

## Introduction to African American and African Studies: II

Spring 2018

21:014:112:02

Tuesday and Thursday 4:00–5:20 PM

Ackerson 106

Instructor: Bernie Lombardi

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Office: Conklin 245

Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:00-4:00 PM and by appointment



This course is an introduction to the study of African and African diasporic cultures and societies with a special emphasis on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We will discuss major political movements, such as decolonization in Africa and the Civil Rights movement in the United States, their social and cultural impacts on Black identity formation, and the cross-continental interactions and cultural developments they incited. We will also spend time considering the conditions of Black life after these monumental movements as articulated by key scholars, artists, and activists of our time.

Central to our discussion throughout the term is an examination of the ways by which the terms “Blackness” and “Africa” have evolved and changed throughout time. As such, we will examine how

gender, sexuality, class, nation, and migration impact how we interpret raced experience in its various manifestations.

While this class, for the most part, moves in historical chronology, it is not a comprehensive survey of African and African diasporic histories. Instead, our key concern will be interpreting different kinds of cultural texts, such as novels, short stories, film, essays, letters, poetry, and news articles, among others, within their historical contexts. We will constantly ask ourselves how studying these various Black/African cultural forms can help us better understand the moment in which we live today and prepare for a better future.

### Course Objectives:

- Analyze African and African diasporic histories, cultures, and identities through multiple kinds of sources with awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of these sources
- Learn how to identify an author's focus and main argument concisely
- Analyze the ways various sources tell different stories about race and racism and consider the power and agency of their writers
- Develop a rhetoric for discussing race that manifests sensitivity and care
- Interpret the various intersections of race, gender and sexuality
- Identify the contributions of African Americans, Africans and other African diasporic subjects to United States and world histories.
- Understand what a historical document can tell us about the context in which it was made
- Draw connections between readings across themes and historical periods
- Develop writing skills
- Develop close reading and critical thinking skills

**Note:** This syllabus may be subject to change. The instructor will make students aware of changes via email.

### Course Requirements

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#### ➤ Required Texts:

1. Soyinka, Wole. *Death and the King's Horseman* (ISBN: 9780393322996)
2. Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye* (ISBN: 9780307278449)
3. Mpe, Phaswane. *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (ISBN: 9780821419625)
4. Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *Between the World and Me* (ISBN: 9780812993547)

These books are available at the Rutgers-Newark bookstore and online at Amazon.com. You may also be able to find these books at the library. However, you are required to obtain the exact editions (new or used) listed above so that we can easily reference passages during class discussion without having to worry about differing pagination.

All other texts are posted on the course's Blackboard site.

You must bring HARD COPIES of ALL readings to class. I reserve the right to ask any students who show up to class without hard copies of the readings to leave for the day.

### ➤ Office Hours

My office hours are for you. Stop by with any questions you have about assignments, readings, classroom discussions, other pertinent topics, or just drop by to say hello. The only thing I discourage is visiting to cover material from a missed class period; for that, consult fellow classmates. All else is warmly welcomed. This is an open and safe space for continuous dialogue, and there is no such thing as a “stupid” question. If your schedule conflicts with my office hours, we can set up an appointment at a mutually agreeable time.

Regarding emails, I will try and get back to students within 24 hours (many times, sooner) Mondays-Fridays. However, I may not respond to emails on Saturdays and Sundays.

### ➤ Grade Breakdown:

Attendance and Participation: 20%

Quizzes (1-5): 20%

Analytical Question: 5%

Interpretive Essay: 25%

Final Exam: 30%

### ➤ Attendance

Students must attend each class meeting having thoroughly read all assigned readings and prepared to discuss the material in class. Students must **bring printed copies** of readings to class.

Students may miss class three times without penalty. Missing more than three classes will negatively impact your final grade. You should be careful as to how you use these absences. If, for example, you use all three absences early in the semester just because you feel like taking the days off, you will be penalized for missing a fourth class even if you are ill and have proper documentation. Therefore, I recommend that you do not use your absences carelessly. The only exception for missing class more than three times is if you can provide proper documentation for all absences. However, these extreme circumstances will require us to meet and discuss your progress in the class. Also, note that you cannot make up quizzes and other assignments that are due on a day you miss class.

