

## SYLLABUS

This course will examine the key themes and major events of Afro-American history beginning with the turn of the century and continuing to the present. Through careful reading and critical study, students will be increasingly able to develop their own informed perspective on the continuing drama of Afro-American history. This course focuses on the sweeping changes that urbanization, industrialization, and social mobility brought to the black American community. These historical experiences will be treated against the backdrop of continuing race, gender, and class oppression, as well as in the context of Afro-American cultural vitality and the struggle to overcome injustice.

**Approach.** The course adopts a world view which treats Afro-Americans as central actors in their history, rather than as passive objects or pawns in the machinations of others. Afro-American history is the product of interactions with U. S. society, which is itself is thoroughly and indelibly stamped with the Afro-American brand.

**Organization.** The class format will mix lectures and discussions.

**Evaluation.** Attendance will be kept for each class session, and as students are responsible for each meeting's work, they are expected to be on time. Grades will be based on the following:

- 1) Three short papers, worth 30% of the total grade. (A hand-out on how to write these papers will be distributed separately.)
- 2) A midterm exam in essay format, worth 30% of the total grade.
- 4) A final examination worth 30% of the total grade.
- 5) Attendance/participation credits, worth 10% of the grade

**Texts.** Texts have been placed on reserve at College Library.

Clayborne Carson, In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s  
James Weldon Johnson, Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man  
Jacqueline Jones, Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow  
Anne Moody, Coming of Age in Mississippi  
Booker T. Washington, Up From Slavery

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Reading assignments are due for the next class meeting.

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE. THE RURAL SOUTH IN 1900

Jan. 19 - The status quo.

**Reading: Jones, Intro, ch. 1.**

Jan. 21 - How the status quo was maintained.

**Reading: Washington, chs. 1-5.**

WEEK 2: IDEOLOGY AND CULTURE: NATIONAL CURRENTS

Jan. 26 - Racism as a system.

**Reading: Jones, ch. 2.**

Jan. 28 - The segregated world.

**Reading: Washington, chs. 6-11.**

WEEK 3: THE MINI-RENAISSANCE OF THE RAGTIME ERA

Feb. 2 - The turn of the century flowering of Afro-American culture.

**Reading: Jones, ch. 3.**

Feb. 4 - Urban life before the Great Migration.

**Reading: Washington, chs. 12-15.**

WEEK 4: REFORM, RACE AND PROTEST

Feb. 9 - Challenges to conservatism.

**Reading: Washington, chs. 16-17.**

Feb. 11 - Afro-Americans and the Progressives.

**Reading: Jones, ch. 4.**

WEEK 5: THE BLACK WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Feb. 16 - Roots of the black women's movement in the anti-lynching campaign.

**Reading: Johnson, chs. 1-2.**

Feb. 18 - Class, social reform, and the club movement.

**Reading: Johnson, chs. 3-6.**

WEEK 6: AFRO-AMERICANS AND THE IMPERIALIST AGE

Feb. 23 - The Spanish-American War.

**Reading: Johnson, chs. 7-8.**

Feb. 25 - Pan-Africanism.

**Reading: Jones, ch. 5.**

WEEK 7: THE GREAT MIGRATION

Mar. 2 - Characteristics of the Great Migration

**Reading: No assignment.**

Mar 4 - MIDTERM

**Reading: No assignment.**

Spring break week of March 7-14. No classes

WEEK 8: "THE NEW NEGRO"

Mar. 16 - Generational and ideological responses to post-World War I society.

**Reading: Johnson, ch. 9.**

Mar. 18 - The Renaissance in Harlem and elsewhere.

**Reading: Jones, ch. 6.**

WEEK 9: POLITICS IN THE DEPRESSION-ERA

Mar. 23 - The city and the machine.

**Reading: Johnson, ch. 10.**

Mar 25 - Radicalism.

**Reading: Johnson, ch. 11; Jones, ch. 7.**

WEEK 10: BLACK NATIONALISM IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Mar. 30 - Garveyism.

**Reading: Jones, ch. 8 and epilogue.**

Apr. 1- Ethiopianism.

**Reading: Carson, Introduction and chs. 1-4.**

WEEK 11: AFRO-AMERICANS GO TO WAR

Apr. 6 - The Double-V.

