

Race and the American Story

Political Science 2425-01/Black Studies 2425-01

NAKA HALL 245

M, W, F 10:00-10:50 am

Instructor: Dr. Rodolfo Hernandez

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is a collaboration between three institutions:

- Arizona State University: The Center for Political Thought and Leadership
- University of Massachusetts, Amherst: W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies
- University of Missouri: Kinder Institute on Constitutional Democracy and the Department of Black Studies

Building upon the evolving discussions of race and racism in our society, this course aims to serve as a model for improving diversity education on campuses across the country and contribute to a more informed and thoughtful national culture. This course consists of readings that tell the story of the confrontation between American political principles and the practice of racial injustice throughout our history. We will trace the ways that discourse on race has morphed in the United States and we will consider the ramifications of these ideas on the endurance of racism in our society. Students will read and discuss the Declaration of Independence, the slavery clauses in the Constitution, the poetry of Phillis Wheatley, the speeches of Frederick Douglass, Anna Julia Cooper, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King, Jr., among others. They will achieve a greater understanding of how diversity relates to humanity, and will learn to dialogue productively and civilly with others who may not share their background or opinions.

The course will be taught on three campuses, and there will be a common Race and the American Story website where students of all sections will interact with each other and with members of the public. On **March 20-21, 2020**, students and faculty may attend our annual Race and the American Story symposium in Memphis TN. Annette Gordon-Reed and Peter Onuf will be our keynote speakers.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Articles on Canvas as assigned on the class schedule.

Annette Gordon-Reed and Peter Onuf, *Most Blessed of Patriarchs: Thomas Jefferson and the Empire of the Imagination* (2017)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this class, students should be able to

- Explain the history of Race in America by referencing the various positions and perspectives of iconic writers, and orators
- Discuss the context of history and culture that has produced the construction of race in the United States
- Connect the historical documents and ideas to contemporary discourse in the US and current events
- Explore the parallels between the history of race in America and the history of race at Mizzou

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Attendance:** The effectiveness of this class leans heavily on your being here and ready to participate. Students are expected to attend every class, only documented absences (doctor's note, military drill, athletic event, etc.) will be excused. (10%)
- **Discussion Board:** Each week, students will enter their reflections on the readings on a Canvas Discussion Board. These should be reflective/stream-of-consciousness entries that will be shared in class and on the RAS Project discussion board. (15%)
- **Film Nominations:** Nominate a film for "Best Depiction of Race and the American Story." Write a 2 page critique of the film, including justification for your nomination. (Due February 17th) We will present these nominations in class. Be prepared to show some clips from your film choice. (15%)
- **Music Playlist:** Each student will compile an annotated music playlist that reflects the theme of Race and the American Story. Given our discussions and readings on race in this class, compile a list of ten (10) music tracks that are reflective of the nuanced constructions of race in America. (Due March 30th) Your song choices can be pulled from any genre of music and from any era. Under each track, write a brief paragraph that explains why the track is on your list. Elaborate briefly on how each song relates to the theme of our class this semester. (20%)
Use this format:

EXAMPLE:

- | Artist | Song | Album | Year | Genre |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1. Curtis Mayfield & the Impressions | "This is My Country" | <i>This is My Country</i> | 1968 | Soul |

This song reflects the history of the United States in a way that is inclusive of the experiences of African-Americans. The lyrics touch on the fact that African-Americans were brought to the United States as slaves and helped build this country. The song is a direct response to those who have suggested that African-Americans leave the country. We discussed the idea of repatriation and "colonization" that some founding fathers like

Thomas Jefferson were fond of. This song is a valid response to that idea that any citizen who questions the reality of racial oppression in the USA must leave the country. Curtis Mayfield and the Impressions are presenting a song of empowerment for Black people in the civil rights era (1968) but this song also stands true to every era of the American story, including the responses to contemporary activists like Colin Kaepernick.

