**Introduction to Black Studies**

BLS 101  
Cluster Requirement: 4A

**Course Catalog Description**

BLS 101 – Introduction to Black Studies  
3 Units

An introduction to the principal concepts and methods of Black Studies. Topics include the social, political, aesthetic, and economic experiences of Black people in America and throughout the world. Students will develop their academic research, critical reading & writing, and oral presentation.

**Course Overview**

The contributions of the peoples of African descent in the Americas touch on all phases of the human experience. To better understand the various phases of these contributions, this course is designed to study peoples of the Black Diaspora—their experiences and responses to the cultural, economic, political, and social production of “Blackness.” A central purpose of the course is to introduce students to the field of Black Studies with the goal of helping you develop an understanding of and appreciation for the complexity of race and its interplay with gender and sex from a globalist context. Using an interdisciplinary approach, the course is designed to introduce students to and provide them with the tools to understand the issues pertinent to the Black Diaspora in general and Black Americans in particular. Through a combination of lectures, discussions, exercises, film screenings, media and textual analysis, the course will examine the evolution of the Black experience in the New World, starting out from the days of captivity in the homeland, through the Middle Passage and on to slavery, emancipation, segregation, civil rights and political reintegration.

The ultimate objective of the course is to give students an academic foundation that will help them develop critical thinking on questions of democracy and inequality in U.S. society. Such skills are essential in the preparation of students who are interested in going on to graduate school, professional schools, and to careers in public life.

**Course Rationale**

This course introduces students to Black Studies as an interdisciplinary field of study, which looks at Black communities and experiences through the historic, social, aesthetic, political, economic and creative aspects, philosophies, traditions, and experiences of Black people. This course is designed to prepare students to pursue the minor in Black Studies as well as bolster every other major program of study at the University.

**Learning Outcomes**

Course-Specific Learning Outcomes:

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

1. Identify and express the key social, political, aesthetic, historic, and/or economic issues affecting Black people.
2. Define, identify and apply ‘engaged learning’ within the context of Black Studies as a discipline; to understand a text, event, or experience.
3. Identify and apply the concept of ‘engaged learning’ to their academic and professional pursuits, particularly those in the Black Studies minor.
4. Explain how perspectives within one or more academic disciplines impact the Black community on a national and/or global level.
5. Explain how issues in the Black community are explored in a scholarly context.

University Studies Learning Outcomes:

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain different perspectives on: b) the nature of human relationships and how these relationships are evidenced in regard to the broader world.
2. Recognize ethical issues in complex contexts and evaluate the ethical positions taken by themselves and others.
3. Locate, analyze, summarize, paraphrase and synthesize material from a variety of sources.
4. Evaluate arguments made in support of different perspectives on US society.

**Examples of Texts**

* Maulana Karenga, Introduction to Black Studies
* Smallwood, Stephanie E., Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora, Boston: Harvard University Press, 2008.
* Woodson, Carter Godwin, The Miseducation of the Negro, New York: Tribeca Books, 2013
* Willie Lynch, The Willie Lynch Letter and the Making of a Slave, New York: African Tree Press, 2011
* Dubois, William Edward Burghardt, The Souls of Black Folk, NY: Dover Publications, 1994.
* Williams, Juan & Julian Bond, Eyes on the Prize: America’s Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965, New York: Penguin Books,
* Maryse Conde, *I,* Tituba: Black Witch of Salem
* bell hooks, Black Looks: Race and Representation
* Martin Bernal, Black Athena
* J.A. Rogers, Great Men of Color
* George M James, Stolen, Legacy
* Frank Snowden, Blacks In Antiquity
* Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks
* Ivan Van Sertima, They Came Before Columbus
* Harold Cruse, Crisis of the Negro Intellectual
* W.E.B. Dubois, et al, Three Negro Classics
* Floyd W. Hayes, III. 2000. *A Turbulent Voyage: Readings in African American Studies. 3rd Ed.*Rowman & Littlefield.

**Example Assignments**

Individual instructors will choose from among these assignments, which are designed to fulfill the university studies learning outcomes but also allow some flexibility for individual sections of the class in terms of topic, placement throughout the semester, and mode of delivery.

