

## AMST 385: African American Culture & Society

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Spring 2013                      Lecture 10431R                      MW 12-1:50PM                      THH 121

**Professor:**                      **Lanita Jacobs**

**Office:**                              Grace Ford Salvatori Hall (GFS) 128

[Note: To get to my office, you must first enter the Anthropology Department at GFS 120]

**Email:**                              jacobshu@usc.edu

**Office Hours:**                      M/W 2-3PM; also by appointment. You can also contact me Monday-Friday via email.

**Course Website:**                      AMST 385 course materials are accessible through Blackboard; to access, click on:  
<https://blackboard.usc.edu/>

### Required Texts:

1. Dyson, Michael Eric. 2006. *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster*. New York: Basic Books. [This text is abbreviated as Dyson in the reading schedule.]
2. Gwaltney, John Langston. 1993. *Drylongso: A Self Portrait of Black America*. New York: The New Press. [This text is abbreviated as Gwaltney in the reading schedule.]
3. Hurston, Zora Neale. 1998 [1937]. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; with a foreword by Mary Helen Washington. New York: HarperCollins. [This text is abbreviated as Hurston in the reading schedule.]
4. Jackson, John L. 2005. *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [This text is abbreviated as Jackson 2005 in the reading schedule.]
5. AMST 385 Reader. [This text is abbreviated as RDR in the reading schedule.]

### Highly Recommended Texts

6. Jackson, John L. 2008. *Racial Paranoia: The Unintended Consequences of Political Correctness*. New York: Basic Books. [This text is abbreviated as Jackson 2008 in the reading schedule.]
7. Jones, Edwards P. 2003. *The Known World*. New York: Amistad. [This text is abbreviated as Jones in the reading schedule.]
8. Zinsser, William. 2001. *On Writing Well*. Sixth Edition. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. [This text is abbreviated as Zinsser in the reading schedule.]

**NOTE:** All required and optional texts will be placed on reserve at Leavey Library. Additionally, select articles from the course reader will be available in Blackboard or Leavey Electronic Reserves.

**Course Description:** This course focuses broadly on socio-cultural and political issues affecting the lives of African Americans in the United States. Special attention will be paid to the following themes: *Methodological Issues* (pertaining to the study of African American culture); *Key Historical Moments* (e.g., slavery, Emancipation, The Great Migration) that have shaped African Americans' lives and worldviews, *Race, Class, and Other Intersections* in African America, *Race, Authenticity, and Representation* in popular and everyday culture, and *Defining Moments in the Present* that impact the lives of Black people in the U.S. This course employs an interdisciplinary approach to addressing what it means (and has meant) to be African American. This course also integrates scholarly and popular texts (e.g., films, videos, music) to illuminate the cultural, economic, and socio-political complexity of African American life and society.

**Grading:** You will be required to submit THREE discussion papers (1-2 double-spaced pages in length) which analyze the assigned readings for a weekly theme. You must analyze a week of assigned readings within *each* exam period (e.g., you must submit your first paper during weeks 1-4, your second paper during weeks 6-10, and your third paper during weeks 11-15. Beyond these constraints, you are free to choose which week of assigned readings you wish to review. Do note that these discussion papers (DPs) *must* be typed and should also suggest 2-3 questions or topics for discussion. The discussion papers are due at the **beginning of class on Monday** and are worth five points each. Discussion papers will thus account for 15% of your final grade. (More information on DPs can be found in Blackboard under “Assignments”). In addition, there will be TWO exams and a final exam covering assigned readings and films/clips. Your score on the first exam will constitute 30% of your grade and your score on the second exam will constitute 25% of your grade (totaling 55%). Your score on the final exam will constitute the remaining 30%. Each of the three exams will include short-answer and essay questions and will be “non-cumulative.” Each exam will afford an opportunity to earn extra-credit in the form of a two-point bonus question. Bonus questions will be based on optional readings only. The grading scale is as follows:

**Grading Scale:**

94-100 = A      87-89 = B+      77-79 = C+      67-69 = D+      ≥ 59 = F  
 90-93 = A-      84-86 = B      74-76 = C      64-66 = D  
                     80-83 = B-      70-73 = C-      60-63 = D-

GRADE BASIS
3 Discussion Papers: 15%
Midterm 1: 30%
Midterm 2: 25%
Final Exam: 30%

**An Official Note on Examinations:** Make-up exams will only be given under extraordinary circumstances and will require documentation from your doctor. The content and form of any make-up exam will be at my discretion. In any case, do inform me via email or phone **prior** to missing an exam. If you feel you must reschedule an exam on account of having (a) two additional exams scheduled at the same time or (b) three exams in a 24-hour period, do inform me at least two weeks prior to our scheduled mid-term. The final exam, however, **must** be taken at the time noted below.

**Attendance:** Consistent and punctual attendance in lecture and discussion section(s) is encouraged and will increase your understanding of course materials. Your record of attendance will also be considered in determining discussion section and (borderline) course grades. Do note that it is *your* responsibility to be aware of what has transpired in class. Should sickness, family emergencies, or other events necessitate your absence from class, you should consult Blackboard and/or your student colleagues for copies of their lecture notes.

**Academic Accommodations:** Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability should register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when necessary documentation is filed. Please deliver the letter to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in Student Union 301 and is open Monday-Friday, 8:30AM-5PM; DSP Phone: 213-740-0776.

**Class Structure:** Class meetings will consist of both lecture and discussion, with a clear emphasis on the latter. As such, it is essential that you keep up with the weekly readings and that you hand in weekly discussion papers on time. (NO late papers will be accepted.)

## READING & EXAM SCHEDULE\*

### COURSE INTRODUCTION, METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

#### Week 1: RESEARCHING AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURE

- 1/14 • Geertz: Thick Description [*Optional*; in RDR]
- 1/16 • Gwaltney: Introduction [in Drylongso]
- Jackson 2005: Chapter 6-Real Natives
- Jacobs-Huey: The Natives are Gazing and Talking Back [in RDR]
- Film: *The Deadly Deception* [LVYVID 2135; on reserve at Leavey Library]

To access articles in Reader (RDR), go to Blackboard, click on "Course Documents." Once there, click on "Course Resources" and THEN click on "Reader." Readings will be listed alphabetically by author's last name. (Currently, many of the readings are available in Ares Electronic Reserves at: <https://usc.ares.atlas-sys.com>; these readings will be soon be moved to the Reader in Blackboard for easy access.)

### KEY HISTORICAL MOMENTS: SLAVERY, EMANCIPATION, AND THE GREAT MIGRATION

#### Week 2: SLAVERY AS A "TOTAL INSTITUTION"; AFRICAN AMERICAN WORLDVIEWS

- 1/21 **No Class** • Goffman: On the Characteristics of Total Institutions [in RDR]
- 1/23 • Gwaltney: The Legacy of Slavery (24-69) [in Drylongso]
- Jones: Chapter 4 and 9 [*Optional*; in The Known World]
- Lester: To Be A Slave [in RDR]
- Film: *Found Voices: The Slave Narratives* [LVYDVD 1541; on reserve at Leavey Library]

#### Week 3: EMANCIPATION & BEYOND: THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

- 1/28 • Hurston: Their Eyes Were Watching God [Read entire book, including Foreword]
- 1/30 • Walker: Looking for Zora [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Film/Clips: *Zora Neale Hurston: A Heart with Room for Every Joy* [LVYDVD 1450], Excerpts from *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (2005)

#### Week 4: THE GREAT MIGRATION: FROM THE SOUTH TO THE NORTH

- 2/4 • Marks: The Great Migration [*Optional*; in RDR]
- 2/6 • Tolnay: The African American "Great Migration" and Beyond [in RDR]
- Film: *Goin' to Chicago* [LVYVID 342]

### RACE, CLASS, AND OTHER INTERSECTIONS

#### Week 5: ISSUES OF CLASS & AUTHENTICITY: TALES (AND COSTS) OF UPWARD MOBILITY

- 2/11 • Bell & Gunderson: The Painful Avenues of Upward Mobility [in RDR]
- 2/13 • Feagin & Sikes: Seeking a Good Education [in RDR]
- Film: *Far from Home* [to be placed on reserve at Leavey Library]

#### Week 6: EXAM WEEK

- 2/18 **No Class**
- 2/20 **Exam 1** • Exam 1 on Wednesday, February 20<sup>th</sup>

#### Week 7: TESTIMONIES OF RACE, CLASS, AND SOLIDARITY

- 2/25 • Cose: Tiptoeing Around the Truth [in RDR]
- 2/27 • Dyson: Shadow-Boxing with a Scapegoat (or, Do White People Matter?) [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Shelby: Social Identity & Group Solidarity, Conclusion [in RDR]
- Wilson: From Institutional to Jobless Ghettos [in RDR]
- Film/Clips: Excerpt from Chris Rock's *Bring the Pain, TBA*

#### Week 8: RACE, CLASS, GENDER: INTERSECTIONALITIES

- 3/4 • Crenshaw: Whose Story Is It Anyway? [in RDR]
- 3/6 • hooks: Black Women and Feminism [in RDR]
- Williams: I'm a Black Woman: This is My Dream [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Williams: House of Cards [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Film/Clips: *TBA*

## RACE, AUTHENTICITY, AND REPRESENTATION

### Week 9: INTERROGATING “ETIC” NOTIONS OF BLACKNESS

3/11

3/13

- Hall: The Spectacle of the Other [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Hunt: Making Sense of Blackness on TV [in RDR]
- Jackson 2008: Ch. 1: What Dave Chappelle Can Teach Us about American History [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Film: *Ethnic Notions* [LVYDVD 2171; on reserve at Leavey Library]

## SPRING BREAK 3/18-3/22

### Week 10: INTERROGATING “EMIC” NOTIONS OF BLACKNESS

3/25

3/27 **Exam 2**

- Gwaltney: The Many Shades of Black (71-92) [in [Drylongso](#)]
- Film: *Black Is ... Black Ain't* [LVYDVD 2081; on reserve at Leavey Library]
- **Exam 2 on Wednesday March 27<sup>th</sup>**

### Week 11: INTERROGATING “EMIC” NOTIONS OF BLACKNESS

4/1

4/3

- Favor: Discourses of Black Identity: The Elements of Authenticity [in RDR]
- Jackson 2005: Chapter 1: Real Fictions
- Jackson 2005: Chapter 7: Real Emcees [*Optional*]
- Johnson: Manifest Faggotry [in RDR]
- Film/Clips: To be announced (TBA)

## DEFINING MOMENTS IN THE PRESENT: SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup> AND HURRICANE KATRINA

### Week 12: SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup>: “REALNESS,” RACE, AND RESISTANCE IN 9/11 HUMOR

4/8

4/10

- Gwaltney: A Nation within a Nation (1-23) [*Optional*; in [Drylongso](#)]
- Jacobs: “The Arab is the New Nigger” [in RDR]
- Jackson 2005: Chapter 7 - Real Names
- Levine: Black Laughter [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Watkins: Introduction – On the Real Side [in RDR]
- Film/Clips: TBA

### Week 13: HURRICANE KATRINA: BLACK RAGE AND RACIAL DESPAIR

4/15

4/17

- Dyson: Come Hell or High Water (read book)
- Thompson: Katrina’s Hidden Race War [in RDR]
- Thompson: Body of Evidence [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Kaplan: Black Anger and the Big Easy [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Film/Clips: *Trouble the Water, Katrina’s Hidden Race War* (on YouTube)

### Week 14: IN/BEYOND TRAGEDY: BLACK GRIEF AND RESILIENCE

4/22

4/24

- Rosenblatt & Wallace: Racism as a Cause of Death [in RDR]
- Rosenblatt & Wallace: Being Strong in Grief [in RDR]
- Film/Clips: *Carry Me Home*, TBA

### Week 15: BLACK “REALNESS” AND LOVE: A CULTURAL/POLITICAL IMPERATIVE?

4/29

5/1

- Dyson: Another Saturday Night, or Have All the Brothers Gone to White Women [in RDR]
- Hill Collins: Very Necessary – Redefining Black Gender Ideology [in RDR]
- Jackson 2005: Chapter 9 - Real Loves [*Optional*]
- Jones & Shorter-Gooden: Forging a Delicate Balance [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Rose: Longing to Tell (Intro & Epilogue) [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Young & Braziel: Introduction - Cultural Amnesia and the Academy [in RDR]
- Film/Clips: TBA

**FINAL EXAM: FRIDAY, MAY 10<sup>TH</sup> 11AM-1PM, THH 121**

\* The Reading and Exam Schedule may be subject to change. Modifications will be noted in Blackboard.

**COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY (Books are in BOLD)**

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- Bell, Inge, Bernard McGrane, and John Gunderson. 2005. The Painful Avenues of Upward Mobility. *In This Book is Not Required* (197-210). London: Pine Forge Press.
- Cose, Ellis. 1993. Tiptoeing Around the Truth. *In The Rage of a Privileged Class* (27-51). New York: Harper Collins.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1992. Whose Story Is It Anyway?: Feminist and Anti-Racist Appropriations of Anita Hill. *In T. Morrison (Ed.) Race-ing Justice, En-Gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality* (402-440). New York: Pantheon Books.
- Dyson, Michael Eric. 2006. Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster. New York: Basic Books.**
- Dyson, Michael Eric. 2005. Shadow-Boxing with a Scapegoat (or, Do White People Matter?). *In Is Bill Cosby Right? (Or Has the Black Middle Class Lost Its Mind?)* [181-237]. New York: Basic Books.
- Dyson, Michael Eric. 2003. Another Saturday Night, or Have All the Brothers Gone to White Women. *In Why I Love Black Women* (195-250). New York: Basic Books.
- Favor, J. Martin. 1999. Discourses of Black Identity: The Elements of Authenticity. *In Authentic Blackness: The Folk in the New Negro Renaissance* (1-23). London: Duke University Press.
- Feagin, Joe R. and Melvin P. Sikes. 1994. Seeking a Good Education. *In Living with Racism: The Black Middle-Class Experience* (78-134). Boston: Beacon Press.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1971. Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture. *In The Interpretation of Culture* (3-30). New York: Basic Books.
- Goffman, Erving. 1961. On The Characteristics of Total Institutions. *In Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (assigned 3-48). Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
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- Hill Collins, Patricia. 2004. Very Necessary: Redefining Black Gender Ideology. *In Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (181-212). London: Routledge.
- hooks, bell. 1989. Black Women and Feminism. *In Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (177—182). Boston: South End Press.
- Hunt, Darnell M. 2005. Making Sense of Blackness on Television. *In Channeling Blackness: Studies of Television and Race in America* (1-24). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
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- Jackson, Jr., John L. 2005. Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.**
- Jackson, Jr., John L. 2008. What Dave Chappelle Can Teach Us about American History. *In Racial Paranoia* (23-51). New York: Basic Books.
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- Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2006. “The Arab is the New Nigger”: African American Comics Confront the Irony and Tragedy of September 11. *Transforming Anthropology* 14(1): 60-64.
- Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2002. The Natives are Gazing and Talking Back: Reviewing the Problematics of Positionality, Voice, and Accountability among “Native” Anthropologists. *American Anthropologist* 104(3): 791-804.
- Johnson, E. Patrick. 2003. Manifest Faggotry: Queering Masculinity in African American Culture. *In Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* (48-75). London: Duke University Press.

**Jones, Edwards P. 2003. *The Known World*. New York: Amistad.**

- Jones, Charisse and Kumea Shorter-Gooden. 2003. Forging A Delicate Balance: Romance and Relationships Between Black Women and Men. *In Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America* (205-234). New York: Perennial.
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- Levine, Lawrence W. 1977. Black Laughter. *In Black Culture and Black Consciousness*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Marks, Carole. 1989. The Great Migration. *In Farewell – We’re Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration* (19-48). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
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- Shelby, Tommie. 2005. Social Identity and Group Solidarity and Conclusion. *In We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity* (201-256). London: Belknap Press.
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- Walker, Alice, Ed. 1979. Looking for Zora (Afterword). *In I Love Myself When I Am Laughing... and Then Again When I Am Looking Mean and Impressive: A Zora Neale Hurston Reader* (297-313). New York: The Feminist Press.
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