**Reading: Carson, chs. 5-7.**

Apr. 8 - Roosevelt's uneasy coalition.

**Reading: Moody, chs. 1-7.**

WEEK 12: BLACK AMERICANS AND THE COLD WAR

Apr. 13 - Afro-Americans and foreign affairs.

**Reading: Moody, chs. 8-12; Carson, ch. 8.**

Apr. 15 - Restructuring Afro-American politics.

**Reading: Moody, chs. 13-16; Carson, chs. 9-10.**

**WEEK 13: THE EMERGING CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

Apr. 20 - The evolution of the challenge to segregation.

**Reading: Moody, chs. 17-19.**

Apr. 22 - The origins of insurgency.

**Reading: Moody, chs. 20-22; Carson, chs. 11-13.**

**WEEK 14: CIVIL RIGHTS INSURGENCY AND SOCIAL CHANGE**

Apr. 27 - The civil rights movement from 1961 to 1970.

**Reading: Moody, chs. 23-25.**

Apr. 29 - Impact of the civil rights movement on U. S. society.

**Reading: Moody, chs. 26-29; Carson, chs. 14-16.**

**WEEK 15: THE TRIUMPH OF CONSERVATISM?**

May 4 - Racial justice and urban unrest.

**Reading: Carson, chs. 17 through epilogue.**

May 6 - The conflict over entitlements.

**Reading: None.**

**PAPERS DUE**

## TOPICAL ESSAY

The topical essay is a 6-8 page essay on one topic in twentieth century Afro-American history. Aside from text readings and lecture material, no additional research is required to write the essay. Critical analysis and careful interpretation of the topics, rather than extensive empirical investigation, is most desired. Sample topics are suggested below, but students are not bound to these. The only restriction as to subject is that the topical essay be about an aspect of twentieth century Afro-American history.

Get an early start on planning and writing. Constructing an outline of your argument is a good way to proceed. While there are no recitation sections in this course, the instructor is ready to help students with the selection of topics, construction of outlines, reviewing of initial drafts, and any other aspects of preparation.

The paper will be typed, double-spaced. Margins should be no wider than 1 1/4" and pages should be full. While these instructions may seem picky, word processing programs now permit people to do many truly odd things with term papers, and the point here is to ensure that the length of the paper genuinely has something to do with its content. Untyped papers will be returned unread, and late ones may be docked. If you want to directly quote a source in your text, use quotation marks and indicate the source of the quotation in a footnote. Any ideas not your own should be identified as borrowed.

Feel free to discuss your topic with others in the class. Be open to differing points of view, but let the final product be your own. Essays will be evaluated on the basis of their pertinence, logical organization, clarity of expression, and general accuracy.

The purpose of the essay is to prompt you to think in depth about the issues that it raises. The quality of the essay you write will be judged by how well you demonstrate your ability to present your thoughts and arguments clearly and effectively. You are not bound by the topics below. You should, however, have selected one by Week 11, when you will be asked to submit a brief (2-3 sentences) description, which can be, like the samples below, phrased in the form of questions.

Samples:

1. In the social sciences, much of the literature on the black family stresses either one of two approaches. The first suggests that slavery and subsequent racial discrimination weakened the black family. According to this view, father-absent and other unconventional family structures have contributed to the high rates of out-of-wedlock births and juvenile delinquency in the black community. Other social scientists maintain that black families continue to be nurturing despite their variance from the approved social norm. These scholars believe that Afro-Americans' cultural adaptations allowed them to deal with the problems posed by their environment. Discuss both aspects of this debate from your own point of view, in historical perspective.
2. Based on your reading and lecture notes, write a general description of the black political agenda as it evolved since 1900. What are the main objectives and strategies? What have been the greatest obstacles and successes?
3. What, if any, is the relationship between the legal reforms instigated by the civil rights movement and the economic reforms of the mid-1960s Great Society program? What have been the achievements and limitations of both?
4. Analyze the hero in The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man. Does this fictional character shed any light on the collective Afro-American experience of the early 20th century? Johnson's protagonist has been called one of the first modern characters in Afro-American literature. What would account for such a description? Do you agree or disagree?