African and Black Diaspora Studies

Course Descriptions

Spring 2016

ABD 203: Africa: 1900-Present
Tuesday 6:00-9:15 (LPC)
Instructor: Dr. Ogena Otunnu
Crosslist from HST 133. Examines the workings of the colonial system, the rise and course of independence movements, and the history of individual African states since independence.

ABD 209: Race and Racism
M/W 11:20-12:50 (LPC)
Instructor: Dr. Lori Pierce
Although it is common for us to talk about race, very few of us have an understanding of what the term means, much less how it came to signify human diversity. The US has suffered a long and complex history of racial conflict. In each era of our history, the circumstances reflect prevailing political, social, cultural and economic imperatives, but the basis of these conflicts remains consistent: our commitment to racial ideologies about human inequality.

In this course we will study the scientific and historical origins of these beliefs and how they have been expressed in our media and popular culture. Race is not an objective scientific category that reliably conveys information about people or groups of people; it is a set of ideologies and practices that originated in modern Europe and has a traceable intellectual history. In this course we will study the origin of race as an intellectual and scientific project designed to organize humanity into discrete and hierarchical groups, and the implications of racial thinking, i.e. racial discrimination perpetuated by rhetorical and pictorial stereotypes, discriminatory behavior and institutional practices. We will utilize racial formation theory which links race and racism by showing the dynamic connections between stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination and privilege.

We will utilize analytical models such as Critical Race Theory, Racial Formation and Intersectionality to shed light on some of the contemporary social conflicts which have been and continue to be “about race.”

ABD 221: Romance, Gender, and Race
T/Th 11:20-12:50 (LPC)
Instructor: Dr. Julie Moody-Freeman
Crosslist from ENG 232. This course examines how writers represent gender and race in the romance genre. It examines why women readers are attracted to this genre and how writers and publishers influence and are influenced by women’s reading preferences. Attention will be devoted specifically to examining black women writers and readers of romance novels, who make-up 25% of a billion dollar publishing industry. Questions to be addressed include: How does a writer’s gender and racial/ethnic identity shape the representations of race and gender in romance fiction and cover design? How have writers complicated the popular romance plot to address the issues of gender, race, class, and age? How do writers utilize the romance novel during specific historical periods to address social, political, and health issues? It studies how writers use romance fiction during particular historical periods to address such issues as: Black love; intra-racial dating and marriage in post 9/11; the HIV/AIDS health crisis in Black communities; profiling and racism in the United States. The course concludes by examining how the internet has transformed writing, publishing, purchasing, and reading practices for the writers, publishers, and readers of romance novels with black characters.

ABD 233: Survey of African Diasporic Intellectual Thought
T/Th 11:20-12:50 (LPC)
Instructor: Dr. Chernoh Sesay, Jr.
Crosslist from REL 218. This course does not assume that an intellectual is an educated and secular elite person who thinks about the world more deeply and more insightfully than a broad and less educated religious populace. Instead this course defines an intellectual and an intellectual tradition in much broader terms. This class illustrates how Black/African American religious traditions are, in fact, intellectual traditions because they represent deeply serious, reflective, and meaningful expressions of social, spiritual, and political philosophy by both well-known and unknown folks of color. Hence, this course makes the argument that we should not think of Black religious traditions as ideas, beliefs, and practices that are or that should be separate from Black intellectual traditions. This class invites students to examine the intersection of identity creation, community formation and political activism through the prism of religious expression and thought. Moreover, this class demonstrates that African American religious experience is represented as much by the Black mind as it is by the Black body. This course will help students think about the relationship of African-American religious traditions to American culture, black culture and black political thought. We will focus our attention on the relationship between political thought and theology as black people in America confronted racism. We will also study the relationships between black identity formation, race, gender, liberation theology, and evangelical thought. Not only will we follow the development of an intellectual tradition within black Christianity, but we will also pay attention to intellectual traditions within black Islam.

ABD 246: Principles of African Art
T/Th 1:00-2:30(LPC)
Instructor: Dr. Nancy Demerdash
Crosslist from HAA 101. This course serves as an introduction to the study of African art. Coverage of the artistic traditions of Africa will not be exhaustive. Africa is an enormous continent with an extraordinary diversity of cultures. It is impossible to represent the entire continent in one quarter. The course is based around a series of important concepts for the study of African art. The course will explore each of these concepts through a variety of artistic traditions from the continent. In this manner, students will gain basic theoretical tools which will enable them to work with art from across Africa.

(over)
The study of African art will also serve as an introduction to the basic concepts of the field of art history more generally, albeit from the Africanist perspective. As such, there is no need to have taken free black life, abolition, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the beginning of Jim Crow segregation. Beyond specific content, this course will improve historical literacy, writing, and analytical skills.

**ABD 252: Contemporary African Art: From Independence to Present**

T/Th 4:20-5:50 (LPC)

**Instructor:** Dr. Nancy Demerdash

This course surveys a selection of artistic traditions from across the African continent beginning with the arrival of the Portuguese along the coast of West Africa in the mid-fifteenth century until the age of African independence in the 1960s. While the impact of a European presence helps define the boundaries of this course, artistic response to that presence is but one theme. Interactions between African cultures and the impact of Islam are equally important considerations.

**ABD 258: African-American History, 1900-Present**

T/Th 11:20-12:50

**Instructor:** Dr. Tera Ageypong

Crosslist from HST 248. The African experience in America spans four hundred years, from the initial settlement of the American continent by Europeans, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and down through the present day. This course will focus on a portion of that history—from 1900 to the present. This course will focus on the voices and experiences of African Americans themselves. The course is more or less organized chronologically, with an emphasis on topics such as Jim Crow segregation, migration, the Harlem Renaissance/Black Arts Movement, African Americans in World Wars I and II, black political thought, black freedom movements, and gendered criminalization.

