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Rutgers University-Newark
Spring 2013
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AFRICAN AMERICAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES 21:014:302
ENGLISH 21:352:395:Q1
THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Black Arts Movement, as it is commonly known, was an aesthetic, cultural and ultimately deeply political artistic movement loosely linked to and in philosophical agreement with many aspects of the Black Power movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Despite its brief historical span, we will explore why the Black Arts Movement remains significant for the course of contemporary African American, African Diasporic and American literature today, by looking first at its antecedents in the Harlem Renaissance, the first major African-American literary movement of the 20th century and a central moment in American modernism, and then contrast the rhetoric and discourse of key Harlem Renaissance figures with those of the Black Arts writers and artists, noting the centrality and model of the former, while also discussing the ways in which Black Arts writers diverge and participate actively in the construction of a (Pan-)African(-American)/black nationalism. Indeed, the question of "nationalism" will be key, as will key concepts such as racism, gender, sexuality, class, and intersectionality. We will conclude the course by considering the afterlife of Black Arts Movement ideas in several late 20th and early 21st century works.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

All required texts will be posted to the CMS Blackboard site. Please note that I may change the course texts, but will give you sufficient advance notice. If you would like to acquire any anthologies in which a majority of these works (from the Harlem Renaissance, or the Black Arts Movement) appear, please let me know and I will provide you with the proper citation. Please bring all texts we will be reading to class.

I will also be requesting that the library place on reserve a copy of Spike Lee's film *Do the Right Thing*, which we will be viewing later in the course, and a videodisc featuring music by the hip hop group Public Enemy, which we also will be listening to and discussing in class. I will also be posting (method TBD) audio files by The Last Poets, Gil Scott-Heron, and Public Enemy.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Regular, punctual attendance at and participation in class;

- 6 one-page commentaries, which you will be submitting, based on the group you sign up for, on the dates listed on the calendar below;
- 1 two-to three-page creative work, inspired by the texts in the class, which you will be submitting on the dates listed on the calendar below;
- Periodic pop quizzes or in-class very brief writing assignments;
- A final 7 to 10-page critical or research paper to be submitted by Please note that you must come to speak with me in person about your final paper.

This course will have no mid-term or final exam, but, as noted above, there may be pop quizzes throughout.

Reading Commentaries

To facilitate discussion, all students in the class will join one of FIVE groups (A-E), and based on your group's assigned date, you will individually write SIX one-page (200-word) commentaries on the readings preceding the due date. Please note: these should not exceed a page. The commentaries are due on designated COMMENTARY days (see calendar below).

As informal written assignments, your commentaries can either be clearly handwritten or typed, and should summarize and discuss the assigned readings. You should not regurgitate exactly what is in the texts, but discuss some *literary, aesthetic, political, cultural* or *theoretical* aspect of the readings immediately preceding your commentary's due date; and you must submit written responses to the readings based on the group to which you sign up.

Your comments will be graded with a check (if completed and focused on the readings), a check plus (if especially well done and written), or a check minus (if barely passable or unreadable). An extraordinarily good record on the commentaries (many check pluses) will elevate your course grade by half a grade (from B to B+, for example). Barely passable commentaries (many check minuses) will lower your course grade by ONE FULL GRADE (from C to D).

Turning in fewer than six commentaries will also lower your course grade by ONE FULL GRADE (from C to D), and late comments will not be accepted without a signed doctor's note (or an equivalent form of excused late submission, such a personal family tragedy or a tropical storm like Sandy; broken printers, feeling blah, forgot the date, etc. are not acceptable).

Be sure to place your name and date on your commentary pages. It is your responsibility to identify who you are and that you are submitted required work.

Creative Project

On the required date, all students in the class will submit a brief two-to-four-page creative project inspired by one of the creative texts we have read thus far. This can be 1)

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a poem; 2) short prose piece; 3) playlet or snippet of a play; 4) memoiristic text; 5) cross-genre work. This is not a critical text per se, and so you should not approach it as if you are writing in that form. You also should take this assignment as seriously as you would a critical one. It is your opportunity to engage with the critical and creative texts and demonstrate your artistic skills.

Final Paper

You must hand in your final paper in **HARDCOPY** form to me on the date it is due (**MAY 15, 2013**). Do not submit it via email. Let me repeat: do not submit it to me via email. Bring it to the African American and African Studies department main office (or to the English department main office). *Without prior approval late papers will not be accepted.*

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Please note that everyone must ensure that she or he signs in for every class. Beginning the second week, you are expected to attend the entire class. More than three (3) unexcused (medical, family emergency, etc.) absences will lower your *course* grade ONE LETTER GRADE (e.g., B to C). *Six (6) unexcused absences will result in failure.* Please come to class. If you cannot attend this class regularly and on time because of a schedule conflict, do not enroll in this class.

