“[T]he problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line. . . .”
-- W.E.B. Du Bois

“The well-intended say: ‘We're all human, everybody is really decent, we must forget color.’ But color cannot be ‘forgotten’ until its weight is recognized and dealt with.”
-- Stokely Carmichael

“Any people who could endure all that brutalization and keep together, who could undergo such dismemberment and resuscitate itself, and endure until it could take the initiative in achieving its own freedom is obviously more than the sum of its brutalization. Seen in this perspective, theirs has been one of the great triumphs of the human spirit in modern times, in fact, in the history of the world.”
-- Ralph Ellison

“The magic words are: Up against the wall mother fucker this is a stick up!”
-- Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones)

“We have to talk about liberating minds as well as liberating society.”
-- Angela Davis

Course Description and Goals

African American history is American history. You cannot study the past of this country without confronting the history of African Americans in every time period and in almost every aspect of our nation’s development. The story of Africans and their descendants in the United States highlights some of the darkest moments in our history – as well as some of the brightest. The worst will become obvious quite quickly: slavery, rape, lynching, segregation, disenfranchisement, and racial bigotry. The best aspects include the nobility and sacrifice of people who have fought against pervasive injustice, in the process helping to uphold the foundational values of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness that they themselves were so often denied. To explore this history is also to understand the enrichment of our common culture through music, art, and literature produced by African Americans.

This course will explore the African American experience from Emancipation through the present day. Rather than a comprehensive survey of this rich historical area, we will focus on a series of voices, topics, and approaches that offer different perspectives on the African American experience. Some of the people we will hear from in this class are well known historical icons, such as Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, W.E.B. Du Bois, Assata Shakur, and Barack Obama. We will also,
however, explore the perspectives of ordinary people, ranging from sharecroppers in the rural South to gang members in 1990s LA.

By the end of the course, you should have an understanding of the historical construction of race in the United States, the way in which forms of racial discrimination have been institutionalized and challenged over time, and the extent to which cultural forms such as the zoot suit and hip hop might constitute a type of resistance.

**Course Materials**

**Required books:**

- Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Thought from Slavery to Freedom*
- W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*
- William H. Chafe et. al., *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell About Life in the Segregated South*
- Attallah Shabazz et. al., *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*
- Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*
- Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography*
- David Zirin, *The John Carlos Story: The Sports Moment That Changed the World*
- Paul Beatty, *The White Boy Shuffle*
- Barack Obama, *Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*
- Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*

**Online reader:** Some readings have been placed online and are available at our CROPS website in the “Resources” folder grouped by week. Please print out these readings and bring them to your section for easy reference during discussion.

**Course Requirements and Grading**

This class is a seminar. That means that much of the learning takes place though the medium of conversation. The classroom is our shared space where we will collectively work through the issues raised by both the readings and our own experiences. The success of the class depends on our ability to facilitate a conversation that is informed, respectful, challenging, and hopefully fun and exciting.

To help make this class work both individually and collectively, you must be prepared to do two things. First, you must come to class having done the assigned reading for that day. Second, I expect you to come prepared to engage in an informed and respectful discussion with your classmates about the issues, questions, and challenges raised by the readings. My job is not to give you the answers to the many challenging questions posed by African American history, but rather to help facilitate our collective exploration of the issues involved. I do not expect you to come to class having mastered the readings, some of which are quite challenging. Coming to class with a question or a puzzle raised by the readings is as good as coming with a well-formed opinion. We will almost certainly disagree amongst ourselves on many of the issues raised in this class.
Disagreement is a sign of a healthy and informed discussion so long as you are respectful and collegial to your fellow students.

To help prepare you for the discussion, I ask that for every class meeting for which readings are assigned (via UCMCROPS or required books) students arrive having written a response of roughly one or two paragraphs (no more than one page double-spaced). A response is not a summary of the reading. Nor does it have to be particular formal. Rather, I want you to give your own personal reflection on an issue or question raised by at least one of the readings for that day. If there is something about the reading that puzzles you, your response is a good place to start addressing it. Your response serves two purposes: it helps prepare you for discussion and it counts directly toward your participation grade. Your responses must be submitted in person; they will NOT be accepted by email. If you miss a class due to illness or emergency, please bring the response for that class to the next class meeting.

To reflect the importance that I place on our conversation to the learning process, 40% of your grade will be based on class participation. This part of your grade will be determined by the degree to which you attend the class and contribute to the discussion as well as by your response papers. If you do the readings, attend class regularly, participate in our discussions, and submit your response papers then you will receive a good participation grade. Simple, yes? If you have any question about your participation grade at any point in the semester, please come and see me.

There will also be three written assignments for this class. Each of these will be based entirely on your reading of class materials. You will receive a prompt for these essays at least one week before they are due, but the best way to prepare for them is to do the reading and come to section prepared to discuss it.

Grading breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper #1 (4-6 pages)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>February 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper #2 (5-7 pages)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>April 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper #3 (6-8 pages)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>May 8</td>
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Written assignments turned in up to 24 hours late will receive a 1/3 grade reduction (e.g. an A would become an A-). Work turned in between 24-72 hours late will be lowered a full grade except in cases of serious illness or emergency. Any work turned in after 72 hours late will not be accepted and will count as an F.

