Course Information:

Black Arts Movement and Cultural Activism
21:014:303:63
21:512:408:63
Thursdays, 6-9pm
Online

Instructor Information:

Mary Rizzo
Assistant Professor of History
Office: Conklin 247A
Office Hours: TBD
Email: mary.rizzo@rutgers.edu
Twitter: @rizzo_pubhist

Course Description:

Can art and cultural expression be activism? Does poetry, music, literature, and film have the power to change minds, bring discrimination to light, and motivate people to fight for social justice? In this class, we will grapple with these questions by examining the tradition of cultural activism in the African American community since the 1960s. We will focus on the Black Arts Movement, a radical black artistic movement of the 1960s and 1970s, that informed and was informed by the civil rights and Black Power movements. We will trace the roots of the Black Arts Movement in urban, social and culture history. We will also examine its influence on cultural activism since its heyday.

Much of our work will center on Baltimore, MD, and a community poetry and arts magazine called Chicory that was published there from 1966-1983, which has been digitized. Part of the Black Arts Movement, Chicory allows us to hear the voices of working-class African American residents of Baltimore calling across the decades. We will contextualize and analyze their stories to better understand a tumultuous moment in American history. Students will apply what they learn in a public and digital history project requiring research, analysis, and creating content for the public.

I look forward to exploring these ideas with you.

Objectives:

By the end of this class, students will be able to:

• Describe key figures, events, and ideas in the history of the civil rights, Black Power, and Black Arts movements, understanding them as complicated movements that included internal debates over tactics, strategies and the role of culture;
• Think about race relations in conjunction with issues of class, gender, sexuality, and place within these movements;
• Analyze primary sources, including creative expressions, as historical documents;
• Connect history with contemporary issues;
• Synthesize readings and documents in original academic analyses and public history products.

Course Website:
We will use Canvas for this course. All readings, assignments, quizzes, and discussion board questions and posts can be found there.

To access Canvas, go to: https://canvas.rutgers.edu/. If you have any problems, please contact Canvas help at help@canvas.rutgers.edu.

**Expectations:**

This class will use a hybrid model of synchronous and asynchronous engagement.

**Every Thursday, we will meet online for a synchronous lesson that will include lecture, discussion and group activities.** Prior to that meeting, on most weeks (see syllabus and Canvas site) students will respond to discussion questions on Canvas, which will be counted towards your participation grade. Some weeks there will be reading quizzes on Canvas as well.

As I write this syllabus, the pandemic continues to disrupt people’s lives. It’s impossible to know what the semester will hold for us. I will be as flexible as possible with you as long as you communicate with me about your needs and issues in a timely manner. In return, I ask for your flexibility with us in case our situations change and we have to adjust our class plans along the way.

**Attendance and Participation:**

You will be expected to attend class having completed readings and assignments and be prepared to actively participate. Bring your readings with you to each class meeting to facilitate discussion.

**Attendance is mandatory.** An excessive number of absences will negatively impact your grade, whether excused or unexcused. In the case of illness or other issues, please be in touch with Mary Rizzo by email as soon as possible. For further detail on university regulations on class attendance see http://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/nwk-ug_0608/index.html

**Academic Integrity:**

Integrity is fundamental to the academic enterprise. It is violated by such acts as borrowing or purchasing assignments (including but not limited to term papers, essays, and reports) and other written assignments, using concealed notes or crib sheets during examinations, copying the work of others and submitting it as one’s own, and misappropriating the knowledge of others. The sources from which one derives one’s ideas, statements, terms, and data, including Internet sources, must be fully and specifically acknowledged in the appropriate form; failure to do so, intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes plagiarism. Violations of academic integrity may result in a lower grade or failure in a course and in disciplinary actions with penalties such as suspension or dismissal from the College. The university’s policy on academic integrity is available at http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/

All students are required to sign the Rutgers Academic Integrity Pledge and the Rutgers Honor Pledge on each exam. “On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this examination / assignment.”
I strictly follow the University’s rules regarding plagiarism and other academic irregularities. Please consult me if you have any questions about what is and is not appropriate regarding the use of sources or citation.