### ➤ Participation

You are evaluated in part on your contributions to the discussion. This is not only about quantity of participation, but also about thoughtful participation: selective comments that really move discussion forward and suggest careful engagement with the texts and questions under consideration. Active listening is also part of participating. Being present in the classroom, sharing ideas, and doing your best to make the time we have together productive is far more important than recording and memorizing what is said in lectures.

I do expect you to respect and engage with your peers’ interests, as they can inform and expand your own in valuable ways. I will take note when you respond thoughtfully to other students, when you are open to different perspectives and points of view, when you call classmates by name, when you contribute to the classroom’s energy with alert body language and responsive gestures. Students who routinely contribute to class discussion, show initiative in engaging with the material, and demonstrate their active listening will receive high marks for participation. A critical part of discussions is the posing of thoughtful questions.

Many of the topics this course covers are sensitive and require intellectually mature and respectful participants. Being respectful and open-minded is the best way to learn and grow. Individual and intellectual growth should always be goals while taking courses in college. If you ever feel disrespected or uncomfortable during course discussions, you should not hesitate to contact the instructor.

### ➤ Quizzes

There will be five quizzes given throughout the semester making up 20% of your final grade. Each quiz is worth five points. This means that your lowest score will be dropped. Quizzes will vary in format. Some will consist of several short answer questions and others may be in the form of a single short essay. These questions will test both your attention to reading and engagement with class lectures/discussions.

Note that you **cannot** make up a quiz that you missed. If you are absent on the day a quiz is given, that quiz will count as your discarded lowest score.

### ➤ Analytical Question

You are required to create one analytical question this semester. Each student will be assigned a specific reading to create a question about. **Your question is due to the instructor by 6:00 PM (via email) the night before your reading is assigned to be discussed in class.** This assignment is worth 5% of your final grade.

This question should be 2-3 sentences in length. The first 1-2 sentences must be an attempt at summarizing the reading's main argument. These sentences should be followed by a thought provoking question that shows your close reading of the material and demonstrate that you have given the topic serious thought. You must come to class prepared to discuss your question with your classmates.

**No make-ups will be given for this assignment** (except for extreme illness or family emergency with relevant documentation). Do not take it upon yourselves to switch topics with someone else. Any changes have to be cleared with me well in advance of the assigned date. It is your responsibility to remember the date you are supposed to submit your question. Please do not hesitate to ask me if you have any questions.

I will do my best to assign you to a date/topic that appeals to your interests. Email me three choices, including date and author's last name, stating your preferences for leading class discussion. In selecting your three choices, consider which topics/readings most appeal to you and your schedule (i.e. don't select a date when you have a paper due in another class). You may also email me specific dates when you prefer not to lead discussion. In order to consider your preferences, **I must receive your choices by Wednesday, January 17 at 6:00 PM.** I will do my best to accommodate everyone's preferences, but this will not always be possible. I will assign dates in the order in which I receive your emails.

### ➤ Interpretive Essay

You are required to write one essay this semester, due on **Tuesday, April 3.** The purpose of this essay is to test your capacity to read closely and think critically about the texts we discuss in class. Topics will be distributed Thursday, March 8 (the class before Spring break), so you will have about a month to work on this essay.

You must hand in a hard copy of your essay at the beginning of class (4:00 PM) on April 3. This essay is worth 25% of your final grade. It should be 4-5 pages (no less than 4 full pages and no more than

5 full pages), and must be written in 12 point Times New Roman or Cambria font, be double-spaced, and have 1 in. margins on all sides.

### ➤ **Final Exam**

The Final for this class will be in the form of a take-home exam, due on **Thursday, May 3 at 10:00 PM** via Blackboard. The exam is worth 30% of the final grade and will consist of 3-4 essay questions, which you will be given roughly one week prior to the due date. All questions will be comparative in nature, and all responses must be written in paragraph form with complete sentences.