Please note you are not permitted to use laptops, cell phones, or other electronic devices in class unless you have a note from the Disability Services Center. In a seminar, being attentive to the discussion and your fellow students is one of the most important components of a successful class.
Academic Honesty

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University of California, Merced’s Academic Honesty Policy. The relevant section on plagiarism states that:

Plagiarism refers to the use of another’s ideas or words without proper attribution or credit. This includes, but is not limited to: copying from the writings or works of others into one’s academic assignment without attribution, or submitting such work as if it were one's own; using the views, opinions, or insights of another without acknowledgment; or paraphrasing the ideas of another without proper attribution. Credit must be given: for every direct quotation; when a work is paraphrased or summarized, in whole or in part (even if only brief passages), in your own words; and for information which is not common knowledge. The requirement to give credit applies to published sources, information obtained from electronic searches, and unpublished sources.

Penalty for violation of this Policy may include failure of the course and University disciplinary action. Please see the entire policy http://studentlife.ucmerced.edu.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The University of California Merced is committed to ensuring equal academic opportunities and inclusion for students with disabilities based on the principles of independent living, accessible universal design and diversity. Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss his or her specific needs. Also contact Disability Services at (209) 228-7884 as soon as possible to become registered and thereby ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.
Course Schedule

Week 1: Race, Culture, and Resistance

January 21: Introductions; Course Mechanics

January 23: Constructing Race, Culture, and Resistance

Books:
- Kelley, pp. 1-13

CROPS:

Week 2: Origins of African American Folk Culture

January 28: Songs, Stories, and Resistance in the Slave Quarters

Books:
- Levine, pp. 1-135

January 30: African American Culture and the Meaning of Freedom

Books:
- Levine, pp. 136-297

Week 3: W.E.B. Du Bois and Agony of Race

February 4: W.E.B. Du Bois: A Biography in Four Voices (film)

Books:
- Du Bois, chapters I-VIII

February 6: The Souls of Black Folk

Books:
- Du Bois, finish the rest of the book
Week 4: Early Struggles for Civil Rights

February 11: Washington, Du Bois, and Garvey

CROPS:
Marcus Garvey on the objectives of the UNIA, 1921 [AUDIO]

February 13: Ida B. Wells and the Crusade Against Lynching

*Paper #1 Due In Class*

CROPS:
*Without Sanctuary* website.

Week 5: The Strange Career of Jim Crow

February 18: Living Jim Crow (I)

Book:
Chafe et. al. eds., pp. 1-151

February 20: Living Jim Crow (II)

Books:
Chafe et. al. eds., pp. 152-303.
Week 6: The Civil Rights Struggle in Postwar America

February 25: MLK and the Origins of the Liberal Civil Rights Movement

Books:
Carson, ed., pp. 1-204.

February 27: To the Mountaintop

Books:

CROPS:
Martin Luther King Jr., “I Have a Dream,” 1963 [Audio]
“Dr. King’s Dream for the Global Strike Team,” 2013.

Week 7: Civil Rights at the Grassroots

March 4: From the Grass Roots

Books:
Kelley, pp. 17-102

CROPS:
Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, “Mama Told Me Not to Go.”

March 6: The Riddle of the Zoot Suit

Books:
Shabazz et. al., pp. 1-153
Kelley, pp. 161-181

Week 8: Malcolm X

March 11: Kathleen Cleaver Visit (no class – please attend Cleaver talk)

Books:
Shabazz et. al., pp. 154-324

March 13: From Malcolm X to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz

Books:
Shabazz et. al., pp. 325-466
Week 9: “What We Gonna Start Saying Now is Black Power!”

March 18: Origins of the Modern Black Power Movement

CROPS:

March 20: The Black Panther Party

CROPS:
Huey P. Newton, “Huey Talks to the Movement” (1968).

Week 10: SPRING BREAK

Week 11: Panthers and Prisons

April 1: *Free Angela Davis and All Political Prisoners!* (film)

*Paper #2 Due in Class*

Books:
Shakur, vii-160.

April 3: Assata Shakur’s Journey

Books:
Shakur, 161-274.

Week 12: Race and Sports

April 8: Black Power and the 1968 Olympics

Books:
David Zirin, *The John Carlos Story* (entire)

April 10: The New Plantation?

CROPS:
Excerpts from Billy Hawkins, *The New Plantation*
Excerpts from Shaun Powell, *Souled Out?*
Week 13: To Live and Die in (Postindustrial) LA

April 15: *Bastards of the Party* (Film)

CROPS:

April 17: “They Ain’t Scared of Rap Music, They Scared of Us.”

Books:
Kelley, pp. 183-277

CROPS:
Excerpts from Ice-T, “The Ice Opinion.” [Audio]

Week 14: Remixing Blackness

April 22: Instructor Away – NO CLASS

April 24: *The White Boy Shuffle*

Books:
Beatty, *The White Boy Shuffle*

Week 15: Barack Obama and Race in 21st Century America

April 29: Race and Inheritance

Books,
Obama, pp. 1-295.

May 1: A Post-Racial America?

Books:
Obama, pp. 299-442.

CROPS:
Week 16: A New Jim Crow?

May 6: “Is It a War on Drugs, or Just My Community?”

Books:

May 8: Conclusion

*Paper #3 due in class*

Books: