

AAS/Hist 321: African American History Since 1900
MWF 11:00-11:50 Spring 2020. Professor Plummer, bplummer@wisc.edu

S Y L L A B U S

(double-sided copy)

This course examines twentieth century African-American history, beginning with its roots in rural society at the turn of the twentieth century. The African American experience encompasses the survival strategies of black people as they moved from country to town and city. It includes the cultural innovations made in response to changing conditions. 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 become acquainted with the momentous developments of the last century, including industrial and demographic transition, agricultural change in the South, the impact of world wars and the Cold War, and key events and issues of a long era of civil rights insurgency. Black radicalism is explored, as well as the policies of the federal government, the impact of world affairs, and the role of gender. The activities and life stories of individual participants and broad historical forces are considered. Students will further develop their analytical skills as they familiarize themselves with this history, a powerful tool for understanding the totality of American life.

Learning outcomes include: Familiarizing students with African Americans' lives during a critical era in their history as well as that of the country at large; fostering knowledge about the broader social context in which that history has unfolded and continues to evolve; making students aware of some of the rich resources for research available to them; exploring present-day issues and their relationship to the past; sharpening analytical skills.

Why an ethnic studies requirement? (This section is based on the University's statement on ethnic studies.) Ethnic studies courses are conscious of how society has valued certain histories and discounted others. They illuminate how these differences have promoted disparities in contemporary American life. Ethnic studies courses aim to apply critical thinking skills and encourage students to harbor a healthy skepticism towards knowledge claims about race and ethnicity, whether in the form of media, political, or popular representations. As part of this process, the ethnic studies requirement should challenge students to question their own assumptions and preconceived notions on these topics.

Awareness of self is linked with awareness of and empathy towards the perspectives of others. Ethnic Studies courses give students an opportunity to think about identity issues, including their own identity, as well as the connections they might have to people "outside" their focused social circle. Ethnic Studies courses endeavor to be relevant to students' lives outside the classroom by enhancing students' ability to effectively and respectfully participate in a multicultural society. This participation can include being able to discuss race and ethnicity with a colleague or friend, for example, or recognizing inequities that may occur in interpersonal or institutional contexts.

Organization. The class format will mix lectures and discussion led by students. Scheduled topics provide broad chronological and thematic continuity and supply background material for students' own research interests. Students are encouraged to use the archives at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, one of the finest 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.

This 3-credit course has 3 hours of group meetings per week (each lecture counts as one hour according to UW-Madison's credit hour policy). The course also carries the expectation that you will spend an average

of at least 2 hours outside of class for every hour in the classroom. In other words, in addition to class time, plan to allot an average of at least 6 hours per week for reading, writing, preparing for discussions, and/or studying for quizzes and exams for this class.

Each student will sign up to lead one day's discussion of assigned readings. Everyone will have at least one opportunity to organize discussion for the class. After making yourself familiar with the material you are to talk about, you will write down your talking points on a sheet of paper that you will hand in to me. This will be a paragraph or two outlining what you got out of the reading and what you want the class to discuss, and/or it can be a set of questions for discussion. Discussion leading is graded by evaluating how clearly the discussant presents the reading. It assesses the ability to identify major points, put the material in context, and develop thoughtful questions. Further instructions this will be provided in a separate handout.

There are two 5-page papers. The first will cover a pre-1945 topic, and the second a post-1945 topic. Students will be provided with a list of paper topics they can choose from, but 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.

Evaluation. Grades will be based on the following:

1. Pre-1945 paper, 5 pages - (20%)
2. A midterm exam (20%)
3. A final exam (20%)
4. Post-1945 paper, 5 pages - (20%)
5. A 10-minute discussion-leading session. (20%)

Grades are not curved.

Missed exams cannot be made up.

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, laptops, and other devices while in class.

Students with disabilities. Students with a disability should contact the professor as soon as possible to arrange for alternative testing accommodations or any other special needs.

Attendance requirement: Attendance is required and 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 without penalty. Those otherwise missing more than 8 class sessions cannot earn more than a C in the course.

Due dates:

Midterm – March 5

First paper – April 7

Second paper – April 30

Final exam - May 5, 12:25 PM - 4:25 PM

Required texts. Articles and excerpts are in digital form and will be downloadable from Canvas. Books are on reserve and can be purchased from A Room of One's Own Bookstore, 315 W. Gorham Street.

