

**TFMS 245.01, ENGL 230.02, and WGSX 250.01:
Struggle, Survival, and Subversion:
African American Expression in American Culture**

Fall 2007

Tuesday/Thursday 2:00-3:50 p.m. MH 104

Merideth Taylor (MH 112) and Jeffrey Coleman (MH 124)

Required Texts:

Erasure, Percival Everett

A Raisin in the Sun, Lorraine Hansberry

Summer Snow, Trudier Harris

Dutchman and *The Slave: Two Plays*, Leroi Jones

The Color Purple, Alice Walker

Photocopied essays

Course Goal: This course will examine the multiple roles of African-American creativity in the expressive arts. Dance, theater, literature, music, and film from the 1830s to the present will be explored in order for students to gain a deeper cultural understanding of how artists and writers have inscribed the African presence and shaped American history, thought, and culture.

This course counts for credit in the Africa/African-Diaspora Studies Program and the Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program.

Week 1 (8/28 & 8/30)

T Introductions

Th “Christian Conversion and the Challenge of Dance,” Stucky, 39-58
“Up From Under: The Africanist Presence,” Gottschild, 1-10
Viewing: *Ethnic Notions*

Week 2 (9/4 & 6)

T “Black Like You: Blackface Minstrelsy, The Rock & Roll Years,” Strausbaugh,
57-98
Viewing: *Bamboozled*, LI 321

Th *Erasure*, 1-72
Viewing: *Bamboozled*, LI 321

Week 3 (9/11 & 13)

- T *Erasure*, 73-210
Viewing: Excerpts selected from one or more of the following, *Dance Black America*, (Cakewalk) *Vaudeville*, *Dancing*, and *I'll Make Me a World*
- Th *Erasure*, conclusion

Week 4 (9/18 & 20)

- T "Identity Politics in American Negro Vaudeville: The Whitman Sisters, 1900-1935," George, 59-79
"First Premises of an African Aesthetic," Gottschild, 11-19
"Characteristics of Negro Expression," and "How it Feels to be Colored Me," Hurston
Viewing: Excerpts from *Dance Black America* (Snake Hips), *Zora is My Name!*
- Th "The New Negro," Locke
"The Negro Artist and Racial Mountain," and "The Blues I'm Playing," Hughes
"Dance in the Harlem Renaissance: Sowing Seeds," 23-37
Viewing: Hughes, *Working Towards Salvation*
Three-page Response Paper due

Week 5 (9/25 & 27)

- T Read *The Color Purple*
Viewing: Excerpts selected from *New Dance Group Gala*, *Dance Black America*, ("The Ostrich," "Shango," Negro Speaks of Rivers," "Mourner's Bench")
- Th Read *The Color Purple*
Music: Billie Holiday, Bessie Smith, Ella Fitzgerald and various blues and jazz selections

Week 6 (10/2 & 4)

- T Finish *The Color Purple*
Viewing: *The Color Purple*, LI 321

Th Viewing: *Color Purple*, LI 321
"The Impact of Lynching on the Art of African American Women," Perkins, 15-20 and "Blue-eyed Black Boy," Douglas, 116-120

Week 7 (10/11)

Reading Days 10/8 & 10/9

Th "The American Dream and the American Negro," "Fifth Avenue, Uptown," and "In Search of a Majority," James Baldwin
Three-page Response Paper due

Week 8 (10/16 & 18)

T *A Raisin in the Sun*, Hansberry
"Political Radicalism and Innovation in the Works of Lorraine Hansberry," 40-54
Viewing: *Raisin in the Sun*, LI 321

Th Viewing/discussion: *A Raisin in the Sun*, LI 321

Week 9 (10/23 & 25)

T *Dutchman*, Jones
Viewing: *Dutchman*

Th "Towards a Black Aesthetic," Hoyt Fuller and "Black Arts Movement," Larry Neal
Viewing: Excerpt from *Black Theatre: Making of a Movement* (Baraka)

Week 10 (10/30 & 11/1)

T Advising Day
No classes, but read "What America Would Be Like Without Blacks," Ralph Ellison

Th *Day of Absence*, Ward

Week 11 (11/6 & 8)

T Civil Rights Poetry
Summer Snow, Preface-47
Viewing: *The Murder of Emmett Till*

Out-of-class viewing: *When the Levees Broke*

- Th "Motion in the Ocean" (Free Southern Theatre), O'Neal, 118-129
Summer Snow, 48-81
Viewing: *The Songs are Free*
Out-of-class viewing: *When the Levees Broke*
Three-page Response Paper due

Week 12 (11/13 & 15)