Classroom Etiquette

Everyone enrolled in the class is expected to behave in a polite, thoughtful, agreeable manner. If you behave rudely or are inconsiderate to your classmates (excessive domination of the discussion, cutting people off, name-calling, etc.) you will be asked to leave the room. (Repeated disruptions may result in a failing grade.) You should be ready to participate in every discussion. You may *not* keep a laptop computer open or a tablet computer running for note-taking unless you have spoken first with and gotten permission from me. You must shut off all cellphones; texting, Tweeting, Facebooking, Instagramming, Pinteresting, listening to your cellphone, mp3 player or similar device, and above all, cellphone conversations, as well as any other similar form of behavior, are unacceptable. If you are caught do any of these more than once, your *course* grade will fall by ONE LETTER GRADE (e.g., C to D).

GRADING POLICY:

Final paper = 30%

Commentaries = 30%

Creative Project = 20%

In-class participation and Attendance = 20%

+

Pop quizzes/in-class writing assignments (these can help to raise or lower your grade)
= 100 percent!

A = Exceptional work

B+ = Very good work

B = Pretty good work

C+ = Good work

C = Average work

D = Substandard work but enough to pass

F = Very poor work (I do not want to give anyone this grade, so please, make the effort.)

ATTENDANCE:

You **MUST** regularly and punctually attend class. Please make every effort to arrive on time. You may miss one class with my permission without a grade point reduction. If you are regularly absent or tardy without sufficient explanation and/or proper Rutgers University medical verification, you should expect a full-point reduction of your final grade.

If you need to be absent or late during the quarter for any reason, please let me know as soon as you can in advance, so that the class and I can plan accordingly.

PLAGIARISM:

Simply put, plagiarism, which entails the unattributed copying of someone else's work, is unacceptable. This includes copying passages of someone else's work—published, unpublished, in a book, from a newspaper, from a blog, from Google, anywhere--without attributing the copied material either in the text or in footnote or endnote as a quote, with adequate citation. It is always better to write a flawed draft that you can strengthen and revise than to submit someone else's work. Always.

Even if you are pressed for time, do not copy someone else's work and submit it as your own without proper attribution. I will devote one of our class sessions towards the end of the term, before your paper draft is due, to discussing matters such as research, endnotes, and so forth. You may also always schedule a session at the Writing Center in Conklin 126 to discuss your paper; the Writing Center is not just for students who may be struggling with their writing, but also for everyone who wants to improve her or his work. They are there to help you.

There are programs that faculty members can access which can scan for plagiarized texts, so please, do not do so.

Please note that Rutgers takes breaches of code of academic integrity very seriously, and if you plagiarize, you will be putting your college future in jeopardy. Violations of the University academic integrity policy will be prosecuted.

Also, please note that the State of New Jersey has very serious penalties, including a substantial fine and potential prison time, for students who purchase and submit papers from online academic paper mills. I am not making this up: it is very serious business. So again, do your own work, come talk with me and also visit the writing center if you are experiencing any issues with your papers, and absolute do not plagiarize someone else's material.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AGREEMENT:

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As per the rules of Rutgers University, students should sign the Academic Integrity Agreement, which can be found on the CMS Blackboard site.

ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES:

E-mail:

Please provide me with the best e-mail to reach you. If you do not use e-mail, please let me know as soon as possible.

E-mail is the best way to reach me. My earthlink account is the best route.

Emergencies:

In the case of an emergency, please contact the African American and African Studies department's main office at 973-353-5528, OR the English Department's main office at 973-353-5158, or have someone you trust contact them. If you are ill and not incapacitated, please send me e-mail if you can; if you can only contact me afterwards and you must be out for a long period of time, please have the appropriate person in your school notify me.

Religious Holiday Policy:

It is University policy (University Regulation on Attendance, Book 2, 2.47B, formerly 60.14f) to excuse without penalty students who are absent from class because of religious observance, and to allow the make-up of work missed because of such absence. Examinations and special required out-of-class activities shall ordinarily not be scheduled on those days when religiously observant students refrain from participating in secular activities. Absences for reasons of religious obligation shall not be counted for purposes of reporting.

Students are advised to provide timely notification to instructors about necessary absences for religious observances and are responsible for making up the work or exams according to an agreed-upon schedule.

COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE	READING	ASSIGNMENT
Th 1/24	Week 1: Introduction Discussion of Syllabus Discussion of Course Topic and Themes	
Mon 1/28	Week 2: Antecedents: The Harlem Renaissance: The New Negro	READ: Alain Locke, "The New Negro"; W. E. B. DuBois, "Criteria of Negro Art"; Langston Hughes, selected poems.
Thu 1/31		READ: Richard Wright: "Blueprint for Negro Writing"; Countee Cullen, selected poems; Claude McKay, selected poems; Georgia Douglas Johnson, selected poems.
Mon 2/4	Week 3: The Harlem Renaissance: Countercultures	READ: Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain"; Zora Neale Hurston, "Drenched in Light"; Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes, from <i>Mule Bone</i> . COMMENTARY DUE (GROUPS A, B, C, D)
Thu 2/7		READ: Richard Bruce Nugent, "Smokes, Lilies and Jade".
Mon 2/11	NO CLASS	
Thu 2/14	Week 4: Black Poetics in the Post-War Era: Gwendolyn Brooks & Russell Atkins	READ: Gwendolyn Brooks, selected poems; Russell Atkins, selected poems. COMMENTARY DUE (GROUPS B, C, D, E)
Mon 2/18	Week 5: <i>Dutchman</i> , or Killing Off the Black Bourgeoisie	READ: Amiri Baraka, <i>Dutchman</i> .
Thu 2/21		READ: William Van De Burg, "What Is 'Black Power?'"; Larry Neal, "The Black Arts Movement"; Amiri Baraka, <i>Dutchman</i> (continued)
Mon 2/25	Week 6: The Black Arts Movement: Neo-Orality & The Objective	READ: Mike Sell, "The Black Arts Movement: Performance, Neo-Orality, and the Destruction of the

		'White Thing"; Amiri Baraka, selected poems. COMMENTARY DUE (GROUPS A, B, C, D, E)
Thu 2/28		READ: Howard Rambsy II, "Introduction: A Group of Groovy Black People"; Ameer Baraka, "Introduction"; Amiri Baraka, selected poems; ; Reginald Lockett, "Die Black Pervert".
Mon 3/4	Week 7: Black Arts Movement: Revolution & Black Power	READ: James T. Stewart, "The Development of the Black Revolutionary Artist"; Harold Cruse, "Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American"; Amiri Baraka, "Madheart". COMMENTARY DUE (A, B, D, E)
Thu 3/7	NO CLASS	
Mon 3/11	Week 8: The Black Arts Movement: Women Speak	READ: Cherise Pollard, "Sexual Subversions, Political Inversions: Women's Poetry and Politics of the Black Arts Movement"; Nikki Giovanni, selected poems.
Thu 3/14		READ: Nikki Giovanni, selected poems; Sonia Sanchez, selected poems.
Mon 3/18 - Thu 3/21	NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK WEEK	
Mon 3/25	Week 9: The Black Arts Movement: Black Surrealism and Metaphysics	READ: Jayne Cortez, selected poems. COMMENTARY DUE (A, B, C, E)
Thu 3/28		READ: Jayne Cortez, selected poems; Carolyn Rodgers, selected poems; Henry Dumas, selected poems.
Mon 4/1	Week 10: The Black Arts Movement: Other Currents & Genres	READ: Jay Wright, "The End of the Ethnic Dream"; Lance Jeffers, "My Blackness Is the Beauty of This Land"; Audre Lorde, "Now" and "The Black Unicorn". COMMENTARY DUE (A, B, C, D, E)
Thu 4/4		READ: Ed Bullins, "How Do You Do".

Mon 4/8	Week 11: The Black Arts Movement: The Last Poets & Spoken Word	LISTEN: Last Poets, <i>This Is Madness/Last Poets</i> , esp. selected songs (Run, Nigger; Niggers Are Scared of Revolution; Wake Up, Niggers; New York, New York; Jones Coming Down). COMMENTARY DUE (A, C, D, E)
Thu 4/11		LISTEN: Last Poets, <i>This Is Madness/Last Poets</i> , esp. selected songs (True Blues; Related to What Chant; Related to What; Black Is Chant; Black Is; White Man's Got a God Complex); Gil Scott-Heron, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised".
Mon 4/15	Week 12: The Black Arts Movement: Looking Back, Looking Forward	READ: Cheryl Clarke, "'Missed Love': Black Power and Black Poetry"; Lorrie Smith, "Black Arts to Def Jam: Performing Black 'Spirit Work' across Generations"
Thu 4/18		WATCH: Spike Lee, <i>Do The Right Thing</i>
Mon 4/22	Week 13: Post-BAM Art	WATCH: Spike Lee, <i>Do the Right Thing</i> CREATIVE PROJECT DUE
Thu 4/25		LISTEN: Public Enemy, <i>Fear of a Black Planet</i> , esp. selected songs (Brothers Gonna Work It Out; 911 Is A Joke; Anti-Nigger Machine; Burn Hollywood Burn; Fear of a Black Planet; Fight the Power).
Mon 4/29	Week 14: Post-BAM Art Continued	LISTEN: Public Enemy, <i>It Takes a Nation of Millions</i> , esp. selected songs (Bring the Noise; Don't Believe the Hype; Caught, Can We Get a Witness; Prophets of Rage; Security of the First World; Party for Your Right to Fight).
Thu 5/2		READ: Kia Corthron, <i>Force Continuum</i> .
Mon 5/6	Week 15: LAST DAY OF REGULAR CLASSES Final Discussion	READ: Kia Corthron, <i>Force Continuum (continued)</i> .
Tu 5/7-	READING DAYS	

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Wed 5/8	
Fri 5/15	EXAM WEEK – FINAL PAPER DUE by 5 pm