

AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES 636: AFRO-AMERICAN HISTORY FROM 1900 TO THE  
PRESENT  
Spring 2011. Professor Plummer

Office hours: Tues/, Thurs. 11 to noon and by appointment  
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S Y L L A B U S

This upper division course surveys twentieth century African-American history, beginning with its roots in rural society at the turn of the century. The Afro-American experience encompasses the survival strategies of black people as they moved from country to town and city. The critical events studied include world wars, the development of an urban culture, the evolution of music and art, politics and protest, and the impact of African-American life and thought on modernity in the United States. Students will further develop their analytical skills as they familiarize themselves with the continuing drama of Afro-American history, a powerful tool for understanding the cultural vitality of Afro-Americans and their ongoing struggle to overcome injustice.

**Organization.** The class format will mix lectures, discussions, and audiovisuals when possible. Scheduled topics provide broad chronological and thematic continuity and supply background material for students' own research. Students are encouraged to use the Social Action Collections at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, which includes one of the finest civil rights archives in the country. Wisconsin also has one of the most extensive collections of newspapers, including the African American press. Some of these are also available digitally. The course offers an excellent opportunity to use these resources.

**Classroom policies.** The more controversial a subject, the more we need to respect one another's viewpoints. Class discussions can be lively and intense, but they must be diplomatic. Thoughtfully criticize an idea; don't attack the person expressing it. Please turn off cell phones, pagers, and other noisemakers while in class and enter and leave the room quietly at the beginning and end of the session. The multimedia classroom was expensive to build. Please try to keep furnishings clean.

**Evaluation.** Grades will be based on the following:

- 1) Two 6-7 page papers (30% each)
- 2) A midterm exam (20%)
- 3) A final exam (20%)
- 4) Attendance. (See below)

Attendance requirement: Attendance is required. Attendance will be kept for each class session. The reason is to protect the interests of those students who diligently come to class and help cre-

ate a community by their presence. It is based on the idea of a classroom as a social entity and education as a commitment. Anyone have up to 8 unexcused absences ( i.e., one month of classes) without penalty. Those otherwise missing more than 8 class sessions cannot earn more than a C in the course.

**Texts.** Texts have been placed on reserve at College Library, or at the Historical Society, if the Society owns the book. They are available for sale at the University Bookstore.

Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*

James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*. (This is in the public domain and will be distributed to students as a .pdf file)

Robin Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression*

Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off The Prize: The United Nations And The African American Struggle For Human Rights, 1944-1955*

Robert E. Weems, *Desegregating The Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century*

Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance*

Nancy MacLean, *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace*

Patricia Hill Collins, *From Black Power to Hip Hop: Racism, Nationalism, and Feminism*

#### What the grades mean:

A (93-100) - Papers that are thoroughly researched, knowledgeable and reflect mastery of the sources used. They have a well-defined, logically developed argument that takes into account possible counter-arguments and that show strong evidence of original thinking. "A" papers are soundly structured, skillfully written, lack grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors, and are careful about citations. Exams demonstrate excellent knowledge of facts as shown by quantitative performance on short answer and multiple-choice sections. Excellence indicates superior knowledge, ability to reason on the fly, and writing ability on essay questions.

AB (85-92) – ABs are papers that are well researched but not exhaustively so, and that indicate solid understanding of the sources used. They are well argued and do not simply mirror the conclusions of other authors. Papers are clearly written and identify all sources used and cited, but are not outstanding as far as writing style or insights are concerned. ABs have a minimum of grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors. Exams evince good knowledge of facts as demonstrated by quantitative performance on short answer and multiple-choice sections. Essay sections are characterized by sound knowledge, capacity to sustain an argument, and write clearly and well spontaneously.

B (80-84) – "B" papers have covered some but not most of the bases in drawing factual information out of sources. They have moderate organizational problems. They make a good argument but do not provide evidence to support all of it, or may not be logical or well organized

throughout. Sometimes there is slippage with regard to citations and grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors. Exams show good knowledge of facts as demonstrated by quantitative performance on short answer and multiple-choice sections. Essays show an adequate grasp of the subject but arguments are not strongly supported, and writing is adequate but not impressive.

BC (77-79) – These papers do not cover enough factual ground. They have serious structural or organizational problems and may feature weak arguments or adequate arguments that are weakly supported. Papers may have compositional problems. Not enough attention has been paid to grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors. Exams indicate borderline knowledge of facts as illustrated by quantitative performance on short answer and multiple-choice sections. Essays may not fully answer the question, try to answer another question, or are not clearly written.

C (70-76) – So-called “average” papers indicate through inaccuracies or lack of material that research was not adequately done. They may have writing problems serious enough to confuse a reader. “C” papers do not present a real argument, or do little to support it. They may contain extensive citation that just fills up space with poor documentation of the citations. These papers pay little or no attention to grammar, punctuation, or spelling. The exams display limited knowledge of facts as demonstrated by quantitative performance on short answer and multiple-choice sections. Essays may skirt the questions asked, are not well structured, or show evidence of writing difficulties.

D (69-65) – papers reports do not contain much information and are organized and written poorly. They lack a thesis. Extensive difficulties with writing and documentation are apparent. No attention is paid to the paper’s appearance, which might contain extensive grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors. Exams indicate deficient knowledge of facts as demonstrated by quantitative performance on short answer and multiple-choice sections. Essays indicate lack of basic knowledge and have serious organizational and compositional problems.

F (64) - Failure to carry out the minimum requirements of the papers or exams as detailed above. Often a product of absence.

#### Information about papers:

Students will be provided with a list of paper topics they can choose from. Those wishing to develop their own are free to do so after clearing the topic with the professor. Bear in mind that these papers are short, so topics should not be overly broad. For all the papers, think practically. Are you choosing a subject who can be researched and written within the time available to you? Is your topic meaningful? Greater detail and guidelines on the writing process will be provided later on a separate handout.

#### **Due dates:**

Paper 1 – Thursday, February 24

Paper 2 – Thursday, April 21

Midterm – Thursday, March 10, in class

Final exam – May 10, 2:45 pm – 4:45 pm