

PAS 300 / Fall 2009

Dr. A. Nama

Office: FOB-212 / Ph# 818-677-3112

Office Hours: TBA

Contemporary Issues

Course Description:

This course examines the various approaches and points of application within the broad categories the Black Experience, race-as-representation, Black popular culture and Black identity in a postmodern era.

Course Objectives:

This course engages in critical analysis that investigates below the surface of social phenomena and demonstrates the usefulness of *black cultural criticism* as a productive method to interrogate the cultural politics of race in America. The course also makes students aware of the historical origins of a range of current and urgent social dilemmas black folk face and how these dynamic challenges are confronted. In terms of student outcomes this course seeks to provide students with a comprehensive, concise, critical and substantive grasp of the major and relevant historical/cultural/political debates that have and continue to inform and construct African American social existence.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Identify and explain current issues that impact African American social relations and social behavior.
2. Explain debates concerning contemporary issues facing African Americans and black people from multiple perspectives by deconstructing debates/issues covered in class.
3. Explain the difference between black cultural criticism and other more traditional approaches to examining the causes and solutions for particular social challenges and failures that underlie historical and contemporary debates/issues concerning African American social life
4. Demonstrate an understanding of how social problems impact black communities and American society along with proposing possible approaches to address such various challenges that the African American community face.

Required Course Texts:

The use of the textbooks are key to establishing a black cultural criticism framework by which to engage the range of material covered. The course, however is lecture intensive and involves committed note taking. In other words the texts are necessary to pass the course, but not sufficient to excel in the course.

- (1) *The Devil and Dave Chappelle and Other Essays* by J. Cobb
- (2) *Incognegro* by Johnson
- (3) *Black Space* by Nama

Course Calendar:

Below is an outline for each week's topic of examination. The titles are meant to give a thematic impression of what will be examined.

Week One

- Black cultural criticism, pedagogy and perspective
- Read: Black Space intro

Week Two

- Race and "Blackness" in a post-civil rights America
- Read: Black Space chap 1
Read: Cobb 1-54

Week Three

- Contemporary Debates in the Black community
- Read: Cobb 54-110
Read: Incognegro 1-25

Week Four

- Dynamics of race and immigration in the Black community
- Read: Black Space chap 2

Week Five

- Dynamics of race and immigration in the Black community
- Read: Black Space chap 3

Week Six

- Race and Sports continued
- Read: Whiting, Chap 1

Week Seven

- Review & Midterm

Week Eight

- Media, race and representation
- Read: Cobb 155-202

Week Nine

- Media, race and representation continued
- Read: Cobb 203-254
Black Space chap 4

Week Ten

- Crisis of Black leadership

Read: Cobb 257-319

Week Eleven

Black male female relationships and imagery

Read: Whiting, Chap 2

Week Twelve

Black male female relationships and imagery

Read: Whiting, Chap 3

Week Thirteen

- What is Blackness?

Read: Black Space chap 6

Week Fourteen

- Review for Final

Student Assessment**Performance Criteria:**

The standards by which student performance is evaluated

(1) Midterm is a combination of multiple choice, fill in and short essay exam worth a total of 100pts.

(1) Final Examination is a combination of multiple choice, fill in and short essay exam worth a total of 100pts and is not cumulative. Only material covered after midterm is tested and is also worth a total of 100 pts.

Written Presentation

Each student/student group will choose a film/documentary and will present a formal 15 minute presentation based upon a previous screening or instructor approved film that draws on the reading and lecture(s). Students may make use of film clips, power point, transparencies and other resources in presenting an in-depth discussion of the topic. For every class meeting an assigned date for student presentation is missed one whole grade scale is deducted, unless the student provides a valid documented reason that is acceptable to the instructor. Oral presentation is worth a total of 50pts while the 3-4 page excluding bibliography written version of the presentation is worth 50pts. Type written, double spaced, 12-point font, one-inch margins and thoroughly proofread.

Course Grading:

Midterm	100pts
Final Examination	100pts
Oral Presentation	50pts
Written Essay	50pts
Total:	300pts

Grading Scale

300-281pts	A	282-268	A-		
267-261pts	B+	260-250	B	249-238	B-
237-231pts	C+	230-220	C	219-208	C-
206-200 pts	D+	199-189	D	188-177	D-
176-below	F				

Policies:

I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE MATERIAL.

NO MAKEUP EXAMS (VERIFIED MEDICAL EMERGENCIES EXEMPTED)