

History 105.02 – The African American Intellectual Tradition

Dr. Charles W. McKinney

Fall 2011, 302 Clough Hall
MWF 9.00 – 9.50
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday
10.00 – 11.45 and by appointment

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Course Description

Intellectual history is largely defined by the role that elite thinkers play in the shaping of ideas. This course will adhere to the definition of intellectual history as “the history not of thought, but of [people] thinking.” To that end, students will grapple with an intellectual tradition that encompasses the work and thought of both “elite” and “non-elite” actors in the African American experience. From slaves to senators, the African American Intellectual tradition is broad, wide and deep. To that end, students will examine intellectual responses to slavery, emancipation, nation-building, and the long civil rights movement. In our examination of expressive culture, writings and speeches, we will come to a greater understanding of the centrality and multi-layered meanings of freedom. Finally, students will explore the critical role that African American intellectuals—in all their guises—have played in the shaping of the American historical and intellectual landscape.

Course Requirements:

Books:

- Gates and Burton, eds., *Call and Response: Key Debates in African American Studies (Key)*
- Octavia Butler, *Kindred (Kindred)*
- Carmichael and Hamilton, *Black Power (Black)*
- Ogbar, *Hip Hop Revolution (Hip Hop)*

Unless otherwise indicated, all other required readings will be available in my online public folder, located in the History Department folder on the server.

Reaction Papers - 45% of final grade:

Students will submit **three** 5-to 7-page reaction papers due on designated days. In responding to the paper prompt, you will provide a critical reading/reaction to the intellectual terrain covered by the text(s). Specifically, I’m asking you to discuss and evaluate the major intellectual components of the chosen selection(s). What are the subjects of the readings responding to? How have they framed their responses? Are they effective? While a very short synopsis of the readings can make its way into the papers, reaction papers will ultimately be graded on the *conclusions* you draw about the readings themselves, and the ways in which they help/do not help you understand the dominant themes of the class. These papers will be due on: **Monday, September 19; Wednesday, October 12; Wednesday, November 9.**

Debate/Class Participation/Research Brief Presentation – 35% of final grade

Each student will participate in **one in-class debate**. You will sign up for one of these debates towards the beginning of the semester. Your evaluation will be based on your thoughtful, informed participation in the debate. We’ll talk more about this later. As for **class participation**, I expect you to attend every class meeting, arrive on time and come ready, having done the assigned reading and/or written assignment. Since there will be a very high premium on class discussion, it is imperative that everyone comes to class ready to contribute with comments, questions and insights. Remember though, class participation is not a contest. The people who talk the most do not necessarily “win.” What really counts is your ability and willingness to bring something valuable to the discussion that your colleagues and I can build upon in our efforts to bring some clarity to the issues that we are discussing. If you have an insight on the readings, or if you have a page full of questions, let your voice be heard! Of course, this level of participation will require full reading of assigned work. Also, to ensure the best possible experience for all of us, let’s refrain from using inappropriate language, or any other activity that may make our classroom less than open and engaging. At the end of the semester, you will make a **ten minute presentation of your research brief**. I will provide the criteria for this presentation later in the semester.

Research Brief – 20% of final grade

Students will submit a 10-12 page research brief that uses both secondary and primary source documents to explore key issues raised (or not raised) throughout the course. I will be happy to assist you in your efforts to identify primary source documents for this paper. The thesis statement for your brief will be due on **Friday, October 21. The final paper is due on Monday, November 21 at the beginning of class.**

Please do not hesitate to come by my office to discuss any of these requirements.

Honor Code:

All work turned in for this course is to be completed in accordance with the Rhodes College Honor Code. To demonstrate your commitment to the Code, each student must write “pledged” and sign his/her name on every assignment. If you have questions about plagiarism you should talk to me directly.

Policies:

Note on written work:

All written work must be composed on a computer, be double-spaced and in 10 or 12 point font. Have your name, the assignment name (and number if necessary), date, course name and email address on each document you turn in. Students who feel that they need assistance with written assignments should feel free to contact me so that we can discuss whatever challenges you may be facing.

Attendance:

Students will be allowed three unexcused absences. *All other absences after the third one must be excused. Each unexcused absence after the third one will cost you 5% of your **final** grade. If you miss three weeks worth of classes, you can be dropped from the class or flunked.* Valid excuses for missing class include but are not limited to religious observances, college-sanctioned academic or athletic travel, personal illness or injury, family illness or injury or bereavement. Excuses after the allotted three should be accompanied by a note from the Dean’s office. Needless to say, infrequent class attendance will negatively impact your class participation grade.

