

Fall 2008

AAS 100
Introduction to African American Studies
MW 3:00-4:30, Clow 19

Liz Cannon

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And by appointment—Please don't hesitate to set up an appointment.

Course Description

In addition to being an introductory survey course, this is a core course for the Minor in African American Studies. We will read a variety of texts, across several disciplines so that you will have a general sense of the issues and experiences that have affected African Americans over time. Because study of the African-American experience spans subject areas including (but not exclusively) history, economics, sociology, literature, political science, culture, religion, language, all of the creative arts and behavioral sciences, an interdisciplinary mix is appropriate.

There is no one particular theme that ties the diverse works on the syllabus together. And yet, they share conceptual and contextual connections that help to define some of the contours of the African-American experience in the United States from 1816 until the present. The materials you will read are for the most part works that many people interested in knowing about African Americans' ethnic and national experience will read; they are important texts in the African-American intellectual and cultural canon. The issues raised within the various forms may sometimes be difficult to discuss because often they deal with suffering, discrimination and injustice, or seemingly intractable problems of crime, violence, distrust, and racism. But you probably also will find new ways of understanding with more complexity both our shared society and the human experience because the texts also deal with love and pride and happiness, endurance, creativity and joy. Studying in this course will help each of you primarily as critical thinkers but also in becoming better informed citizens in our nation and the world.

Required Texts

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (1845)

Toni Morrison, *Love* (2003)

All other works can be found on e-reserve (marked by *), unless an internet URL is given.

Course Requirements

Each assignment will be assigned a letter grade.

2 Analytical Papers—20% (each paper is worth 10%)

You will be required to write two three-five page papers. The first paper will be on Frederick Douglass's narrative and the second on Toni Morrison's novel.

Specific instructions will be provided at appropriate times.

Reading Responses—20%

For **four** of the readings we study (your choice which ones), you will write a thoughtful response, indicating your understanding of the reading and your critical response to it.

DO NOT WRITE ON EITHER FREDERICK DOUGLASS OR TONI MORRISON.

To focus your discussion, choose a short passage from the text that struck you. Put

that passage at the top of your response (use proper MLA in-text documentation—words in passage not counted in required length of response). Then

- 1) in your first sentence, indicate where the passage is from by giving the author's full name and the title of the work. Make sure you correctly punctuate the title.
 - 2) in your own words, discuss what the passage means
 - 3) discuss how the passage relates to the major ideas of the reading
 - 4) give your response to the passage—why did it strike you?
 - 5) relate the passage to other readings or films we've studied in class or class lectures.
 - 6) if you include other quotes from the reading, make sure you properly introduce it and use correct in-text documentation.
 - 7) length: at least 500 words
 - 8) **must be typed and double-spaced**
 - 9) use proper MLA heading at the top of your first page, left side, double-spaced. Include your name, prof's name, title of class, date—in that order.
 - 10) Due the day we discuss the reading. Late responses will be down-graded.
- NOTE: you will choose which readings you will respond to, **but** two must be done in the first half of the course: before the midterm on October 15, and two in the second half (no responses after Thanksgiving)

PowerPoint Presentation—10%

7-9 minute presentation of an African American who has made a significant contribution to our society.

Group Discussion Leaders—5%

Group A: Sept 17; Group B: Oct 1; Group C: Oct 20; Group D: Oct 27; Group E: Nov 10; Group F: Nov 12

Midterm—20%

Final—15%

The exams may include multiple choice, short answer completion, matching, and essay questions. Both exams will cover the readings, films, and lectures.

Participation—10%

Your participation grade is based on your attendance and your contributions to class discussion. Attendance is required—you must be here mentally as well as physically. You are allowed one free absence. After that, your participation grade will be lowered. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, unless you have an official note from the university requiring your absence from class. If you miss more than 8 classes, you may fail the course. If you do miss a class, please talk to me.

Plagiarism is defined as using the language OR ideas of someone else without correct and complete bibliographic citation. It is a breach of academic conduct and will be reported to the University for official sanction, which may include failure of the course or (if repeated) expulsion.

Please do not hesitate to come see me if you have any questions or concerns about this class. My office hours are listed above, but we can make an appointment if these are not convenient for you. Students with disabilities needing a reasonable accommodation should inform me immediately.