***Overview***

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| **Assignment** | **Relationship to University Studies Outcomes** |
| Readings | Text and materials introduce students to various values, beliefs, attitudes, and habits that define the nature and quality of life for people of the African Diaspora. Thereby, introducing them to various nature of human relationships and how these relationships are evidenced in regard to the broader world. |
| Written Papers | Students develop papers that identify issues in black studies that help them engage in reasoned inquiry and self-reflection regarding various values, beliefs, attitudes, and habits for people of the African Diaspora. |
| Examinations | Exams help students to reinforce basic concepts of how black studies explores the key social, political, aesthetic, historic, and/or economic  issues affecting Black people. |

***Examples***

**Assignment 1**

The two landmark documents that have evolved to influence American democracy are the Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson, and the Emancipation Proclamation by Abraham Lincoln. Read the original copies of these two documents, and in a minimum five-page essay, provide an analytical overview of how the two documents compare and contrast with each other from a Black Studies perspective. Your essay should begin with a clear and succinct description of the controversies and political environment that gave rise to the unilateral issuance of these history-making documents, and the lasting impact they have had in the democratic development of the United States.

**Target Learning Objectives**:

Course Specific

1. Identify and express the key social, political, aesthetic, historic, and/or economic issues affecting Black people.

University Studies

1. Explain different perspectives on: b) the nature of human relationships and how these relationships are evidenced in regard to the broader world.
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4. Evaluate arguments made in support of different perspectives on US society.

**Rubric**

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| --- | --- |
| **Grading Criteria** | **Weight** |
| The response answers all parts of the question asked, that is provides clear presentation of the comparison and contract of the two documents | 25% |
| The response includes evidence and examples, where appropriate, to support the answer. | 25% |
| The response includes analysis where appropriate that goes beyond **describing** the answer but gives context to show the student understands the political environment of the time and how different groups of people were impacted. | 30% |
| The response is well-written in clear English with little to no grammatical errors. | 20% |

**Assignment 2**

Exploring your own Race-Gender Identity

The goal of this assignment is to explore your own race-gender identity and, in so doing, develop a better understanding of race-gender identity in general. Although racial and ethnic identity are sometimes intertwined, for the purpose of this assignment, please limit your discussion to racial identity. I am aware that this assignment may be difficult for some of you. Please feel free to discuss it with me, if you get stuck or just feel like you could use some guidance. To help you get started, several suggestions are listed below. These are intended solely as suggestions. You are neither required to discuss all these elements (I assume that you will find it meaningful to discuss several), nor are you limited to them.

* When, why, and how you first became aware of your race, your gender
* When, why and how you first became aware of the intersection of your race and your gender—how these identities are intertwined.
* Influence of skin color and gender (or other physical characteristic attributed to race or gender) on your life
* Others’ response to your skin color or other physical characteristic attributed to race
* Messages from family members about gender and skin color or other physical

characteristic...

* Family stories about your own racial group, other racial groups, or race in general
* Media and cultural messages about race and gender
* Friendships and other relationships within and apart from your own racial group
* Participation in groups or activities centered on race or racial issues and gender issues
* Experiences with stereotypes, prejudice, and racism (as victim, as perpetrator, or as both)
* What it means to you (if anything) to identify with your racial group with your gender group
* What you like and don’t like about being a member of your racial group and gender group.

Your autobiographies should consist of no more than two typed double-spaced pages in a standard 12- point font and with standard one-inch margins. There is no length minimum, but given the brevity of the assignment, I strongly recommend that you write as close to two pages as possible. Please note, as well, that it is typically more challenging and time consuming to express complex ideas well in a short space compared to a longer space. Plan accordingly. Although there are no “wrong” responses in an autobiographical assignment, there certainly are inadequate and superficial ones.

You will be evaluated on both content (80 percent) and writing (20 percent), so please take care to submit work that is as error-free as possible.

**Target Learning Objectives**:

Course Specific

1. Define, identify and apply ‘engaged learning’ within the context of Black Studies as a discipline; to understand a text, event, or experience.

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**Assignment 3**

**Major Written Assignment University Learning Outcomes Category 4A 3 and 4:**

Paper Assignment:

**Purpose**

The purpose of the course paper is to get each of you to analyze an issue raised in the course, to provide a more in depth analysis of the cultural, economic, political, and social context surrounding this issue.

**Details**

* Students will choose a topic of interest from the course content.
* Explore the historical, cultural, economic, political and social issues of the topic
* Discuss the importance players of the African Diaspora and their influence
* Examine the impact of the topic chosen on the course of history in terms of changes that occurred, etc.