- T "(Re) Crossing Borders: The Legacy of Alvin Ailey," Goeller, 113-124
Summer Snow, 82-136
Viewing: "Revelations"
Out-of-class viewing: *When the Levees Broke*
Discussion of Final Project/Presentations for Week 15
- Th Contemporary music/dance/performance, 1960-80
Summer Snow, 82-136
Viewing: Excerpts from *For Colored Girls, Dance Black America* and *Paris is Burning*
Out-of-class viewing: *When the Levees Broke*

Week 13 (11/20)

- T "katrina: acting black , playing blackness," Dicker/Sun, 614-616
Discussion and viewing of *When the Levees Broke*, LI 321
Viewing: *Fires in the Mirror*
Proposals for Final Project/Presentations due
- Th Thanksgiving

Week 14 (11/27 & 29)

- T " 'How Do I Rent a Negro?' Racialized Subjectivity and Digital Performance Art," Catanese, 699-714
"Hot Ghetto Mess", Viewing outside class
Critical Readings/Reviews
- Th "Getting Off: Portrayals of Masculinity in Hip Hop Dance in Film," LaBosky, 112-119
Viewing: Excerpts from *Rize, Freestyle: The Art of Rhyme*

Week 15 (12/4 & 12/6)

T Presentations

Th Presentations, if necessary

Week 16 EXAM WEEK

Our class is scheduled to meet Wednesday, December 12 from 7:00-9:15 p.m.
Presentations, if necessary

Attendance:

Regular attendance is required. Students are responsible for any class work done or assigned during any absence.

Three unexcused absences will drop your final grade by a full letter score.

Four unexcused absences will drop your final grade by two letters.

Five or more unexcused absences equal failure.

Arrive to class *on time*, prepared to work, with assignments read/written. This course depends on your active preparation and participation

Grades:

Your final grade will be based on the following:

Three three-page response papers	40%
Participation	30%
Final Project/Presentation	30%

Response Papers:

The Response Paper is a three-page analysis of one specific idea or element of a text or viewing. Response Papers should be no less than and no more than three double-spaced pages, preferably in Times New Roman 12. A successful response paper has three components: you offer a clear interpretive thesis about your issue or idea, you support your thesis with a close analysis of one or two specific pieces of evidence, and you offer some explanation as to why the subject with which you are dealing matters. For example, what does your argument help the reader understand about African American expression in American culture?

Response papers allow you to test out your ideas about the readings and viewings before you formalize those ideas in your final research project or performance (more about this later). The papers also help us gauge your progress in the course. If you are having difficulties understanding or keeping track of the objectives of the course we can identify those difficulties and address them immediately

Guidelines for Response Papers:

An effective response paper begins with a succinct (one or two sentence) statement of your argument. Limit the scope of your first paragraph. Do not write long introductions to your response papers; you don't have the space for them.

Every argument, however small, needs support. Following your thesis paragraph/sentence, you should present one or two specific pieces of evidence for it from the text or viewing you are considering. Such evidence should almost always include a citation from the text, with your analysis of that cited passage. In your response papers you should have one or two paragraphs of supporting argument; as a general rule of

thumb, each paragraph should focus upon one idea only, and each idea should be supported by one or two specific pieces of evidence.

The best response papers conclude by offering to the reader some sense of why your thesis is an important one. If the reader accepts your argument, what insight have you provided for him or her about the readings, viewings, or about this course?

The most important guideline to keep in mind with regard to your response paper is focus: you should address one single issue in the response paper. You do not have time or space for any more than that.

Make sure you cite page numbers when you offer a quote.

Final Project/Presentations:

Final projects and presentations can range from traditional research essays to collaborative research and/or creative projects and presentations. Your subject matter can be derived from any of the topics discussed in class or from a related and relevant area of interest not covered in class. In short, you will be given a reasonable amount of flexibility and creative control.

Essays must consist of 12-15 double-spaced pages and should incorporate a minimum of 9 secondary sources. Essays should adhere to MLA guidelines for internal parenthetical citations (author and page numbers). A Works Cited page is required as well, but does not count towards the 12-15-page requirement.

Presentations are generally 20-25 minutes long and may include audio/video components, but those components should be secondary to your carefully prepared, rehearsed, and timed oral presentation. Two copies of a typed summary of your project, including sources, is required as well.

All ideas for final projects and presentations are subject to approval by Professors Taylor and Coleman and should be submitted no later than **Tuesday, November 20, 2007**. More details for this requirement will be given during the course of the semester.

The Writing Center:

The Writing Center, located in room 115 in the Library, has peer tutors trained to discuss your writing with you. No matter where you are in the writing process (brainstorming ideas, understanding assignments, or revising rough and final drafts), the tutors in the Writing Center can assist you. These tutors are your peers—they do not grade or proofread your paper, but instead offer an opportunity to work with others on becoming a stronger writer. We encourage you to use the Writing Center as much as possible.