

AFAM 165:01- Black Life, Thought, and Culture Before 1903
M-R 1pm-3pm (Access via Canvas or WGR 497)
Summer Session I

Dr. Robert J. Patterson
Office Hours: T (11:45-12:45 & by Appointment)

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“Only the BLACK WOMAN can say 'when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole Negro race enters with me.’”

--Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South*

“My Master had power and law on his side; I had a determined will. There is might in each.”

--Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

“You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man.”

--Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*



Course Description:

This course studies how pre-twentieth century black artists, activists, and cultural production imagined the possibilities for black freedom in light of the changing political and economic circumstances for black people in the antebellum and postbellum periods. Beginning with the black American spirituals, we will analyze a variety of cultural forms (literature, photography, speeches), topics (freedom, equality, civil rights), debates among black thinkers (Walker, Wheatley, Delaney, Stewart, Harper, Cooper, Wells, DuBois, Washington, Laney) in order to historicize and contextualize how black spaces have been thinking about, writing about, and debating about many of the contemporary conversations that animate African American Studies. Accordingly, we will engage both primary and secondary texts (from the period and contemporary ones) to assist us in our task.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester, each student will be able to discuss several aspects of African American Studies including, but not confined to, the following:

- At least a dozen writers, critics, and texts that are generally included in the pre-twentieth century African American/Black Studies tradition/canon.
- The differences and similarities between and among African American cultural producers and thought leaders of various eras, genders, classes, and political stances.
- The debates among thinkers about freedom, the possibilities for integration, the need for self-sufficiency in African American communities.
- The political continuities and discontinuities between slavery, Reconstruction, Emancipation, and the 20th century black freedom struggles, including the civil rights, black power, black feminist, and black lives matter movements.

Moreover, students will also be able to:

- Articulate verbally and in writing personal interpretations based upon careful documentation and close reading/textual analysis of the texts.
- Examine African American cultural production, including the politics of creation and reception.
- Read, research, consider and reconsider the assigned texts and their various contexts.
- Utilize library resources to further investigate an aspect of African American studies that they find intellectually intriguing and stimulating.

Required Texts:

Douglass, Frederick
Jacobs, Harriet
Cooper, Anna Julia
DuBois, W.E.B.

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass
Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl
A Voice from the South
The Souls of Black Folk

Online Reserves (designated as “C” on your syllabus are available through the course’s Canvas site)

COURSE POLICIES

Class participation and punctual attendance are essential; to be successful you must be present and participate in class. Regular attendance and a firm commitment to succeed are requisite! Simply sitting in class is not enough. This classroom will be a forum to share ideas and to learn from each other. As such, you are expected to be in class on time, and to remain in class until the session ends. You will be marked late if you arrive after 12:30pm. *Two*

tardies equal one missed classed period. If you are absent more than two (2) class periods, your final grade will suffer as follows: on the 3rd absence, your grade will be lowered five (5) points—½ of a letter grade. For each additional absence, you will lose an additional 5 points. **If you are absent more than five (5) times, you will fail this course. BE IN CLASS.**

Email Etiquette and Protocol: Please be sure to include a salutation and closing in all electronic correspondence that you send to me. Remember that email should be reserved for brief correspondences. Should you find yourself writing a lengthy email, it might be more appropriate to visit me during office hours to discuss the matter. Finally, please allow ample time (up to 48 hours business hours) for me to respond to your email, realizing that I will respond as soon as possible.

Zoom Etiquette: Please be respectful during our Zoom Sessions, remembering that we all have unique circumstances during this phase of virtual learning and instructional continuity. While some students will use live backgrounds, others will use virtual ones. In either case, students **should turn their cameras on** for the duration of the session. **Please** use the raise hand feature in Zoom (as opposed to the chat), or interject politely using your microphone if I am screen sharing and cannot see your video or “raised hand.” Please refrain from texting or being otherwise preoccupied during our session as we will use **our synchronous** time to cover the course material.

Assignments will be submitted at the start of class, (1:00PM), on the day that the assignment is due, or by the designated time when assignments are due outside of our normal meeting period. Make every effort to submit your work **via email** on time as late work will be severely penalized. Grades will be lowered one letter grade (10 points) for each day it is late beyond the original due date and **cannot be submitted more than 2 days late**.