**Contents of Paper**

The paper will be 5-6 pages, 1-inch margins, typed (12 point font) and double-spaced.  This is exactly how you must submit the paper, no exceptions!  You will be specifically graded on how well you follow directions.

In terms of sectioning your paper, I have a suggested outline approach that can be used below:

I. Introduction:  Describe the selected topic and establish its importance

II. Literature Review:  Review the literature that deals with the topic you have selected (what have others said in this area)

III. Analysis of the Literature:  Analyze and critique the literature (what has been done.  Provide and discussion your understanding underscoring what else may be considered)

IV. Summary and Conclusion:  Summarize your arguments.  Give your opinion about what should be done along with a brief statement of support.

V. References.

This is only a suggested outline – you are free to modify your own outline.

**Deliverables**

You will be required to submit three deliverables during the course:

1. A topic with a brief explanation why you are choosing this topic and how you will go about analyzing the topic.

2. A detailed outline showing the major sections of your paper, and summarizing what will be described in each section.

3. A final paper product.

**Grading**

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| **Grading Criteria** | **Weight** |
| Meeting length, format requirements, and deadlines | 20% |
| Overall clarity of the content – is the paper clearly written, presented in a logical format, and responsive to the topic chosen | 25% |
| Proof of editing (few to no mistakes apparent in the paper) | 20% |
| Proof of analytical reasoning used in evaluating the literature | 20% |
| Use of sources (have primary sources been utilized and properly attributed?). | 15% |

**SAMPLES COURSE OUTLINE**

**Week 1**

Introduction

**Week 2**

The emergence of Black Studies, its institutionalization, protest in repose

* Noliwe, M. Rooks, “By Any Means Necessary: Student Protest and the Birth of Black Studies” and “Black Studies in White and Black: the Ford Foundation Funds Black Studies,” *White Money/Black Power: The Surprising History of African American Studies and the Crisis of Race in Higher Education* (Boston: Beacon, 2006), p. 31-60, 93-122.
* Film: *Scarred Justice: The Orangeburg Massacre*
* Film: “What’s Race Got to Do with It?”

**Week 3**

Europe, uneven development, and disciplining knowledge

* Walter Rodney, excerpts from *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Howard: Washington, DC, 1980).
* Cedric Robinson, excerpts from *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina, 2000).
* Eric Wolf, excerpts from *Europe and the Peoples Without History* (Berkeley: California, 2010).
* Film: *Afrique, je te plumerai*

**Week 4**

Roots of black radicalism, out of slavery, through marronage and resistance

* Melton A. McLaurin, *Celia, a Slave* (Athens: Georgia, 1991).
* Angela Y. Davis, “Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves,” from Joy James, ed., *The Angela Y. Davis Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).
* Cedric Robinson, excerpts from *Black Movements in America* (New York: Routledge, 1997).
* W.E.B. DuBois, excerpts from *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880* (New York: Atheneum, 1979).

**Week 5**

Talking about Race, Racism and White Privilege

* Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. “Racism without Racist”.
* Di Angelo, Robin. “Nothing to add: A challenge to White silence in Racial discussions.”
* Tatum, Beverly Daniel. 1997. Defining racism: “can we talk?” in *Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria? And other conversations about race*. pp. 3-17.
* Smith “Three Pillars of White Supremacy”.

**Week 6**

Framing Black Studies: Origins and Contemporary Issues

***A.*** The Discipline: What is Black Studies?

* Daniel, Philip, T. K. 2007. Black studies: Discipline or field of study? In Nathaniel Norment

B. Black Studies: Trends, Developments and Future Challenges

* Floyd W. Hayes III, “African American Studies: Trends, Developments, and Future
* Challenges” pp. 1-4
* Carter G. Woodson, “The Study of the Negro”; in Hayes pp. 5-8
* Manning Marable, “Black Studies, Multiculturalism and the Future of American Education,” in Hayes pp. 24-34
* Christian, Mark 2006. Black Studies in the 21st Century: Longevity has its place. Journal of Black Studies, 36 (5): 698-719.

