

Introduction to African American and African Studies: II

Spring 2019

21:014:112:02

Tuesday and Thursday 4:00–5:20 PM

Bradley 312

Instructor: Bernie Lombardi

Instructor Email: Bernie.Lombardi@Rutgers.edu

Office: Conklin 246

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, 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- Understand what a historical document can tell us about the context in which it was made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

➤ Required Texts:

1. Soyinka, Wole. *Death and the King's Horseman* (ISBN: 9780393322996)
2. Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye* (ISBN: 9780307278449)
3. Wainaina, Binyavanga. *One Day I Will Write About this Place: A Memoir* (ISBN: 978 1555976248)
4. Okorafor, Nnedi. *Shuri #1* (this is a comic book; the cheapest way to purchase it is on the kindle app for \$3.99—the kindle app is free)

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 ALL readings to class. I reserve the right to ask any students who show up to class without 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%

Museum Group Project: 20%

Exam #1: 20%

Exam #2: 20%

Final Essay: 20%

➤ Attendance

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

➤ **Museum Group Project**

Students are required to review in groups of 3-4 the *Arts of Global Africa* exhibit at the *Newark Museum* (see: <https://www.newarkmuseum.org/arts-global-africa>) This review is worth 20% of your final grade and is due on **Tuesday, March 5** at the beginning of class. Note: each group submits one review essay (hard copy). The essay should be **1,500 – 1,800** words, written in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, and have 1 in. margins on all sides. Make sure each group member's name is listed at the beginning of the essay. You must also include a **works cited** page at the end of the essay including any outside sources you used while writing this essay.

I will put students into groups during the first week of class. All members of the group will receive the same grade for the assignment. It is the group's responsibility to divvy up the workload as fairly as possible. It is extremely important that the group views the exhibit together and spends quality time discussing it afterward. Admission to the *Newark Museum* is free with Rutgers ID. Along with the essay, you **must** also submit a photo taken of the group at the museum with the exhibit entrance and title visible in the background. Any group that does not submit this photo will receive a ten-point penalty for this assignment. Note: You don't have to get an actual photo developed. Printing it in black and white in the Rutgers library is fine.

How to write this museum review essay:

- Do background research before you go to the exhibit (include sources in your works cited).
- Collect all the material made available by the museum.
- Take notes on: what is the theme of the show? What thematic devices are used to select and organize the work in the show? How does the show make these themes known to you? What was your first impression when you began walking through the exhibition? Did it change throughout? If so, how and why?
- What historical or contextual material is included in the show? What might have been included but isn't? (Assuming you did your background research, what else would you have liked to know with respect to the material in the show?)
- How is the exhibition's content relevant to the themes of our class?
- Focus on the art: choose **two** of your group's favorite pieces from the exhibit and consider the following for each: who is the artist, when was this piece made and what is its title? what subjects does the artist illustrate? What characterizes the artist's style? What medium did the artist use? Describe the piece's impact on the group. How do you interpret this piece? What is this piece's relevancy to the larger exhibit? What is its relevancy to the themes of our class?

➤ Exams

There will be **two** in-class exams for this class (**March 14** and **May 2**). Each exam is worth 20% of your final grade. The first exam will cover all material up to Spring break and the second exam will cover all material after Spring break. Each exam will test your understanding of key terms, concepts and historical moments and your ability to describe a cultural text's significance/contribution to these terms/concepts/moments. You may also be asked to compare and contrast competing viewpoints held by the thinkers we discuss.

You are permitted to bring **one** standard-sized piece of paper (i.e. printer paper) with **hand-written** notes into each exam. You **may not** share notes with classmates. Students caught sharing notes with a classmate will receive an automatic 0 for the exam.

****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 exams. In addition, an exceptional dialogue between students and the instructor may appear in question form on an exam.

➤ Final Essay

In lieu of a final exam, you will be asked to write a **1,500-word** essay responding to a specific question that I will provide on the last day of class. This essay is worth 20% of your final grade and will be due on **Wednesday, May 15 at 3:00 PM** via Blackboard. The question will be comparative in nature and require that you put in conversation a series of texts from the syllabus.

➤ 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.

