

UIUC Fall 2007

AFRO 100: Introduction to African American Studies

Professor Abdul Alkalimat

Office: 1204 Nevada, ph 333-7781

Office Hours: Tue. 2 – 4pm, appointments are necessary

Course overview:

This course is the introductory survey of the academic field of African American Studies. Our focus will be on the major issues involved in the study of the African American experience, both the objective issues being analyzed in the research literature and the subjective issues of how African Americans think about their experience. Our goal then is to provide an opportunity to understand the issues and enter into a discourse based on Black thought. This is the unique feature of Afro-American Studies, engaging the world from a Black perspective (subjective) while embracing all of the available scientific data (objective).

Our emphasis is on what you know, and not your opinions. Informed opinions must be based on understanding the issues, and that requires study of the facts and also what others believe about those facts. Informed opinions must be earned through hard work of study and investigation.

Course objectives:

1. to develop a clear understanding of several fundamental concepts in the field of Afro-American (Africana) Studies;
2. to develop a clear understanding of the key theories and ideological debates in African American life and history
3. to develop proficiency in clear and critical writing about these concepts, theories, and ideological debates

Basic questions for this course

1. What is the Black experience?
2. What is Black history?
3. What are the fundamental ideologies/theories in Black Studies?
4. What are the great social change debates in Black history?

Weekly assignments:

1. 50 pages of reading (usually less)
2. Review 5 websites out of those assigned
3. Attend lecture on Tuesday 9 – 11 am
4. Attend discussion section on Thursday
5. Write weekly theme paper due every Tuesday morning the week following the lecture (e.g., the paper covering the lecture topic given on August 28th will be due

on September 4th, based on the discussion of August 30th.) Each paper must have at least 500 words using reasonable margins and double spaced with a 12 pt font.

Grading:

1. 5% for each weekly paper (5x14= 70%)
2. 15% for discussion group participation (attendance required)
3. 25% for final
4. Total possible 110%
5. Grade based on a scale of 100 (Basically this is a built in 10% extra credit, or it gives you the possibility of skipping one weekly paper)

Required material

1. Alkalimat, et. al., Introduction to Afro-American Studies (free)
<http://alkalimat.org/eblackstudies/intro>
2. Alkalimat, African-American Experience in Cyberspace (purchase)
3. Illinois map, US map, Africa map and World map (free) (get from WWW)
4. subscription to H-Afro-Am (a free listserv in African American Studies)
www.h-net.msu.edu/h-afro-am
5. Autobiography of Malcolm X (purchase)
6. Special issue of Black Scholar on Katrina (purchase)
7. Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki> (free)
8. digital storage devise (e.g. a flash drive or if you own a computer, use your hard drive)

Learning strategy (Guide to getting and A)

The key to success in this course is rhythm or discipline, especially time management. We are on a weekly schedule so getting in sync is critical because it is so easy to fall behind. A paper will be due every Tuesday, so you need a weekly plan. The following is a proposal for a daily guide to follow on a week by week basis, over 14 weeks:

- a. **Monday:** read some of weekly assignment (1 1/2 hours). This helps to prepare for the lecture, get acquainted with new concepts/vocabulary, and to get the weekly essay topic firmly in your mind. Start with the web if that's easier for you.
- b. **Tuesday:** Lecture (2 hours). Take detailed notes, even bring a tape recorder if you feel that your note taking needs back-up – no excuses, get it anyway you can
- c. **Wed:** finish the reading and web surfing and write an outline for your paper (1 1/2 hours). Always make an outline, and identify the key concepts/facts/references that you want to use. Prepare one or two key questions for the discussion session to help you.
- d. **Thursday:** Discussion section (1 hour). Play an active role in the discussion.
- e. **Friday:** relax on this day off, but think about the course and discuss the issue of the week with your friends and get their points of view
- f. **Sat:** finish writing the paper (1 1/2 hours). Use word count to make sure you have the minimum 500 words. (Use conventional margins, 12 pt font, and double space) – don't forget to use spell check, and include a bibliography and footnotes

- g. **Sun:** meet with your study group, critique each others papers, finish your paper (1 1/2 hours)

Staff

The staff for this course will be Professor Alkalimat and two graduate Teaching Assistants. Google Alkalimat to check the Professor out, and get acquainted with your TA during the first Thursday discussion. The Ta's are

- a. Shywon Berry
- b. Aaron Hodges

It will be important to meet and get to know your instructional team so you can find out what is expected of you. Success is based on your effort to meet the standards of this course. Also, as mentioned above, it is wise to network with several of your class mates to form a study group to give each other critiques on your weekly papers.

