum.

Each absence will result in a deduction of 10% points from the student's final grade, with the exception of the first absence. Lateness, leaving the classroom for more than 5 minutes, and leaving a class session before its conclusion will cause a loss of 2.5 – 5% points from the final grade per instance after the first event. It is particularly important to attend our special guest lectures punctually. Jury duty, UTEP official representation in sports or academic events, and military orders to leave the city are the only instances in which absences may be excused. Three or more unexcused absences can result in the student receiving a failing grade for the course. When excused absences are excessive or limit the ability of the student to submit homework or demonstrate mastering the content of our texts and lectures, students will be dropped from the course or will receive a failing grade. Please review your student handbook for policies pertaining to plagiarism. The policies will be adhered to strictly. The assignments and format for the tests will be discussed more thoroughly within the first week of the semester.

Cell phones, computers, and earphones, must be stored in your back pack or purse, away from your desk during our class time, exams, group work, and special events. Students may use their electronic devices only to access software and sites used during an active session, exclusively when indicated by their professor or guest speakers. Your writing area must be used to write or perform activities directly related to the class.

Assignments must be submitted each Tuesday by midnight, except the first week of the term.

Late work policy:

- **All assignments are due on or before the assigned dates.**
- **There will be no make ups for class participation or quizzes in class. Backpack assignments will receive zero points if not submitted on time.**

It is important that you understand the reasons why you receive the grade you do. I encourage students to discuss the graded papers, quizzes or exams with me, but such conversation can only take place 24-hours after students receive their graded paper or quizzes.

Students' responsibilities

- Students will complete all procedures required to drop the course if they desire to obtain a "W."
- Students will be active in their own learning process, obtain knowledge on their own, and share their knowledge with their peers and teacher.
- Students are expected to read assigned material prior to class. They should be prepared to answer questions related to material in the text and may be called on to do so. Students should also be prepared to ask questions about issues of interest or for clarifications of concepts during class.
- Students are expected to show respect for the instructor, guests and one another regardless of opinion, cultural values and other group differences.
- Communications with your peers and your professor must follow the protocol you will read at <http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor> Participation points will be deducted when your messages do not follow the conventions listed in the site referenced.

- When requested to meet with your professor in her office, you must schedule a meeting or meet her during office hours during the next 36 hours. Failing to meet with her in this case will result in a deduction of your participation points.
- Students should give one another equal opportunity to express opinions, experiences and ideas. Students will respond according to their turn, not in a ping-pong mode, or in a two-person discussion. The goal is not to win a discussion but to reflect on the information and perspectives presented during our group conversations. .
- All students should be supportive of a cooperative learning environment in the classrooms.
- Students are encouraged to attend all sessions, arrive on time, and remain in attendance until each session is formally ended. When a test is scheduled, students will not be allowed to leave the classroom before finishing the test, with the exception of documented medical problems. A significant proportion of the learning process originates from interaction with others and in the give-and-take discussions relevant to readings. Because our class represents a system of learning, your presence or absence affects and enables the learning process of every other class member.
- Students will not use cell phones or other electronic devices during our class sessions unless we are in our research period and used only for that purpose. Unauthorized use of electronic devices will cause dismissal of the student at the time of the event and for the duration of that session. Attendance and participation points will be cancelled. If the behavior is repeated, the student will be dropped from the class. In cases of emergency, students must notify the instructor of the need to answer a call and will be allowed to exit the classroom for a brief period of time to take the call.
- Students will acquire their materials during the first week of class, including their textbooks and subscription to Packback.
- **Your classmates and your syllabus will be a good source to inquire on what you missed in class when absent. Make sure to read the assignments schedule submitted through Blackboard.**