**\*\*Note:** The instructor will form exam questions based off of the course's readings and visual content and class lectures and conversations. It is crucial that when you are absent, you ask your classmates (and not the instructor) what you missed in class. I may show short clips or provide handouts during class, and you are responsible for this information on the final exam. In addition, an exceptional dialogue between students and the instructor may appear in question form on the final exam.

### ➤ **Notes on Late Assignments, Course Engagement, and Use of Electronics**

In the event that students know an assignment will be late, they should inform the instructor at least three days prior to the assignment due date. If the instructor considers a student's reasoning legitimate, he can choose not to penalize for lateness (this is completely up to the instructor's discretion). If students are ill or unable to complete an assignment due to a serious family matter, they should provide the instructor with appropriate documentation, such as a doctor's note.

Students should have a plan to ensure that they will have access to the internet on a daily basis throughout the semester. Technical problems, failed internet connections, and computer crashes are not excuses for not completing course work or submitting assignments late. You should make a plan for what you will do if you have any technical problems.

Electronic media is a welcome tool to aid learning in the modern classroom. However, used irresponsibly it can also be detrimental to learning when students lose the ability to focus on lectures or distract other students with it. Use of electronic media is therefore a student privilege, not a right, and may be revoked by the instructor under certain conditions. During class time certain electronic media—laptop computers and tablets, not cell phones—may be used only for the following purposes:

- to read required course texts (E-books or texts posted on Blackboard)
- to type notes on lectures and classroom discussions
- for all in-class exams, provided the student has first downloaded Respondus

Electronic media may NOT be used to browse the internet, answer email, check social media, or for any use that is not directly related to the course. If any student is found to be in violation of the electronics policy—as witnessed by the instructor, the graduate assistant, or as reported by fellow classmates—that student will be banned from using any electronic media for the remainder of the course. If the student continues to use electronic media despite the ban, his or her final grade will be reduced a full letter grade at the conclusion. In extreme cases I reserve the right to ban the student from the classroom altogether. The student will be notified in writing if s/he has lost the privilege of using electronic media. Cell phones must be turned off during class time or set to “vibrate”.

### ➤ Policy on Academic Integrity (Cheating and Plagiarism)

Rutgers University treats cheating and plagiarism as serious offenses. The standard minimum penalties for students who cheat or plagiarize include failure of the course, disciplinary probation, and a formal warning that further cheating will be grounds for expulsion from the University.

If I find that you have used other people's ideas (e.g., Wikipedia, Amazon reviews, book jacket descriptions, etc.), I will not accept the assignment because I will not be able to consider it your own work. You will get a failing grade (0 points) for that assignment and will not be able to make it up.

You are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the Academic Integrity Policy, available at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers/>. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any use of the ideas or words of another person without proper acknowledgment of credit will result in penalties up to and possibly including a course grade of F. Likewise for cheating on exams and quizzes. Note that the uncited use of uncopyrighted material such as Wikipedia entries still constitutes plagiarism.

### ➤ Policy on Disabilities

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus' disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>. For more information please contact the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, in suite 219, by phone at 973-353-5375 or by email at [odsnewark@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:odsnewark@newark.rutgers.edu).

### ➤ How to Read (adapted from [https://www.academia.edu/10274714/How\\_to\\_Read\\_and\\_View\\_A\\_Student\\_Worksheet\\_on\\_Close\\_Reading](https://www.academia.edu/10274714/How_to_Read_and_View_A_Student_Worksheet_on_Close_Reading))