[BOOK] Robin D. G. Kelley and Earl Lewis, eds., *To Make Our World Anew: A History of African Americans from 1880, volume 2 only*. (Oxford University Press, 2005). We'll be reading everything except the first chapter. *This book is also online through the Library.*

[BOOK] Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law* (Liveright/Norton, 2017)

Articles and excerpts in alphabetical order: (These are posted to Canvas)

W. E. B. Du Bois, from "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others" from *Souls of Black Folk*, and "Close Ranks" from *The Crisis*

Marcus Garvey's editorials, from *Philosophy and Opinions*

Danielle L. McGuire, "'It Was like All of Us Had Been Raped': Sexual Violence, Community Mobilization, and the African American Freedom Struggle," *Journal of American History* 91 (Dec. 2004): 906-931

Peniel Joseph, "Dashikis and Democracy: Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Black Power Movement," *Journal of African American History* 88 (2:2003): 182-204

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

Alain Locke, "Enter the New Negro," *Survey Graphic* (March 1925)

Eric Lott, "Double V, Double Time: Bebop's Politics of Style," *Callaloo* 11(3): 597-605.

Kristi Tillett, "'Free That Brown Eyed Man' The United States v. Chuck Berry," *Safundi* 13 (3-4:2012): 339-356

Booker T. Washington, the Atlantic Compromise speech, in *Up from Slavery*

Ida B. Wells, from *Southern Horrors*

Other information:

The class list address is: afroamer321-1-s20@lists.wisc.edu

You are automatically subscribed to it if you are registered. Students should also feel free to use the list to communicate with one another and share information about the course. E-mail is not a substitute, however, for class attendance and participation.

Professor's office hours: 11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. in Afro-American Studies, 4th floor, Helen C. White.
E-mail address: bplummer@wisc.edu

COURSE CALENDAR - (Readings are discussed on the day they appear on the calendar)

Jan. 21 - Introduction to the course

Reading: *To Make Our World*, ch. 1 pp. 3-22;
Color of Law, Preface

Jan. 23 - The Nadir

Reading: Wells, "Southern Horrors"; *To Make Our World*, ch. 1, pp. 23-44

Jan. 28 - Conserving a usable past

Reading: *To Make Our World*, ch. 1, pp. 44-66.

Jan. 30 - Ragtime and blues

Reading: *To Make Our World*, ch. 2, pp. 67-86

Feb. 4- The Washington synthesis

Reading: Washington's Atlanta Compromise speech; *To Make Our World*, ch. 2, pp. 87-96.

Feb. 6 - "Race Radicals"

Reading: Du Bois, "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others;" *To Make Our World*, ch. 2, pp. 96-110

Feb. 11 - World War I

Reading: Du Bois, "Close Ranks;" *To Make Our World*, ch. 2, pp. 110-120; Color of Law, ch. 1

Feb. 13 - Urban Meccas

Reading: Locke, "Enter the New Negro;" *To Make Our World*, ch. 2, pp. 120-130; *Color of Law*, ch. 2.

Feb. 18 - Garveyism

Reading: Garvey, from *Philosophy & Opinions*

Feb. 20 - Renaissances, Harlem and elsewhere

Reading: no assignment

Feb. 25 - Changes in the South

Reading: *To Make Our World*, ch. 3, pp. 131-148; *Color of Law*, ch. 3

Feb. 27 - Depression and the interwar era

Reading: *To Make Our World*, ch. 3, 148-166; *Color of Law*, ch. 4

Mar. 3 - Midterm prep

Reading: no assignment

Mar. 5 - **MIDTERM**

Reading: no assignment

Mar. 10 - A New Deal for some

Reading: *To Make Our World*, ch. 4, pp.167-76; *Color of Law*, ch. 5

Mar. 12 - African Americans and World War II

Reading: Eric Lott, "Double V, Double Time: Bebob's Politics of Style"; *Color of Law*, ch. 6

SPRING BREAK MAR. 14 - MAR. 22

Mar. 24 - The Cold War

Reading: Kinchy, "African Americans..."; Color of La, ch. 7

Mar. 26 - Civil rights before the *Brown decision*

Reading: *To Make Our World*, ch. 4, pp. 176-92; *Color of Law*, ch. 8

Mar. 31 - Popular culture

Reading: Tillett, "Free that Brown-Eyed Man;" *To Make Our World*, ch. 4, pp. 192-214

April 2 - Civil rights insurgency

Reading: McGuire, "It Was like All of Us Had Been Raped"; *To Make Our World*, ch. 4, pp. 214-227

Apr. 7 - Black nationalism after Garvey

FIRST PAPER DUE

Reading: no assignment

April 9 - War and reform in the Great Society

Reading: *Color of Law*, chs. 9 and 10

April 14 - Black Power

Reading: *Color of Law*, ch. 11

Apr. 16 - no class meeting

Reading: no assignment

Apr. 21 - African American internationalism

Reading: *Color of Law*, ch. 12 and epilogue

April 23 - The rise of conservatism

Reading: Joseph, "Dashikis and Democracy"

Apr. 28 - Public policy challenges

Reading: *Color of Law*, Appendix

Apr. 30 - Summary and conclusion

SECOND PAPER DUE

Reading: no assignment

May 5 - Final exam, 12:25 PM - 12:25PM