

AFRO 220

Introduction to Research Methods in African American Studies

Class Tuesdays and Thursdays 1–2:20 pm, English Building 125 except
Three classes in a computer lab: 9/4, 10/14, 10/21 (Location TBA)

Instructor Professor Abdul Alkalimat (Gerald McWorter), mcworter@illinois.edu
Office hours: Tuesdays 3–5 pm in DAAS, 1201 W Nevada, Room 103

Course overview. This is a basic course for the field of African American Studies (Black Studies by any other name). The course prepares students to think creatively and critically about the meaning of the Black experience, and on that basis to investigate empirical reality to test ideas and deepen ones understanding through documentation and analysis. This course is about raising important questions and answering them. Our purpose is to serve the community.

Texts

1. *The New York Times* – read intensively for six weeks
2. *The News Gazette* – read intensively for six weeks
3. *The Daily Illini* – read intensively for six weeks
4. *The African American Experience in Cyberspace*, Alkalimat

Assignments

Each assignment refers to a methodology for use in formal research and as part of your everyday life. A college educated person includes research as part of everyday social practice. Each student will work as an individual (documentary collection), in a group (case study), and with the class as a whole (survey team). See attached pages for instructions.

1. Documentary collection, due 10/2
2. Community survey, done as class project
3. Institutional case study, due 12/2

Grading

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| 1. Documentary Collection | 25% |
| 2. Community survey | 25% |
| 3. Institutional case study | 40% |
| 4. Class participation | 10% |
| 5. TOTAL | 100% |

Grading structure

- | | |
|---|----------|
| A | 90 - 100 |
| B | 80 - 89 |
| C | 75 - 79 |
| D | 70 - 74 |
| F | below 70 |

Topics and Readings

8/26 Overview: Philosophical principles

Abdul Alkalimat, "Harold Washington and Black Studies Methodology: The autobiography of a research project" (2008)

8/28 D-1 Definition

Malcolm X, The Detroit Speeches (read and listen to one speech)

<http://www.brothermalcolm.net/aug04index.html>

AFRO 100 UIUC – watch lecture #9 <http://eblackstudies.org/urbana/>

9/2 D-2 Data

Anderson and Feinberg, Race and Ethnicity and the controversy over the Census,"
Current Sociology 2000

Abdul Alkalimat, Racism and the numbers game: Black people and the 1980 census
(Black Scholar)

9/4 D-3 Digitization

New Philadelphia Association <http://www.newphiladelphiail.org/>

U of Illinois <http://www.anthro.uiuc.edu/faculty/cfennell/NP/>

U of Maryland

<http://www.heritage.umd.edu/chrsweb/New%20Philadelphia/NewPhiladelphia.htm>

Family archive <http://www.mcworter.net/>

9/9 D-4 Discovery

Alkalimat and Williams, "Social Capital and Cyberpower in the African American
Community" <http://www.communitytechnology.org/cyberpower/>

Williams and Alkalimat, "A Census of Public Computing in Toledo, Ohio"

<http://www.communitytechnology.org/toledo/toledo.pdf>

Alkalimat, "Social Cyberpower in Everyday Life"

<http://eblackstudies.org/grbk/organizing.pdf>

9/11 D-5 Design

Report on Journals in Black Studies

Search engine/web sites: <http://www.google.com/>

Wiki <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>

9/16 D-6 Dissemination

Power Point <http://www.education.umd.edu/blt/tcp/powerpoint.html>
H-Net <http://www.h-net.org/>

9/18 D-7 Difference

Media - <http://people-press.org/>
Internet - <http://www.pewinternet.org/>
General research - <http://pewresearch.org/>

9/23 Research meeting on campus: discuss D-1 with community reps

Cyberchurch Manual (Toledo)
PEW Report on Faith Online http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/126/report_display.asp

9/25 Research meetings in the community: begin D-2 in the community

Local community history <http://www.prairienet.org/years/>

9/30 Digitization: text files (flat bed and sheet fed community scanning kits)
Possible visit to Library digitization center

Open Content Alliance <http://www.opencontentalliance.org/>
Project Gutenberg http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page
<http://hurstassociates.blogspot.com/>
H-Net <http://www.h-net.org/>

10/2 FIELD WORK: eBlack Illinois Cyberchurch Project

10/7 Digitization: audio and video (the cell phone and other PDAs)

cell phone culture http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/forums/cell_phone_culture.htm
PEW research http://www.pewinternet.org/ppf/r/179/report_display.asp

10/9 FIELD WORK: eBlack Illinois Cyberchurch Project (15 churches)

10/14 Quantitative methods: perception, measurement, sequence, time,

2010 Census (watch the video, link on right) <http://www.census.gov/2010census/>

10/16 FIELD WORK: eBlack Illinois Cyberchurch Project (15 churches)

10/21 Census: overview and basics of Census.gov

10/23 FIELD WORK: eBlack Illinois Cyberchurch Project

10/28 Census: the newspaper and the census

**** Bring your documentation project to class ****

10/ 30 FIELD WORK: eBlack Illinois Cyberchurch Project

11/4 Qualitative: values, narrative, paradigm, agency and archives

Richard Wright, "How Bigger was born"

Margaret Walker, "How I wrote Jubilee"

11/6 FIELD WORK: eBlack Illinois Cyberchurch Project

11/11 Web searching: google and other search engines

How to evaluate search engines

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/libraries/units/engineering/evaluate.shtml>

Cuil (the new kid) <http://www.cuil.com/>

Alkalimat, African American Experience in Cyberspace (Part 1)

11/13 FIELD WORK: eBlack Illinois Cyberchurch Project

11/17 Web searching: wiki and the knowledge commons

Researching with Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Researching_with_Wikipedia