Paper grades:

As a general rule, grades are not negotiable. However, I will gladly discuss the grade on any assignment 24 hours after the work is turned in.

Late Papers:

Papers are due at the beginning of class. Papers that are one day late will be penalized one letter grade. “My computer crashed the night before the paper was due” is not an excuse for a late paper; rather, it is a testament to poor time management on your part. *Papers over one day late will receive an F. However, please note that you must turn in all of the assigned work in order to pass the class.*

Missed Assignments:

Make-up dates are available for students who miss class for an excusable reason (see above). Students should contact me and arrange a mutually convenient time within a week of the student’s return.

Learning Differences:

I am strongly committed to accommodating students with disabilities, and ask your cooperation in making sure that I’m aware of any such accommodation you might need. For more information, please contact Student Disability Services to alert them of any needs you may have.

Additional Information:

- Please turn off all cell phones, pagers, games, and any other object that can beep, buzz, ring or vibrate. These devices are extremely disruptive when they go off in the middle of class
- The readings for the week should be done by the *beginning of each week*
- ***I reserve the right to amend this syllabus as necessary***

Class Assignments

August

- W 24 Introduction to the course; Question: What is intellectual history?
- F 26 Library Orientation with Greg Paraham
- M 29 The construction of racial ideology
READING: *Key*, Intro to Part 1, 1-20
- W 31 Making Race
READING: *Key*, 21-51

September

- F 2 Discussion: The Nature of Race
- M 5 **No Class (Labor Day)**
- W 7 Responses to Slavery: Religion
READING: *Key*, 144-168; “Black Culture”
- F 9 Responses to Slavery: Migration and Agitation
READING: *Key*, 52-76; 103-130
- M 12 *Kindred*, 1-107
- W 14 *Kindred*, 108-188
- F 16 *Kindred*, 189 – Epilogue
- M 19 Discussion: *Kindred* and the Legacy of Slavery
Reaction Paper #1 Due
- W 21 Building Freedom from the Ground Up
READING: *Key*, 173-202
- F 23 Postbellum Leadership
READING: “Uplifting the Race”
- M 26 The Age of Accommodation
READING: *Key*, 203-217; “Booker T. Washington”
- W 28 New Strategies for a New Century
READING: “Ida B. Wells-Barnett”; “W.E.B. DuBois”
- F 30 Africa for the Africans! The Rise of Marcus Garvey
READING: *Key*, 259-274
Video: “Look For Me in the Whirlwind”

October

- M 3 Separation v. Integration
READING: *Key*, 275-291
Finish watching “Look For Me in the Whirlwind”
- W 5 **Debate #1**
- F 7 **TBA**
- M 10 World War II and its Impact
READING: *Key*, 430-437; “What the Negro Wants”
- W 12 Overview of the Civil Rights Movement
Reaction Paper #2 Due
- F 14 Nonviolence v. Self-Defense; Separation v. Integration
READING: *Key*, 511-587
- M 17 **Fall Break**
- W 19 *Black Power*, chaps. 1 – 3
- F 21 *Black Power*, chaps. 4 – 6
Research Brief Thesis Due
- M 24 *Black Power*, 7 – Afterword
- W 26 Confronting Gender
READING: *Key*, 801-836
- F 28 The Nexus of Race and Class
READING: *Key*, 734-761; “Race Rebels”
- M 31 **Debate #2**

November

- W 2 *Hip Hop Revolution*, chaps. 1 – 2
- F 4 *Hip Hop Revolution*, chap. 3; *Key*, 1015 – 1038
- M 7 *Hip Hop Revolution*, chaps. 4 – Epilogue
- W 9 Discussion: Politics, Art and Culture –Making Sense of Hip Hop
Reaction Paper #3 Due
- F 11 **Guest Lecturer: Vincent Wimbush**
READING: *tba*
- M 14 Naming and Identity
READING: *Key*, 867 – 880
- W 16 Obama and the Civil Rights Legacy
READING: “Remaking History”

F 18 No Class – I will be available for individual conferences to discuss the research brief

M 21 **Research Brief Due. Come to class prepared to discuss oral presentations.**

W-F 23-25 **Thanksgiving**

M 28 Presentations

W 30 Presentations

December

F 2 Presentations

M 5 Presentations

F 7 Evaluations