This course is a computer based activity, so all work must be saved as a digital file as well as printed as hard copy. There will be considerable use of searching the World Wide Web for relevant material to this course. Students needing assistance with this aspect of the course should talk to the TA during the first week of the course to arrange to have a special session on the basics of IT use for this course.

The final exam will be based on all of your papers, so it is important to keep all of your papers (both the graded hard copy version, and a digital version of the original paper) as they will need to be used when you are doing your final.

The Lecture Session (Tuesday mornings)

1. We will always begin with a musical introduction. This creates a relaxed and focused frame of mind. It will be music with feeling and a message. Students are encouraged to submit tracks for the day's topic, including original work.
2. We will be using the "buzz group technique." Once or twice a class session students will be asked to take a few minutes and discuss a particular question. This can be spontaneous or be planned based on where people sit.
3. Lecture/power point: This will be our main activity. Students are encouraged to take notes.

The Discussion Session (Thursday)

1. The primary goal is to discuss the weekly paper topic.
2. Students will have access to the TA for academic support in the class.
3. Students will be able to network into small study groups to work together on the weekly papers.

Websites

The following are guidelines for reviewing websites as part of your weekly assignment.

1. Spend about 10 minutes at each site
2. Find a sitemap or a main menu and study the total situation to answer the question “What does this website have to offer?”
3. Ask the site a question that is related to your weekly essay topic and see if you can get an answer or information to use in your essay.
4. Capture interesting and relevant images and import them into your essay. This will get you extra credit but the images do not count as words. If you don't know how to do this ask a classmate to give you the 411.
5. The Wiki assignment is special. Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia created by its users, and everyone can join in. It's free! Wiki is not all knowing and the certified truth. Wiki is an experiment in whether humanity can organize itself to create a consensus about everything it knows. It is in an early stage so everything we read there is part of a discussion and not the final answer. You can be part of the discussion by contributing your thoughts to the Wiki entry of your choice. So, read the Wiki with a critical eye as you may find things there that need changing. Can you find something that needs changing? This would make an interesting paragraph or two in one of your weekly essays.

The weekly essay

This essay is a weekly assignment for several reasons:

1. Each week is a new theme, so each week the course input (lecture, reading, websites, and discussion) is to be followed by your output (a weekly essay).
2. Improves writing and academic discipline in general for now and the future
3. Our goal is excellence, and only practice makes perfect

Each paper will get a total of 5 possible points and be worth five per cent of your grade:

1. Writing style, grammar, documentation, etc. (one point)
2. Use of lecture, reading and websites (2 points)
3. Content and clarity of answer (2 points)

Our emphasis is on what you know (knowledge based on factual evidence) and not what you believe (opinions or ideology). When your knowledge increases then what you believe becomes significant. Write your papers with reference to your assigned material and the logic of the weekly lecture.

Don't hesitate to argue a position, no matter how conventional or unique, just make sure you have documented facts to back up what you say. It's not what you believe but how effectively you can present and document evidence that will convince the reader of your essay.

Don't get behind – you would miss the whole point. Its all about rhythm, so don't get out of step. This is a can-you-handle-it moment! You can excel if you invest your time and effort and not minimize what you are capable of as a UIUC student. The key to success is discipline of mind, body, and spirit. The future you want can be yours if you reach out and take it.