**Week 7**

Post-Emancipation

* Robert M. Goldman, excerpts from *Reconstruction & Black Suffrage: Losing the Vote in* Reese *&* Cruikshank (Lawrence: Kansas, 2001).
* Angela Y. Davis, “From the Prison of Slavery to the Slavery of Prison: Frederick Douglass and the Convict Lease System,” in Joy James, ed., *The Angela Y. Davis Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 74-95.
* Ida B. Wells, excerpts from *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaigns of Ida B. Wells 1892-1900* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1996).
* Film: *Strange Fruit* (dir., Joel Katz, 2002)

**Week 8**

The civil rights era

* Charles M. Payne, excerpts from *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: California, 1995).
* Charles E. Cobb, Jr., excerpts from *This Nonviolent Stuff’ll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible* (New York: Basic, 2014).
* Film: *The Murder of Emmett Till; W.E.B. DuBois: Biography in Four Voices; You Gotta Move*

**Week 9**

The Great Migration

* Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton, 1996), 15-178.
* Film: *Dark Exodus; Race—The Power of an Illusion: The House We Live In; Goin’ to Chicago*

**Week 9**

Anticolonialism

* Aime Cesaire, from *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review, [1955] 2000), p. 31-46.
* Owusu Yaki Yakubu, *Meditations on Frantz Fanon’s Wretched of the Earth, Part 2* (Chicago & Montreal: Spear & Shield-Solidarity, 2002).
* Film: *Afrique, je te plumerai*; or *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask*

**Week 10**

Black power

* Malcolm X, “Message to the Grassroots,” in Malcolm X Speaks, George Breitman, ed. (New York: Grove, 1965).
* Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, excerpts from Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America (New York: Vintage, 1992).
* Alondra Nelson, excerpts from Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination (Minneapolis: Minnesota, 2011).
* Film: Malcolm X: Make It Plain; Eyes on the Prize: A Nation of Law?

Resistance and the Struggle for voice

* Vincent Harding, “Symptoms of Liberty and Blackhead Signposts: David Walker and Nat Turner” in Hayes, pgs. 97-115.
* Lydia Lindsey and Carlton E. Wilson, “Spurring a Dialogue to Place the African American Experience within the Context of an Afrocentric Philosophy,” in Hayes, pgs. 13I-142.
* El-Tayeb, Fatima. 2003. ‘If you can’t pronounce my name, you can just call me pride’: Afro-German activism and hip-hop.

**Week 11**

Post-civil rights

* Wahneema Lubiano, “Black Ladies, Welfare Queens, and State Minstrels: Ideological War by Narrative Means,” in Toni Morrison, ed., *Race-ing Justice, En-Gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Pantheon, 1992), 323-363.
* Film: *Anita*

Black Music and Black Art

* Portia K. Maultsby, "Africanisms in African-American Music," in Hayes, pgs. 146-176.
* Richard Wright, "How 'Bigger' Was Born," in Hayes, pgs. 218-235.

**Week 12**

War on drugs

* Gary Webb, “The Dark Alliance,” available online at http://www.mega.nu/ampp/webb.html.
* Judith A.M. Scully, “Killing the Black Community: A Commentary on the United States War on Drugs,” in Jael Silliman and Annanya Bhattacharjee, eds., *Policing the National Body: Race, Gender, and Criminalization* (Cambridge: South End, 2002), p. 55-80.
* Dorothy Roberts, “Making Reproduction a Crime,” in *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Vintage, 1997), p. 150-201.
* Gwen Rubinstein and Debbie Mukamal, “Welfare and Housing—Denial of Benefits to Drug Offenders,” in Marc Mauer and Meda Chesney-Lind, eds., *Invisible Punishment: The Collateral Consequences of Mass Imprisonment* (New York: New Press, 2002), 37-49.
* Film: *Tulia, Texas*, Cassandra Herman and Kelly Whalen (San Francisco: California Newsreel, 2008).
* Film: *The House I Live In*, Eugene Jarecki, dir. (2012).

Criminality, Race and Gender

* Jordan-Zachery, Julia. The female Bogeyman: Political Implications of criminalizing Black women.
* Hurwitz, Jon and Peffley, Mark. Public Perceptions of Race and Crime: The Role of Racial Stereotypes.
* FitzGerald, Susan. 2013. “Crack Baby” Study

**Week 13**

Representations of Blackness: The Media

* Bu Bois Of our Spiritual Strivings. Hayes p. 298.
* Gilens, Martin. “Race and Poverty in America: Public misperceptions and the American News Media.
* Fair, Jo Ellen. The body politic, the bodies of women, and the politics of famine in U.S. television coverage of famine in the Horn of Africa. Journalism & Mass Communication
* hooks, bell. Selling Hot Pussy “The politics of Sexuality”