Assignments and Grading:

- Attendance and Participation: 20%
  - Attendance is defined as you coming to class prepared to discuss that day’s readings
  - Participation is counted by how much you participate in class discussions, whether vocally or using the chat. Asking questions counts as participation!
- Discussion Board Posts: 15%
  - Six times throughout the semester, I’ll give you a prompt to respond to the reading in a short discussion board post on Canvas. These will be graded as complete or incomplete.
  - To get an A, you must get 4 completes. 3 completes counts as a B. 2 completes as a C.
  - Once you get the grade you’re happy with, you do not have to do any more responses. If you get 4 completes on the first 4 posts, you’re done for the rest of the semester.
- Reading Annotations: 15%
  - Several times throughout the semester, I’ll ask you to annotate a reading for that week using Hypothesis, which is linked through Canvas.
  - You must add at least two annotations to the document. These can be questions about something the author said, a response to a point the author made, a connection to something else we’ve talked about in our class or to the news.
- Historical Document Metadata Analysis: 15%
  - You will be assigned one or more historical documents. You will analyze that document, describing it through metadata. These documents will be uploaded to the Chicory Revitalization Project website, making them accessible to researchers and the public.
- Short Paper: 15%
  - Using at least one primary source, students will explore the relationship between culture and activism.
- Zine on Cultural Activism Then and Now: 20%
  - You will create a Chicory-style zine around a theme by using poems and artwork from Chicory, historical documents, contemporary documents and images.

Grading Scale:

- A = 90-100
- B+ = 85-89
- B = 80-84
- C+ = 75-79
- C = 70-74
- D = 69-69
- F = 0-58

Late Assignments:

I expect assignments to be completed on the day they are due. Any late submissions without an approved excuse will lose a half-grade every day it is late. If there are circumstances that make
it impossible for you to hand in assignments on time, please contact Mary Rizzo by email as soon as possible so that we can make arrangements with you.

**Required Texts:**

There are no required books for this course.

All required readings will be available through Canvas or online. Additional materials, including films or other media, may be required as well.

**Accommodation and Support Statement:**

Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and the University as a whole. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

- **For Individuals with Disabilities:** The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter barriers due to disability. Once a student has completed the ODS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and reasonable accommodations are determined to be necessary and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be provided. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at ods.rutgers.edu. Contact ODS at (973)353-5375 or via email at ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

- **For Individuals who are Pregnant:** The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance at (973) 353-1906 or via email at TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

- **For Absence Verification:** The Office of the Dean of Students can provide assistance for absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (e.g., illness, personal or family emergency, etc.). Students should refer to University Policy 10.2.7 for information about expectations and responsibilities. The Office of the Dean of Students can be contacted by calling (973) 353-5063 or emailing deanofstudents@newark.rutgers.edu.

- **For Individuals with temporary conditions/injuries:** The Office of the Dean of Students can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition or injury (e.g., broken or sprained limbs, concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request using the following link: https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu.

- **For English as a Second Language (ESL):** The Program in American Language Studies (PALS) can support students experiencing difficulty in courses due to English as a Second Language (ESL) and can be reached by emailing PALS@newark.rutgers.edu to discuss potential supports.

- **For Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment:** The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students who are experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance by calling (973) 353-1906 or emailing TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm. For more
information, students should refer to the University’s Student Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence, Relationship Violence, Stalking and Related Misconduct located at http://compliance.rutgers.edu/title-ix/about-title-ix/title-ix-policies/.

- For support related to interpersonal violence: The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance can provide any student with confidential support. The office is a confidential resource and does not have an obligation to report information to the University’s Title IX Coordinator. Students can contact the office by calling (973) 353-1918 or emailing run vpva@rutgers.edu. There is also a confidential text-based line available to students; students can text (973) 339-0734 for support.

- For Crisis and Concerns: The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a support plan to address personal situations that might impact their academic performance. Students, faculty and staff may contact the CARE Team by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNCARE or emailing careteam@rutgers.edu.