**ABD 290: Special Topics: Postcolonialism and International Studies**

Monday 6:00-9:15 (LPC)

**Instructor:** Dr. Shiera Malik

Crosslist from INT 388. This course introduces student to studies of colonialism and postcolonialism that exist within International Relations (IR). Work in this area challenges the discipline of IR in that it often takes a critical approach to concepts taken for granted in study of political economy. This course introduces students to the main threads of this scholarly challenge and challenges the discipline of IR in that it often takes a critical approach to concepts taken for granted in study of political economy.

**ABD 290: Special Topics: White Racism**

MW 4:20-5:50 (LPC)

**Instructor:** Dr. Traci Schlesinger

Crosslist from SOC 248. In this course, we will use readings of original texts to explore how white people’s beliefs and actions produce and maintain racial stratification in the post-civil rights era within the United States. Because the material covered in this class may lead people to feel strong emotions — angry, guilty, defensive, or justified to name a few — we will begin the course with a discussion between hate speech and free speech and set ground rules for our class community. Once we have done this, we will turn our attention to the everyday narratives about and experiences of race (am) that often — especially among white people — go unexamined. After working through these readings, we’ll take a break to work on building our research skills. This research break will also help you get started on your final paper. During weeks six through nine, we will discuss structural, institutional, and policy support of modern racial stratification paying particular attention to their ‘colorblind’ nature. Finally, we will end the course with a frank and sobering look at what we can do to resist and subvert white racism. Done this, we will turn our attention to the everyday narratives about and experiences of race (am)s that often — especially among white people — go unexamined. After working through these readings, we’ll take a break to work on building our research skills. This research break will also help you get started on your final paper. During weeks six through nine, we will discuss structural, institutional, and policy support of modern racial stratification paying particular attention to their ‘colorblind’ nature. Finally, we will end the course with a frank and sobering look at what we can do to resist and subvert white racism.

**ABD 369: Topics in Public Law: Critical Perspectives on Criminal Justice**

MW 11:20-12:50 PM (LPC)

**Instructor:** Dr. Traci Schlesinger

Crosslist from SOC 310. Critical perspectives on criminal justice presents students with readings on the history and contemporary practice of the criminal legal system in the United States. We argue that the criminal legal system is an instrument of white supremacy and capitalism that, while failing to control crime, succeeds in creating a permanent class of marginalized and disenfranchised people. As a class, we will use readings of original texts to explore empirical trends in the United States criminal legal system and will engage in rigorous sociological analyses of those trends.

**Did you know?**

**African and Black Diaspora Studies (ABD)** will accept courses from other departments towards a major or minor in ABD?

Even courses not listed here can count, if they deal with Africa, Black America, the Caribbean, or anywhere in the African diaspora.

Wondering if a course will count? Ask us! Email abd@depaul.edu

The first texts we read outlines the history and social meaning of state punishment. These readings will introduce us to the idea of criminal “justice” as social control and alert us to the raced and classed nature of state sanctioned forms of punishment. By examining this historical and theoretical framework, we will examine how criminal laws are structured, how people are apprehended for a crime (policing), and what happens to people when they are starting with criminal processing, moving to people’s experiences in jails and prisons, following people post-release supervision and the afterlife imprisonment. We will focus on a meditation on alternatives to imprisonment grounded in CR10’s Abolition Now.

**ABD 380: Topics in American Studies: Toni Morrison**

M/W 1:00-2:30 (LPC)

**Instructor:** Dr. Francesca Royster

Crosslist from ENG 382. This course will explore four of Toni Morrison’s most critically acclaimed novels: Sula, Song of Solomon, Beloved and A Mercy, as well as her speeches and critical essays.

Among the questions we’ll ask: how does Morrison explore the concept of memory in light of a history of racial trauma? How are traditional gender roles engaged and reinvented in her work? How does literacy, its absence or presence help provide the methods of connection? How do characters see themselves as citizens of a larger social world, as well as part of localized black communities? What role does family connection (blood and found) serve to mediate and/or complicate one’s role in community? How do we see the effects of reading and writing to create social change?

**ABD 382: Topics in African Diaspora Studies: Race, Gender, Justice, and Ethics**

Wednesday 6:00-9:15 (LPC)

**Instructor:** Dr. Alyssa Garcia

Crosslist from LST 310. This course is designed to explore debates within and about Critical Race Feminist pedagogy, research, methodology and writing. We will explore the politics and production of knowledge related to issues of race, justice, and learning. In the first half of the course we will discuss issues of activism, public intellectualism, the politics of representation, decolonizing research paradigms, community engagement, ethics, and accountability and that our role as responsible scholars as scholars and students committed to social justice? Can we break away from colonial frameworks? How do we reconstruct the traditional postcolonial gaze? What are the possibilities of justice based applied research projects?

In the second half of the class we will discuss Critical Race, Queer, and Feminist pedagogy in the broader sense. How do identity, power, and difference play themselves out in the educational experience? We shall critically analyze the role of race, class, gender, and sexuality in the ways in which we learn. We will explore issues of voice and reflections of the self to consider how our identities and positionalities are situated amidst structures of knowledge dissemination. We will go on to examine issues of Praxis; how do we apply what we learn outside the classroom setting? As such we will experiment with alternative expressions of knowledge and representation such as performance, poetry and theatre. Together we will foster a dialogue and develop an appreciation for justice based empowering models and strategies of transformative education to be used in and beyond the classroom.