

AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES 636: AFRO-AMERICAN HISTORY FROM 1900 TO THE
PRESENT

Spring 2012. Professor Plummer

Office hours: Tues/, Thurs. 11 to noon and by appointment

Location: 4141 Helen C. White

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Class list e-mail address: afroamer636-1-s11@lists.wisc.edu

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. Pre-1945 paper, 12 pages - (30%)
2. A midterm exam (20%)
3. A final exam (20%)
4. Post-1945 paper, 12 pages - (30%)

Grades are not curved.

Missed exams cannot be made up.

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. Further instructions on writing the papers will be provided in a separate handout.

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 create a community by their presence. It is based on the idea of a classroom as a social entity and education as a commitment. Anyone can 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 Rainbow Book Cooperative, 425 Gilman Street. Articles will be downloadable from Learn UW. They are listed here in the order they'll be read.

[BOOK] James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*. (This is in the public domain and will be downloadable from LearnUW)

[ARTICLE] Corbould, Clare, "Streets, Sounds and Identity in Interwar Harlem," *Journal of Social History* 40 (No. 4, Summer 2007): 859-894

[ARTICLE] Stewart E. Tolnay, "The Great Migration and Changes in the Northern Black Family, 1940 to 1990," *Social Forces* 75 (No. 4, Jun. 1997). 1213-1238

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

[ARTICLE] Abby J. Kinchy, "African Americans in the Atomic Age: Postwar Perspectives on Race and the Bomb, 1945–1967", *Technology and Culture* 50 (No. 2, April 2009): 291-315

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

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

[ARTICLE] Heather Ann Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History," *Journal of American History* 97 (3: 2010): 703-34

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, March 22****Paper 2 – Thursday, April 26****Midterm – Thursday, March 1, in class****Final exam – May 10, 2:45 pm – 4:45 pm**

The class list address is: afroamer636-1-s12@lists.wisc.edu

The web site address is: <http://hum.lss.wisc.edu/bplummer/hist636/index.html>

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