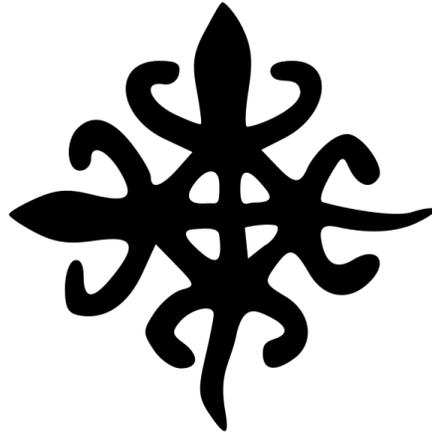
**Close observation/close reading** involves slowing down and paying very close attention to what we are reading or viewing. We do this so that we can pull out big ideas or key images *as well as* identify the details of what is in front of us. When we closely observe something, we are dealing with the "WHAT" aspect of a given object: for instance, What am I seeing? What is happening here? What is the context in which this is taking place? When was it written or produced? What is the form in which a story or idea or image is being conveyed? When we closely observe something—whether we are reading a novel or short story, watching a movie, engaging a scholarly text, listening to a political speech, or even scanning the side of a cereal box!—we are better able to grasp how complex that object is, which makes us better able to practice critical thinking.

**Critical thinking** demands that we ask ourselves questions about the ideas, images, stories, and forms we are encountering in order to better understand the motivations, intentions, and consequences of certain arguments or viewpoints. Critical thinking deals with the "HOW" and the "WHY" of a given object: for example, How is this story or this set of ideas being communicated to me? How are these ideas being organized into an argument or claim about the world? Why has the author or creator decided to communicate a set of ideas in one specific way, instead of another? Why am I seeing or reading about some things while others are masked, ignored, or overlooked? What are the consequences of these omissions? In other words, critical thinking demands that we ask what the

purpose of a given text is, and how its particular presentation of stories, ideas, forms, values, or perspectives have different effects on the world. Ultimately, when we think critically, we refuse to take the world at face value but instead always question what we see, hear, read, and engage with in a spirit of generosity and curiosity. Critical thinking is a way of caring about the world deeply.

The point of exercising close observation and critical thinking together is to develop the ability to make substantial and meaningful claims or arguments about the world around you. We call this **analysis**, or sometimes **critique**. When we analyze or critique something, we are using intelligent and focused observation of a given object to form arguments about how and why it works the way it does. For example, we might be trying to explain how a movie puts forward a particular set of ideals to its audience through its distinct use of plot and cinematography; how a writer uses specific rhetorical or narrative techniques to make a statement about gender, race, class, or sexuality; or how a scholar organizes a specific argument or invents a concept to explain something about the world that remains under-studied. Answering these kinds of questions demands that we transform our initial close observations into *interpretations* that can be supported by evidence present in the object we are studying. Interpretation is the act of making meaning from the form and content of a story, an idea, a worldview, or an image.

In literary studies, we often call this practice **close reading** (as opposed to reading closely). Close reading is the practice of developing multiple interpretations of a given text, object, or phenomenon, based on evidence collected from close observation and critical thinking. It is important to remember that critique is not the same thing as criticism (or what we think of as negative judgment) though it may involve some amount of that; rather, critique involves explaining, in your own words, how a certain set of ideas, forms, representations or values function in a given context and to respond to them with your own fully articulated position. **In other words, analysis and critique describe the activity of forming and articulating your own ideas, which allows you the freedom to have an effect on the world, rather than being a bystander to it all.**



## Course Schedule:

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### Tuesday, January 16: intro to class

1. Watch in class: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story"

### Thursday, January 18: Race Consciousness

1. W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Forethought and Chapter 1)
2. "Leopold Senghor Dies at 95: Senegal's Poet of Négritude" in *New York Times*

### Tuesday, January 23: Back to Africa?

1. Marcus Garvey, "Africa for Africans"
2. Derek Walcott, "A Far Cry from Africa"
3. Countee Cullen, "Heritage"
4. Louise Bennett, "Back to Africa?"