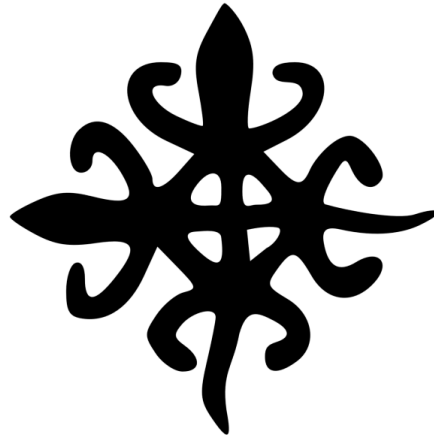
➤ **How to Read** (adapted from https://www.academia.edu/10274714/How_to_Read_and_View_A_Student_Worksheet_on_Close_Reading)

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:**

Tuesday, January 22: intro to class

Thursday, January 24: Race Consciousness

1. W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Forethought and Chapter 1)

Tuesday, January 29: 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 31: Négritude

1. Léopold Sédar Senghor, "What the Black Man Contributes"

Tuesday, February 5: Postcolonial Tragedy I

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

Thursday, February 7: Postcolonial Tragedy II

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

Tuesday, February 12: Decolonizing the Mind

1. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "The Language of African Literature" in *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*

Thursday, February 14: Anti-Apartheid and Black Consciousness in South Africa

1. Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like* (Chapter 11)

Tuesday, February 19: Struggle for Civil Rights in the United States I

1. Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"
2. Malcolm X, "Ballot or the Bullet"

Thursday, February 21: Struggle for Civil Rights in the United States II

1. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past"
2. **Watch:** YouTube clip on Angela Davis
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2BIZy0HScM>

Tuesday, February 26: Blackness and the Politics of Beauty I

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

Thursday, February 28: Blackness and the Politics of Beauty II

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

Tuesday, March 5: Blackness and the Politics of Beauty III

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

*****Museum Group Project due in class*****

Thursday, March 7: 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, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power"
2. **Watch:** Kimberlé Crenshaw, "The Urgency of Intersectionality"
https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality?language=en

Thursday, March 14: EXAM #1

Tuesday, March 19: SPRING BREAK

Thursday, March 21: SPRING BREAK

Tuesday, March 26: The African Diaspora

1. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (excerpts from Chapter 1)

Thursday, March 28: Afropolitanism

1. Taiye Selasi, "Bye-Bye Babar"
2. Achille Mbembe, "Afropolitanism"
3. Binyavanga Wainaina, *One Day I Will Write About this Place*: pp. 3 - 30

Tuesday, April 2: Identity and Postcolonial Africa I

1. Binyavanga Wainaina, *One Day I Will Write About this Place*: pp. 31 - 103

Thursday, April 4: Identity and Postcolonial Africa II

1. Binyavanga Wainaina, *One Day I Will Write About this Place*: pp. 104 - 152

Tuesday, April 9: Identity and Postcolonial Africa III

1. Binyavanga Wainaina, *One Day I Will Write About this Place*: pp. 153 - 206

Thursday, April 11: Identity and Postcolonial Africa IV

1. Binyavanga Wainaina, *One Day I Will Write About this Place*: pp. 207 - 253

Tuesday, April 16: Diaspora and Sexuality

1. Binyavanga Wainaina, "I am a Homosexual, Mum"
2. Marlon James, "From Jamaica to Minnesota to Myself" in *New York Times*
3. Diriye Osman, "Watering the Imagination" and "Your Silence Will Not Protect You" in *Fairytales for Lost Children*

Thursday, April 18: Race and Racism in 21st Century United States I

1. Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (**Introduction: p. 1 -19**)
2. Claudia Rankine, "The Condition of Black Life is One of Mourning"

Tuesday, April 23: Race and Racism in 21st Century United States II

1. Alicia Garza, "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement"
2. **Watch:** Ta-Nehisi Coates interview <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hJvdl8I-XdM>

Thursday, April 25: Afro-Futures I

1. **Watch:** Ryan Coogler, *Black Panther*

Tuesday, April 30: Afro-Futures II

1. Nnedi Okorafor, *Shuri* (issue #1)

Thursday, May 2: EXAM #2

Wednesday, May 15: Final Essay due at 3:00 PM via Blackboard