Lectures/Weekly Topics.....date of lecture

1. **INTRODUCTION** 8-28
Weekly essay topic: Why does the “Katrina crisis” demonstrate the need for African American Studies? (Due 9-4)
Readings: Intro 1, Special issue of the Black Scholar on Katrina (Note the contributions by UIUC faculty)
Websites: Review the ones listed in “Katrina 101” in the Black Scholar
Wiki: Black Studies
2. **BLACK EXPERIENCE: COLOR** 9-4
Weekly essay topic: What difference, if any, does a person’s skin color or other physical features make in distinguishing one person from another?
Readings: PBS http://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-background.htm
Websites: http://www.pbs.org/race/007_Resources/007_01-search.php?getonly=Web%20site&searchheader=Web%20sites (list on main PBS Race web site)
Wiki: race
3. **BLACK EXPERIENCE: CLASS** 9-11
Weekly essay topic: What difference, if any, does a person’s class or other socio-economic features make in distinguishing one person from another?
Readings: Intro, 7 & 8;
Websites: www.census.gov (try and find a profile of your home city, and if you are from Chicago the census tract that you live in.) Cyberspace 18 & 19
Wiki: social class
4. **BLACK EXPERIENCE: CULTURE** 9-18
Weekly essay topic: What difference, if any, does a person’s culture or other values (aesthetic, moral, even food and music choices) make in distinguishing one person from another?
Readings: Intro 9
Websites: Cyberspace 22 – 26;
Wiki: African American culture
5. **BLACK EXPERIENCE: CONSCIOUSNESS** 9-25
Weekly essay topic: What difference, if any, does a person’s ideology or other theoretical ideas make in distinguishing one person from another?
Readings: Search the New York Times and the New Orleans Picyune for stories covering the crisis in Jena, Louisiana
Websites: <http://friendsofjustice.wordpress.com/blog/>,
<http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=07/08/01/1435233>
Wiki: Jena, Louisiana
6. **HISTORY: SOCIAL COHESION & SOCIAL DISRUPTION** 10-2

- Weekly essay topic: Compare one small aspect of African American life in the 19th century with some aspect of your life in 2007. Be specific, give details and maybe even a photo or two. Be creative. ☺
 Readings: Intro 5 – 7;
 Websites: Cyberspace 6
 Wiki: W. E. B. DuBois
7. **IDEOLOGY: PANAFRICANISM** 10-9
 Weekly essay topic: Is there a compelling argument to be made for linking the future of African Americans with the future of Africa?
 Readings: Intro 2 & 15; Malcolm X
 Websites: Cyberspace
 Wiki: Kwame Nkrumah. Panafricanism
8. **IDEOLOGY: NATIONALISM** 10-16
 Weekly essay topic: To what extent can African Americans make legitimate group demands? What difference does this make?
 Readings: Intro 15; Malcolm X
 Websites: www.brothermalcolm.net
 Wiki: Marcus Garvey
9. **IDEOLOGY: LIBERATION THEOLOGY** 10-23
 Weekly essay topic: Why do Black people believe in God? Why is religion and the church so important to Black people?
 Readings: Intro 10; Malcolm X
 Websites: Cyberspace 17
 Wiki: Black church
10. **IDEOLOGY: FEMINISM** 10-30
 Weekly essay topic: Discuss the importance of Black women facing “triple oppression.” Give some specific examples of the issues.
 Readings: Intro 11; Malcolm X
 Websites: Cyberspace 15
 Wiki: womanism, Ella Baker
11. **IDEOLOGY: SOCIALISM** 11-6
 Weekly essay topic: “Why have so few Black intellectuals rejected capitalism in favor of socialism when so few have succeeded as capitalists? What are the key issues involved in such decisions?”
 Readings: Intro 16; Malcolm X
 Websites: <http://www.thematrix.com/>, and search for sites on Paul Robeson
 Wiki: Communist Party and Black America
12. **DEBATES: EMANCIPATION** 11-13
 Weekly essay topic: Select 5 advertisements for runaway slaves and tell a story of what was going on, try to generalize from five cases. Be specific and use short

quotes to make your comparisons. It would be interesting to search for graphics or photographs that might add to your paper.

Readings: Frederick Douglass, 4th of July Speech

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2927.html>

Websites: Cyberspace 5;

Wiki: Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner, Frederick Douglas

13. DEBATES: **SELF-DETERMINATION**

11-27

Weekly essay topic: Compare how DuBois, Garvey, and Washington argued for their different versions of self determination.

Readings: B.T. Washington Atlanta Compromise speech

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/39/>

DuBois critique of Washington, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/40/>

Marcus Garvey, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/garvey/sfeature/sf_words.html#

Websites: Search and find sites you think are useful this week

Wiki: Booker T Washington

14. DEBATES: **LIBERATION**

12-4

Weekly essay topic: Compare the views of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. Pay attention to similarities and differences.

Readings: The Detroit Speeches of Malcolm X: (read and listen)

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

Martin Luther King - three speeches, read and listen (click on the “voice of King” and scroll down) Letter to Paul 1956, Letter from the Birmingham jail 1963, and Beyond Vietnam 1967

http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/liberation_curriculum/resources/index.htm

Websites: Add any ones you find interesting, even if you have used one before

Wiki: Malcolm X, Martin Luther King