We will adhere to the University Honor Policy. In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together. Remember that academic integrity is essential to your development and success as a student. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with this document, as well as for citing ideas, questions, and texts that you obtain from outside sources. Neither implicit nor explicit plagiarism is acceptable. Any student suspected of plagiarism, or demonstrating other conduct, i.e. “receiving information from a fellow student or another unauthorized source,” that violates the University’s Honor Policy will be adjudicated according to the procedures that the Honor Policy outlines. Regarding multiple submissions, please note that in this course you are not permitted to submit papers/assignments that you have already or will be submitting for another course, nor is group work acceptable for individual papers and examinations. Honor policy violation **sanctions may range from a student failing the specific assignment to the student failing the entire course. In more severe cases an already conferred degree may be revoked, or a student may be expelled from the program.**

Intellectual discussions of the sorts of material we will be engaging can sometimes be passionate, even heated. Indeed, I hope that our seminar will be characterized by spirited exchanges about the material and related concerns. Please feel free to share your ideas with the class as energetically as you would like. In my experience, the most productive classroom exchanges take place when the students support their assertions with textual or other evidence, recognize the rights of others to engage and even disagree vehemently, and remain open to the possibility that they may, on occasion, need to think more expansively about the issues.

Student Disability Resource Center

Georgetown University complies with the regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and offers accommodations to students with disabilities. Students with disabilities should contact the Academic Resource Center (Leavey Center, Suite 335; 202-687-8354; arc@georgetown.edu; <http://ldss.georgetown.edu/index.cfm>) before the start of classes to allow their office time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. If accommodations are recommended, you will be given a letter from ARC to share with your professors. You are personally responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner.

Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS and EVALUATION CRITERIA (Subject to Revision):

Examinations (50%): In this course, you will take two examinations. Although the second exam will not be cumulative, as appropriate, it will build upon concepts that we have studied throughout the entire semester. To be most successful on the examinations, you must take copious notes, read carefully and critically, and think energetically about the works and their relationships to and with each other. Examinations, following the pattern of our readings, lectures, and discussions, will consist of questions about the individual texts' arguments and significance as well as the interrelationships between the texts.

Critical Essay (15%): In this course, you will write one (1100-1300 word) analytical paper in which you synthesize the ideas that the primary texts and the broader contexts out of which they emerge. For this essay, you will write a thesis driven paper that uses textual evidence to support your argument. I will distribute the specific requirements for the essay approximately two weeks before the essay is due. In short, I will ask you to consider how a specific text raises an issue, why it was significant then, and how the issue matters in the contemporary moment.

Class Participation, Contribution, and Preparation (10%): All students are expected to make **daily contributions** to the discussion/lecture. Accordingly, your assessment for class participation and discussion will be based on the intellectual rigor of your comments, including your thoughtfulness, synthesis, and analysis. Remember what I stated in the course policies; simply sitting in class is not enough! You must push yourself to take intellectual risks as well as to think energetically about the materials we are reading/discussing. It is your responsibility to contribute consistently and thoughtfully. You should bring the texts to **every session**, as your comments should be rooted in them. See general rubric below.

African American Icons of the 19th Century (25%): For your final exercise in this class, you are to construct an "encyclopedia" or "reader" of iconic figures/texts/events of the 19th century that uses one of the figures we studied this semester as your point of departure. Your encyclopedia/reader should consist of 20 significant entries (each entry should be 4-5 sentences). You are to write a 1000-word introduction that explains the significance of your reader. You are to explain why you have chosen the particular theme(s) you are including and why those themes are important to the study of pre-20th century African American/black studies. Finally, you should explain what you "hope" one would gain from your "reader." Finally, include a "Suggested Reading List," a bibliography of at least 10 texts, not read in class, that are "essential to the study of your topic," that you used to find the information to write the descriptions of your entries. These sources should be books and scholarly journals. Refrain from citing internet sources and wikipedia. All entries should have a visual reference and at least ten of your entries should use primary source artifacts (historical document, e.g. a bill or sale or advertisement for an auction for the enslaved). You can find these sources in the library's black studies databases. Please make an appointment with a librarian if you need assistance with this aspect of the project.

General Comments about paper grades:

An "A" indicates an excellent essay. The writer takes intellectual risks and has articulated exceptionally well-conceived ideas in lucid prose. The essay exhibits a thesis rich enough to lend itself to interesting development and support, understands in detail both the text and problem posed by the topic, shows command of organizational and technical skills such as sentence-and paragraph composition, and uses footnotes and bibliography where appropriate.

