



COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES:

In the first chapter of his monumental work *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) W.E.B. Du Bois wrote:

...the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, —a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, —this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. This, then, is the end of his striving: to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers and his latent genius.

This course is a study of African American literature and culture through the 19th and 20th centuries and up to today, however, if it succeeds, it will go far deeper than this, becoming an insightful investigation of the “double consciousness” that Du Bois alluded to 115 years ago. Themes for this course will include the Construction of Race, Slavery, Emancipation, Jim Crow, Lynching, Jazz, Urbanization, the Harlem Renaissance, Desegregation, Civil Rights, R&B & Rock n’ Roll, the Sports and Entertainment Industries, Victimization, White-guilt, Political Correctness, Affirmative Action, and Hip-Hop Culture.

Because of its combined literary and cultural foci, the methodology of this course will be somewhat unconventional, using not only literary texts and documents, but also many cultural creations (film, music, etc.) to examine the story of Black America. This is necessary because this subject is complex and culturally loaded—the construction, enforcement, reconstruction, and slow transformation of “Black” and “White” America is at the center of the dynamic tension that has driven much of American history, from the ravages of Slavery and the Civil War to the creation of the amazing and distinctive African American culture that heavily impacts the global culture of the 21st century. Each week will include a lecture on the context & culture of Black America for the given era, and then a discussion of the assigned texts. Learning to examine, explain, and understand the vibrant literary and cultural creations of Black America is the goal of this course.

EVALUATION:

Reading Responses: Each week during this seven-week class there will be both required and supplemental texts—I will provide access to all materials. Students are responsible for four Response Essays (500 to 1,000 words) based on the texts and the material from lectures. I will expect these essays to be an insightful analysis of our texts, written in clean, crisp, concise prose. Your grade will be based on your top three responses.

Class Participation: You will all be expected to attend each lecture, to thoroughly read each required text, and to actively participate in class discussions. For the first few weeks of class, this will be done in a “cyber” format because I’ll still be in the U.S.A. From that point forward, we will meet regularly at the university.

ASSIGNMENTS & SCORING

Reading Responses (3 x 25%)	=	75%
Class Participation	=	25%

Grades will be based on a ten-point scale:

5 = 100-90%	4 = 89-80%	3 = 79-70%	2 = 69-60%	1 = 59-0%
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Assignments turned in late will be penalized 10%

COURSE SCHEDULE: (*denotes required text)

Week 1. Slavery & the American Civil War (starting Monday, April 22)

- *Folktales & Spirituals (early 1800s)
- Martin Delany. *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration & Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (selections) (1852)
- Frederick Douglass. *My Bondage and My Freedom* (selections) (1855)
- Harriet Jacobs. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (selections) (1861)
- *Sojourner Truth. "Ar'n't I a Woman?" (1864)

Week 2. Reconstruction & the Rise & Fall of Black Rights (starting Monday, April 29)

- *Charles Chesnutt. "The Wife of His Youth" (1898)
- Booker T. Washington. "The Atlanta Exposition Address" (1895)
- W.E.B. Du Bois. *The Souls of Black Folk* (selections) (1903)

Week 3. Segregated America (starting Monday, May 6)

- *James Weldon Johnson. *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912)

Week 4. The Harlem Renaissance (starting Monday, May 13)

- *Langston Hughes. Poetry & Essays (1910-20s)
- *W.E.B. DuBois. "The Comet" (1920)
- Marcus Garvey. "The Negro's Greatest Enemy" (1923)
- Paul Robeson in the Eugene O'Neill film. *The Emperor Jones* (1933)
- Ken Burns documentary. *JAZZ* vol. 2 (2001)

Week 5. The Civil Rights Era (starting Monday, May 20)

- *Ralph Ellison. *Invisible Man* (selections) (1952)
- TV Episode. *Amos 'n' Andy* (1952)
- *Martin Luther King Jr. & Malcolm X. (selections) (1960s)
- James Baldwin documentary. *I Am Not Your Negro* (2016)

Week 6. All Funked Up: Hip Hop America (starting Monday, May 27)

- *Documentary on Blaxploitation. *BaadAsssss Cinema* (2002)
- Blaxploitation film. *Shaft* (1971)
- Early Hip Hop film. *Wild Style* (1983)
- *Spike Lee film. *Do the Right Thing* (1989)
- John Singleton film. *Boyz n the Hood* (1991)
- Spike Lee film. *Bamboozled* (2000)

Week 7. Black Lives Matter?!: Race in America Today (starting Monday, June 3)

- *Ta-Nehisi Coates. (selection of essays) (2010s)
- Malcolm Gladwell (selection of essay) (2010s)
- Ryan Coogler film. *Fruitdale Station* (2013)
- Barry Jenkins film. *Moonlight* (2016)