- **Final Project**

Student can write a seven page paper or present a ten minute talk or produce a ten minute video on any topic or thinker covered in the course. (40%)

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

January 22, 2020	Introduction to Course
January 24, 2020	Ten Things Everyone Should Know about Race PODCAST: Thinking out Loud ‘Race and the American Story’
January 27, 2020	Barack Obama, Remarks by the President in Eulogy for the Honorable Rev. Clementa Pinckney
January 29, 2020	Nikole Hannah Jones, The Idea of America
January 31, 2020	Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence, removed paragraph on slavery
February 3, 2020	US Constitution, Preamble and Slavery Clauses (I.2, I.9, IV.2), Federalist 54
February 5, 2020	Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, selection from Queries 14 and 18
February 7, 2020	Adam Seagrave, The 3395 Project
February 10, 2020	Phillis Wheatley, “On being Brought from Africa to America;” “To the Right Honorable William Earl of Dartmouth;” “February 14, 1776 Letter to Obour Tanner,” “March 11, 1774 Letter to Reverend Samson Occum”
February 12, 2020	Alexis de Tocqueville, “The Three Races” from Democracy in America
February 14, 2020	Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I a Woman?”, Nell Painter, “Sojourner Truth in Life and Memory: Writing the Biography of an American Exotic.”
February 17, 2020	Film Nomination Due. Francis Harper “Bury Me in a Free Land;” “We are all Bound up together”

February 19, 2020	Frederick Douglass “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”
February 21, 2020	Frederick Douglass “Our Composite Nationality;” Prejudice Not Natural”
February 24, 2020	Frederick Douglass “The Constitution and Slavery” March 16, 1849, The Constitution of the United States: Is it Pro-slavery or Anti-Slavery” March 26, 1860
February 26, 2020	Dred Scott v. Sandford case
February 28, 2020	Stephen A. Douglas, “Speech at Springfield, Illinois”
March 2, 2020	Abraham Lincoln, “Speech on the Dred Scott Decision,” Frederick Douglass “Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln”
March 4, 2020	Reed/Onuf, “Most Blessed of the Patriarchs”
March 6, 2020	Reed/Onuf, “Most Blessed of the Patriarchs”
March 9, 2020	Reed/Onuf, “Most Blessed of the Patriarchs”
March 11, 2020	Anna Julia Cooper “Has America a Race Problem: If So, How Can It Be Solved?”
March 13, 2020	Booker T. Washington “Atlanta Exposition Address,” “My View of Segregation Laws,” “The Fruits of Industrial Training”
March 16, 2020	W.E.B. Du Bois “Declaration of Principles of the Niagara Movement” “The Forethought” “Of Our Spiritual Striving”
March 18, 2020	Zora Neale Hurston, “How it Feels to be Colored Me” Larry Grothaus, “The Inevitable Mr. Gaines”
March 20, 2020	RAS Conference, National Civil Rights Museum, Memphis, TN.
March 23, 2020	Spring Break
March 25, 2020	Spring Break
March 27, 2020	Spring Break

March 30, 2020	Music Playlist Due. Malcom X, “A Declaration of Independence” “The Ballot or the Bullet” “At the Audubon”
April 1, 2020	MLK “The Power of Non-Violence” “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” “I Have A Dream” “I See the Promised Land”
April 3, 2020	Debate Between Hubert Humphrey and Strom Thurman on the Civil Rights Act
April 6, 2020	The Desegregation of Girard College
April 8, 2020	Barack Obama “A More Perfect Union” “The Audacity of Hope, Chapter 7”
April 10, 2020	Kyle Korver, “Privileged”
April 13, 2020	Shelby Steele, “White Guilt”
April 15, 2020	N. Jeremi Duru, “The Central Park Five, The Scottsboro Boys, and the Myth of the Bestial Black Man
April 17, 2020	T.B.D.
April 20, 2020	Ta-Nehisi Coates, “Letter to My Son”
April 22, 2020	Rasool Berry, “Knocking on my Jewish Neighbor’s Door”
April 24, 2020	Ashleen Menchaca-Bagnulo, “I’m a Conservative Latina. Is there a place for me in Trump’s Republican Party After Charlottesville?”
April 27, 2020	USCCB “Open Wide Our Hearts”
April 29, 2020	Maya Angelou “The Mask” James Baldwin “Letter from a Region in My Mind”
May 1, 2020	Class Presentations
May 4, 2020	Class Presentations
May 6, 2020	Class Presentations and Reflections on the Course

This syllabus is tentative and subject to change.