A "B" indicates a good essay that addresses a particularly interesting and challenging problem and explores it in a well-organized, technically competent manner. It uses intelligent argument and judicious reference in support of a

clear, sufficiently complex thesis. There may also be some technical problems in terms of organization and/or style. It may be well-organized and well-written, but offer fewer insights than an "A" essay.

A "C" indicates a satisfactory essay with a thesis demonstrating a student's understanding of the text and question. It is an acceptable although not particularly exciting essay. Its argument develops some aspects of the problem posed by the topic, but the topic may be understood in terms that are too broad or insufficiently complex. The essay may contain technical problems in organization or expression.

A "D" indicates a weak essay. It may lack an interesting thesis, contain misreadings of texts and plot summaries without adequate analysis, or considerable structural, organizational, or grammatical problems.

An "F" indicates an unacceptable essay that simply does not address the assignment, is unacceptably late, or is unacceptably shorter than the assigned length. It contains no thesis worth arguing and is poorly constructed.

Adapted from "Essay-Grading Guidelines"

General Comments about Class Participation, Contribution, and Preparation:

- A Students make *significant* contributions to class discussion and group work (as applicable). They are always engaged in class, whether actively taking notes, listening to peers or the instructor, speaking in class, or participating in group work. These students exemplify maturity and collegiality.
- B Students generally contribute to class discussion and group work, take notes, and listen to peers and the instructor. Contribute less frequently than "A" students, and/or may offer less insight during discussion.
- C Students sometimes take notes and participate in group work, but are not consistently active participants in class discussion and often are otherwise distracted or unfocused. Make tangential comments or fail to offer textually grounded and/or supported claims.
- D Students sit in class, generally without a book, without taking notes, and without making contributions to discussion and/or group work.
- F Student does not show up to class consistently.

Overall Grading Scale: A(93-100); A-(90-92); B+(87-89); B(83-86); B-(80-82); C+(77-79); C(73-76)
C-(70-72); D+(67-69); D(60-66); F(0-59)

Schedule of Assignments (Subject to Revision)

June

07 (M)

Course Overview; What was Black Life Like in the 19th Century?

Episode 1: 1619 Project (in-class)

08 (T)

Spirituals "Were You There," "God's A Gonna Trouble the Water;" "Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel?," "Steal Away to Jesus," and "Go Down Moses" (C)

Phillis Wheatley "On Being Brought From Africa;" "On Imagination" (C)

Episode 2: 1619 Project (in-class)

- 09 (W) David Walker's Appeal "Preamble" and "Article 1" (C)
Watch "Ethnic Notions" and complete "Handout" (before class)
- 10 (R) Frances Harper, "The Slave Mother; Bury Me in a Free Land; Learning to Read; Women's Political Future" (C)
- 14 (M) Douglass' *Narrative of the Life*, Prefaces and Chapters 1-9
- 15 (T) Douglass' *Narrative of the Life*, Chapters 10-11 and Appendix
- 16 (W) Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Preface, Editorial Intro, "Childhood"- "Aunt Nancy"
- 17 (R) Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. "Preparations for Escape"- "Appendix"
- 21 (M) **EXAMINATION # 1**
- 22 (T) Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman" (C)
 Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July? An Address" (C)
 Douglass, "A Radical Woman Suffrage Man" (C)
- 23 (W) Paul Laurence Dunbar, "Philosophy; The Poet; The Fourth of July and Race Outrages; Ode to Ethiopia; an Antebellum Sermon; We Wear the Mask" (C)
 Episode 3: 1619 Project (**before-class**)
- 24 (R) Ida B. Wells, "A Red Record," "The Case Stated," "The Remedy"
 Episode 4: 1619 Project (**before class**)
- 25 (F) **PAPER 1 DUE By 10PM Electronically**
- 28 (M) Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, "Womanhood," "Higher Education of Woman"
- 29 (T) Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery*, Chapters XIII, XIV, XVII
- 30 (W) W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, "Forethought," Chapters I-III
- July**
- 01 (R) James Weldon Johnson, "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing"
 Find 2 reactions to the NFL's decision to play this song during the 20-21 season
- 05 (M) Class Canceled
- 06 (T) **EXAMINATION #2**

07 (W) In-Class Presentations of Final Project Reader Topics

08 (R) In-Class Presentations of Final Project Reader Topics

10 (S) **FINAL READERS due by 12pm**