Calendar

NOTE: page numbers may not fit your edition—go by chapter numbers

I. *Slavery and Freedom: 1746-1865*

September 3 W: Introduction

What is African American Studies

Lecture: *Slavery and Freedom: 1746-1865*

8 M: Bermuda Triangle Disaster

Due: Letter to Liz

10 W: Harriet Jacobs, “Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl”*

Oludah Equiano, “The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano” (chpt 1 and chpt 2)*

Fairchild and Basu, “How Africa Developed the World”

(<http://pzacad.pitzer.edu/~hfairchi/essays/HowAfricaDevelopedWorld.htm>)

15 M: Frederick Douglass, 29-47 (Preface-Chpt. II)

Film: *Slavery and the Making of America: The Downward Spiral*”

17 W: Frederick Douglass, 48-71 (Chpts. III-IX)

22 M: James McPherson, “Who Freed the Slaves”*

Perman—Ira Berlin, “Who Freed the Slaves”*

Go to

<http://www.uwosh.edu/wasah/2008-summer-institute/summer-presenter-resources-presentations> and read:

Michelle Kuhl’s readings: Gen. Benjamin Butler letter, “Colloquy with Colored Ministers”, Frederick Douglass Documents, Lincoln documents, Susie King Taylor quotes,

Guest Lecture: Dr. Michelle Kuhl, Department of History,

Women’s Studies Program, African American Studies Program

24 W: Frederick Douglass, 71-109 (Chpts. X-Appendix)

Discussion A

II. *Reconstruction: 1865-1919*

29 M: W.E.B. Du Bois, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings”*

Lecture: Reconstruction and the Decades of Disappointment

Paper #1 Due

October 1 W: Mary Church Terrell, “The Progress of Colored Women”*

Ida B. Wells, “Lynch Law in America”*

Discussion B

III. *Harlem Renaissance: 1919-1940*

6 M: Alain Locke, “The New Negro”*

Lecture: Harlem Renaissance and the New Negro

Film: *Culture shock: The devil’s music : 1920s jazz*

8 W: Zora Neale Hurston, “How It Feels to Be Colored Me”*

Dorothy West, “The Typewriter”*

Langston Hughes, “Income Tax”*

Film: *Culture shock: The devil’s music : 1920s jazz*

- 13 M: Christine Harold and Kevin DeLuca, "Behold the Corpse: Violent Images and the Case of Emmett Till"*
Film: "The Murder of Emmett Till"
15 W: MIDTERM
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IV. *WWII and the Second Reconstruction: 1940-1975*

- 20 M: Fannie Lou Hammer, "The Special Plight and the Role of Black Women"*
"SNCC Position paper: Women in the Movement" 1964
Lecture: WWII and the Civil Rights Movement
22 W: Martin Luther King Jr. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"*
Malcolm X "Ballot or the Bullet"*
Utube clips: Martin Luther King on Malcolm X:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2P7HOahZ278&feature=related>
Malcolm X Debate:

<http://technorati.com/videos/youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DxyyFGOAwTYM>

Discussion C

- 27 M: Stokely Carmichael, "What We Want"*
Huey P. Newton, "On the Deflection of Eldridge Cleaver..."*
Michelle Wallace, "Anger in Isolation: A Black Feminist's Search for Sisterhood"*

Discussion D

- 29 W: Film: "Standing on My Sister's Shoulders"
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V. *Contemporary African American Thought*

- November 3 M: Toni Morrison, intro-chpt 3 (1: Portrait, 2: Friend, 3: Stranger)
5 W: Toni Morrison, Chpt 4 – 6 (4: Benefactor, 5: Lover, 6: Husband)
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- 10 M: Toni Morrison, Chpt 7-9 (7: Guardian, 8: Father, 9: Phantom)

Discussion E

- 12 W: Paul Taylor, "Does Hip Hop Belong to Me?"*
Morgan, "From Fly-Girls to Bitches and Hos"*

Discussion F

Film: "Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes"

- 17 M: bell hooks, "Black Beauty and Black Power"*

Film: Ethnic Notions

Paper #2 due

- 19 W: Molefi Asante, "Afrocentricity"*

Film: Ethnic Notions

- 24 M: Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege"*

Beverly Daniel Tatum, "Defining Racism"*

Lecture: White Privilege

- 26 W: THANKSGIVING
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- December 1 M: Presentations
3 W: Presentations
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- 8 M: Presentations