- For Stress, Worry, or Concerns about Well-being: The Counseling Center has confidential therapists available to support students. Students should reach out to the Counseling Center to schedule an appointment: counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or (973) 353-5805. If you are not quite ready to make an appointment with a therapist but are interested in self-help, check out TAO at Rutgers-Newark for an easy, web-based approach to self-care and support: https://tinyurl.com/RUN- TA O.

- For emergencies, call 911 or contact Rutgers University Police Department (RUPD) by calling (973) 353-5111.

Learning Resources:

- Rutgers Learning Center (tutoring services) Room 140, Bradley Hall (973) 353-5608 https://sas n .rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/ learning-center
- Writing Center (tutoring and writing workshops), Room 126, Conklin Hall (973) 353-5847 nwc@rutgers.edu https://sas n .rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic- support/writing-center

Weekly Schedule:

Module 1: Civil Rights Movement

In this module, we will examine the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s through the lens of culture. How did activists use Freedom Songs, theater, photographs and poetry to shape the movement? We will examine these texts to understand how culture can spur people to action, create community in the face of danger, and educate people about their history.

Week 1: Jan. 21 Introduction to Class

Week 2: Jan. 28 Emmett Till

Readings:

Anne Moody, excerpt from Coming of Age in Mississippi, p. 121-128 (CHECK)
Week 3: Feb. 4: Freedom Songs and Free Theater

Readings:

C. Fraser Smith, excerpt from *Here Lies Jim Crow: Civil Rights in Maryland*. P. 189-197.

Charles Payne, excerpt from *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, p. 256-263. (LINK?)

Martin Duberman, excerpt from *In White America*, p. 44-48.


Module 2: The Black Power and Black Arts Movements

While some scholars have argued that the Black Arts Movement was the cultural wing of the Black Power movement, others have flipped the statement, suggesting that the Black Power movement was the political wing of the Black Arts Movement. No matter which formulation you agree with, it’s clear that the two movements are deeply connected. In this module, we will explore the origins, development, people and ideologies of the Black Power and Black Arts movements. What was the purpose of black art? How did different groups define Black Power? What can we learn about the possibilities of cultural activism from studying these movements?

Week 4: Feb. 11: Black Women Entertainers

Readings:

Watch PBS documentary *How It Feels to Be Free*. Information on how to access it will be provided.
Week 5: Feb. 18: War on Poverty and the Limits of Liberalism

Readings:


Jerry Morton, “Baltimore is a Big, Dead Fish, but my Mother Likes It,” The Vista Volunteer.

Donald Grafton Gwynn, “White Liberals (Most of Them or All of Them, I Think Sometimes,” Chicory, June 1968.

Week 6: Feb. 28: The Death of Malcolm X

Readings:

Malcolm X, excerpts from “The Ballot or the Bullet” speech, April 3, 1964.

Komozi Woodard, excerpt from A Nation Within a Nation, p. 59-68.


Week 7: Mar. 4: Black Panther Party and Revolutionary Nationalism

Readings:

Susie Day, excerpts from The Brother You Choose, p. 51-78, 95-97.


“Us Colored People,” comic book.


Week 8: Mar. 11: US Organization and Cultural Nationalism

Readings:
SOUL School issue from *Chicory*.

Excerpts from FBI files on the SOUL School.

Historical Document Metadata Assignment due

**SPRING BREAK MARCH 13-21, NO CLASS ON MARCH 15**

**Module 3: Themes and Issues in Black Arts and Black Power**

In this module, we will explore how black artists and activists addressed a variety of themes. Possible topics include the prison arts movement and mass incarceration; police; gender relations and ideologies of gender and sexuality; defining concepts like freedom, liberation or home, and fighting white supremacy and anti-blackness. The class will collectively decide which topics we will discuss in this module.

**Week 9: Mar. 25:**

**Week 10: Apr. 1:**

**Week 11: Apr. 8**

Short paper due

**Week 12: Apr. 15**

**Week 13: Apr. 22: Zine Workshop**

**Week 14: Apr. 29: Legacies of the Black Arts Movement**

TBD: Zine assignment due