D-Space

http://www.dspace.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=44&Itemid=156

Alkalimat, African American Experience in Cyberspace (Part 2)

11/20 FIELD WORK: eBlack Illinois Cyberchurch Project

12/2 Report Back: Class: power points on individual churches (5 each)

12/4 Report Back: Community: a public report back in a public setting

12/9 Final class: evaluation forms and discussion

Documentary Research Collection Notebook: Due 10/2

This project is your individual assignment. By doing this project you will learn important aspects of how to include research in your everyday life style. This is a 24/7 assignment, although every moment will not be a data rich moment, but they will come and you have to be ready – maybe on the TV, in a conversation, seeing some print material at a friends house, looking through a magazine at the doctors office, reading the newspaper, listening to a rap, etc. If you are ready you will discover how data rich life can be.

The purposes of this project are as follows:

1. to use everyday sources for research (mass media and the web)
2. to gather primary and secondary data
3. to link research to policy issues
4. to develop a life style of D-7 research

D – 1 Select a policy issue of importance to the Black community. Then write a one page proposal to Prof Alkalimat to get the ok to go forward. Do this ASDAP. This should include the following:

1. name of the issue
2. two paragraphs on why this is an important issue
3. 5 key words that describe this issue that you will use for research

Wait for written approval to go forward.

D – 2 After getting approval, then begin by doing the following: use one hour to gather 50 pages of text on your issue, download and print this out. Read it and take notes: what sources are mentioned, what data is presented. Check the indexes of the New York Times, Wall Street Post, Washington Post, and Revolution. Compile a list of local source and key contacts. More about data collection will be discussed in class.

D – 3 Create an excel spread sheet with at least the following fields to be entered about each document you collect even if it is only one page:

1. title of document
2. author of document
3. date of the document
4. number of pages
5. summary of content (200 words or less)

D – 4 Sum up D-3 data

1. What can you learn from the titles of all your documents – count words, categories
2. can you discern gender? Who re the leading voices – national? Local?
3. what is the time line?
4. what gets the most coverage? What is kept silent?
5. now, in general, what's it all about?

D – 5 The format of your work will be three copies of an 8 1/2 x 11 bound volume

1. coil binding

2. title: "name of issue: Fall 2008 Research Materials", e.g. "Black Political Power: Fall 2008 Research Materials"
3. Table of contents: organize the documents into sections and list them as the toc
4. write a 5 page introduction that defines the issue, gives a brief historical background, then describes the data in the research book
5. include all of the document with a page inserted between each section with its section title
6. each volume is expected to be at least 150 pages, not larger than 300 pages

D – 6 Each volume must be given to each of the following

1. a member of your family
2. the Department of African American Studies
3. the minister of your case study church

D – 7 Each person you have given a book to must be contact after one week and asked two questions:

1. Was the volume useful? Educational? Some thing I could use on a regular basis?
2. Who are you going to share this volume with in the next several months?

The answers to these questions must be sent to the instructor by 11-17-08.

You will be able to keep only the copy shared with your family.

CYBERCHURCH the community survey: Due 12/2

There are almost 40 Black churches in Champaign and Urbana. We are going to take a survey of these churches and present this data as a combined community service and academic research website. The main aspect of this assignment will be collecting data and reporting it to be compiled into a website.

The manual for this exercise is the Cyberchurch Toledo Handbook. PDF will be online.

There are five levels to Cyberchurch:

1. e-Directory: a photo directory of about 10 fields of information
2. The virtual church: Minister and family, organization structure, weekly-monthly-annual schedule, photo gallery, digitized documents, history, etc.
3. The voice of the church – audio of sermon, and audio of choir, interview with a centenarian or oldest member of church
4. A computer lab in the church
5. A cyber ministry

This will be an experiment in using the cell phone as a research tool for Cyberchurch Level 1 data collection (D-2).

1. taking a photo
2. texting data to be compiled into an excel spread sheet

Students can use any device that can handle both image and text.

This exercise will be carried out on succeeding Thursday as a class in the field: 10/2, 10/9, 10/16, 10/23, 10/30, and 11/6.

We are building a public access data set for community service and academic research. Our first step this term is to start with the Black community. Next Fall we will expand this to all of the churches in Urbana and Champaign.

Research is a service to the people and to the scholarly community, that's why the slogan of Black Studies is "academic excellence and social responsibility."

Research instruction will be handed out in class.

CYBERCHURCH the case study: Due 12/2

Each of you will be organized into teams. Each team will be assigned a church to take to level 3, and lay the groundwork for levels 4 and 5.

The manual for this exercise is the Cyberchurch Toledo Handbook. PDF will be online.

There are five levels to Cyberchurch:

1. e-Directory: a photo directory of about 10 fields of information
2. The virtual church: Minister and family, organization structure, weekly-monthly-annual schedule, photo gallery, digitized documents, history, etc.
3. The voice of the church – audio of sermon, and audio of choir, interview with a centenarian or oldest member of church
4. A computer lab in the church
5. A cyberministry

The following Thursdays will be devoted to case study research in the field: 11/13, and 11/20

The case study requires that each team member go to at least four church services and activities, have at least 3 interviews with church members, try and create one data base of church materials. Each student should spend at least 30 hours, hence each case study should represent about 90 hours of student labor (working in teams of three).

Also, if the church does not have a computer lab then the team should write a two page proposal to the GSLIS Community Informatics Lab to build such a community lab. If the church has a computer lab then the team should write a proposal to upgrade and implement a program of community informatics.

The team should recruit a committee of church activists to take charge of the lab.