### Thursday, January 25: Liberation Struggles in Africa

1. Steve Biko, *I Write What I like* (Chapter 11)
2. Amilcar Cabral, "Identity and Dignity in the Context of the National Liberation Struggle"

### Tuesday, January 30: Struggle for Civil Rights in the United States

1. Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"
2. Malcolm X, "Ballot or the Bullet"
3. Joy James, "Ella Baker, 'Black Women's Work' and Activist Intellectuals"

**Thursday, February 1: Pan Africanism**

1. Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Introduction)

Quiz #1

**Tuesday, February 6: Black Internationalism: The United States and South Africa**

1. Selected letters between Langston Hughes and Richard Rive (in *Langston Hughes and the South African Drum Generation* ed. Graham and Walters)
2. Langston Hughes, "A Toast to Harlem" and "Income Tax" in *The Best of Simple*
3. Richard Rive, "The Bench"

**Thursday, February 8: Postcolonial Tragedy I**

1. Wole Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman* (Parts 1-3; pp. 9-45)

**Tuesday, February 13: Postcolonial Tragedy II**

1. Wole Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman* (Parts 4-5; pp. 45-76)

**Thursday, February 15: Language and African Literature**

1. Chinua Achebe, "The African Writer and the English Language"
2. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "The Language of African Literature" in *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*

**Tuesday, February 20: Blackness and the Politics of Beauty I**

1. Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*: pp. 1 - 58

Quiz #2

**Thursday, February 22: Blackness and the Politics of Beauty II**

1. Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*: pp. 59 - 93

**Tuesday, February 27: Blackness and the Politics of Beauty III**

1. Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*: pp. 94 - 163

**Thursday, March 1: Blackness and the Politics of Beauty IV**

1. Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*: pp. 164-206

### **Tuesday, March 6: Black Feminist Foundations**

1. Audre Lorde, "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," "Sexism: An American Disease in Blackface," and "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" in *Sister Outsider*
2. Alice Walker, definition of "Womanist"

### **Thursday, March 8: Black Queer Theory**

1. E. Patrick Johnson, "Quare Studies, or (almost) everything I know about queer studies I learned from my grandmother"
2. James Baldwin, "The Outing" in *Going to Meet the Man*

Quiz #3

Essay Topics distributed

### **Tuesday, March 13: Spring Break**

### **Thursday, March 15: Spring Break**

### **Tuesday, March 20: Diaspora and Sexuality**

1. Marlon James, "From Jamaica to Minnesota to Myself" in *New York Times*
2. Thomas Glave, "Whose Caribbean? An Allegory, in Part"
3. Diriye Osman, "Watering the Imagination" and "Your Silence Will Not Protect You" in *Fairytales for Lost Children*

### **Thursday, March 22: The African Diaspora**

1. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (excerpts from Chapter 1)
2. Stuart Hall, "Subjects in History: Making Diasporic Identities"

### **Tuesday, March 27: The "New" African Diaspora**

1. Isidore Okpewho, "Introduction: Can We 'Go Home Again'?" in *The New African Diaspora* (pp. 3-14 and 25-26)
2. Chinelo Okparanta, "Tumours and Butterflies" in *Happiness, Like Water*

### **Thursday, March 29: Afropolitanism**

1. Taiye Selasi, "Bye-Bye Babar"
2. Achille Mbembe, "Afropolitanism"
3. **Watch:** *An African City*: Season 1 Episode 1

### **Tuesday, April 3**

**\*Interpretive Essay due – No reading**

**Thursday, April 5: Postapartheid South Africa I**

1. Phaswane Mpe, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*: pp. 1-28

Quiz #4

**Tuesday, April 10: Postapartheid South Africa II**

1. Phaswane Mpe, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*: pp. 29-80

**Thursday, April 12: Postapartheid South Africa III**

1. Phaswane Mpe, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*: pp. 81-124

**Tuesday, April 17: Race in 21<sup>st</sup> Century United States I**

1. Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*: Part 1; pp. 1-71

**Thursday, April 19: Race in 21<sup>st</sup> Century United States II**

1. Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*: Parts 2 and 3; pp. 72-152

Quiz #5

**Tuesday, April 24: Race in 21<sup>st</sup> Century United States III**

**No Reading—watch in class:** Barry Jenkins, *Moonlight*

**Thursday, April 26: Race in 21<sup>st</sup> Century United States IV**

**No Reading—we will discuss *Moonlight***

**Thursday, May 3**

**Take Home Final Exam due: 10:00 PM**