

History 105.04 – The African American Intellectual Tradition

Dr. Charles W. McKinney

Spring 2009, 300 Clough Hall
MWF 12.00 – 12.50
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday
4.00 – 5.30 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:

- Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind (White)*
- Eddie Glaude, *Exodus! (Exodus)*
- Wilson Moses, *Creative Conflict in Afro-American Thought (Thought)*
- Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker (Baker)*

Reaction Papers - 30% of final grade:

Students will submit **three** 5-to 7-page reaction papers due on designated days. To do these papers, you can select *either* a set of related readings or a *single biographical piece* (you cannot do three papers using all the same format). For either choice, you will provide a critical reading/reaction to the intellectual terrain covered by the text(s) you select. Specifically, I’m asking you to discuss and evaluate the major intellectual components of the chosen selections. 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.

Debate/Class Participation/Research Brief Presentation – 20% 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.

Midterm and Final Exam – 15% each of final grade

The Midterm exam will be an in class essay exam. It is scheduled for **Friday, March 6**. The final exam will be a take home essay exam that will be due on our exam date.

Research Brief – 20% of final grade

Students will submit an 8 – 10 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 in the top box on my door on **Friday March 27. The final paper is due on April 17 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/test 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 Tests:

Make-up exams 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 Schedule:

January

- W 14 Introductions; Go over syllabus; Question: What is intellectual history?
- F 16 **Library Orientation, Barret 218**
- M 19 **No Class – Martin Luther King, Jr (Morehouse class of 1948) Day**

Race and the Riddle of the Republic

- W 21 Building Freedom and Unfreedom
READING: *Hideous Monster; African American Voices* (folder)
- F 23 Building Freedom and Unfreedom, Part II
READING: *White*, 13 – 22
- M 26 The Sacred World of the Slaves
READING: *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (folder)
- W 28 Freedom's Response to Slavery
READING: *Exodus*, chaps. 1-2
- F 30 Violence as a Moral Imperative
READING: David Walker's *Appeal* (Articles 1, 4) @
<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/abolitn/walkerhp.html>; Henry Highland Garnet @
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2937t.html>

REACTION PAPER #1 DUE

February

- M 2 Respectability and Temperance
READING: Maria Stewart Article (folder); D. Yacovone, "The Transformation of the Black Temperance Movement", @ <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3123691>
- W 4 Ethnology: An Intellectual Battlefield
READING: *White*, chap. 2
- F 6 A Chosen People
READING: *Exodus*, chaps. 3 – 4
- M 9 The Intellectual World of the Slaves
READING: *White*, chaps. 4-5
- W 11 "Power Concedes Nothing..": Frederick Douglass
READING: *Thought*, chaps. 2, 4; "What to the Slave is the 4th of July" @
<http://www.alexanderstreet4.com/cgi-bin/asp/bltc/getdoc.pl?/projects/artfla/databases/asp/bltc/fulltext/IMAGE/.124>
- F 13 Postbellum Leadership
READING: Uplifting the Race (Folder)
- M 16 Up From Douglass: The Rise of Booker T. Washington
READING: *Thought*, chap 8, 9; Booker Washington biography (folder)

- W 18 Saving the Race: W.E.B. DuBois
READING: *Thought*, chap. 11; DuBois biography (folder)
- F 20 A Question of Leadership
READING: DuBois, “The Talented Tenth” (folder); Booker T. Washington’s Atlanta Exposition Speech @ <http://www.alexanderstreet4.com/cgi-bin/asp/bltc/getdoc.pl?/projects/artfla/databases/asp/bltc/fulltext/IMAGE/.782>
REACTION PAPER #2 DUE
- M 23 **Debate # 1**
- W 25 “Africa for the Africans:” Marcus Garvey and his critics
READING: Garvey biography (folder); *Thought*, chapt. 14; “Africa for the Africans” @ <http://www.alexanderstreet4.com/cgi-bin/asp/bltc/getdoc.pl?/projects/artfla/databases/asp/bltc/fulltext/IMAGE/.1640>
- F 27 The New Negro: Innovation or Reaction?
READING: “The New Negro” (folder); *White*, chap. 6

March

- M 2 “What the Negro Wants”: Evolving Ideologies for Freedom
READING: “What the Negro Wants” (folder); *Baker*, chaps. 1-2
- W 4 Progressive Leadership in Race Relations
READING: *Baker*, chaps 3-4
- F 6 **Midterm Exam**
- M 9 Building a Movement: Another Question of Leadership
READING: *Baker*, chaps. 5 – 6;
- W 11 **Debate # 2**
- F 13 **REACTION PAPER #3 DUE**
- S 14 - S 22 **Spring Break**
- M 23 The Beginning of the Revolution?
READING: *Baker*, chaps. 7 – 8; SNCC/SCLC Statements
- W 25 Violence vs. Nonviolence
READING: King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”; Malcolm X, “The Ballot Or the Bullet.”; Supplemental: Malcolm X Biography (folder)
- F 27 No Class! **BUT DON’T FORGET TO TURN YOUR THESIS STATEMENT IN**
- M 30 **Movie: American Masters: James Baldwin**

April

- W 1 Baldwin: The Price of Oppression
READING: “James Baldwin talks with Kenneth Clark” @ <http://www.alexanderstreet4.com/cgi-bin/asp/bltc/getdoc.pl?/projects/artfla/databases/asp/bltc/fullt>

[ext/IMAGE/.4202](http://www.alexanderstreet4.com/cgi-bin/asp/bltc/getdoc.pl?/projects/artfla/databases/asp/bltc/fulltext/IMAGE/.15021); “Letter from James Baldwin” @ <http://www.alexanderstreet4.com/cgi-bin/asp/bltc/getdoc.pl?/projects/artfla/databases/asp/bltc/fulltext/IMAGE/.15021>

- F 3 Black? Female? When Race and Gender Converge
READING: Frances Beale, “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female” @ <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/196.html>
- M 6 Working Class Culture
READING: Robin Kelley (folder);
- W 8 The Rise and Riddle of Hip-Hop
READING: Ogbar (folder); McWhorter, “Hip Hop Holds Blacks Back” @ <http://www.city-journal.org/printable.php?id=1112>
- F 10 **Easter Friday**
- M 13 The Rise of Obama: The End of Black Politics?
READING: Matt Bai, “Is Obama the End of Black Politics?” @ <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/10/magazine/10politics-t.html>
- W 15 The Declining Significance of Whiteness? Really?
READING: Hua Hsu, “The End of White America?” @ <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/print/200901/end-of-whiteness>
- F 17 **Research Brief Due**
- M 20 – W 29 **Class Presentations**

May

- F 1 **URCAS PRESENTATIONS**
- W 6 **FINAL EXAM DUE AT 5.30PM**