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## **PAN AFRICAN STUDIES 300: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY**

FALL 2009  
Department of Pan African Studies  
California State University, Northridge  
Dr. Anthony Ratcliff  
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Location: Sierra Hall 184  
Class meets: F 9-11:45am  
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Hours: F 12pm-1pm

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:** *Prerequisite – Completion of the Lower-Division writing requirement.* PAS 300 is an in-depth exploration of current social, political, cultural and economic issues in African American communities. This course provides insight on the extent to which these issues affect Black individuals, families, and institutions, as well as in their interaction with the majority American society. Since contemporary African American communities are complex and dynamic fields of activity, we will only be able to examine a select number of issues that currently confront African Americans. In order to develop a common focus and a student-centered learning environment, this course will be organized primarily as a seminar. Two fundamental ideas will guide this seminar: first, that African Americans maintain a common social history and cultural memory in the U.S., with an American social identity forged by racist ideology and discriminatory social, political, cultural, and economic practices. Second, that African Americans are a vibrant and diverse social group marked by a variety of class/cultural/regional self-identities, intellectual perspectives, political stances, economic achievements, artistic/technological creations, and social practices. This particular section of "Contemporary Issues in the African American Community" combines lecture, group discussion, and the latest cutting edge information technology and "new media" (i.e., the Internet, email, WebCT, weblogs, and social networking programs). PAS 300 fulfills requirements for Comparative Cultural Studies, Section B/Multicultural Requirement, and Credential Candidates: F3, 97.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS** (Available in the Matador Bookstore)

Boyd, Herbert. *Race and Resistance: African Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Boston: South End Press, 2002.

Cole, Johnnetta B., and Beverly Guy-Sheftall. *Gender Talk: The Struggle for Women's Equality in African American Communities*. New York: One World, 2003.

Kitwana, Bakari. *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture*. New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2002.

### **ASSESSMENTS:**

Participation/Attendance  
Discussion Leader  
2-Movie Views & Reviews  
10-Weekly Writings/Blog  
Mid-term  
New Media Presentation  
Final Paper

### **Points**

50  
30  
30  
50  
100  
50  
100

### **Grading Scale:**

A = 400-376	C = 309-296
A- = 375-360	C- = 295-280
B+ = 359-348	D+ = 279-268
B = 347-336	D = 267-256
B- = 335-320	D- = 255-240
C+ = 319-308	F = 239 and below

### **Total Points**

## COURSE DOs & DON'Ts

*DO get in the habit of checking your email and the course WebCT page at least once a week. You will receive most of your assignments and class communications via these two sites. This means that you must always keep your email account clear of unnecessary emails. Please get comfortable with these modes of distribution/communication. Also, DO arrive to class at the assigned time. Punctuality is imperative for success in my course.*

*DON'T use your cell phone or text messaging device during class. If I find you texting while in class, I will ask you to leave and I will mark you as absent for the day. I'm positive that you can last at least 50 minutes without texting your friends or family. Also, please DON'T even think about PLAGIARIZING (stealing) material for your assignments in this class. (See below for more information on plagiarism.)*

## ASSIGNMENTS

In PAS 300, you will participate in weekly discussions; write three movie "views and reviews"; write weekly formal reading responses and post them to a course weblog (blog); take a mid-term; develop a "new media" presentation; and write a final research paper.

**Attendance & Participation:** Active participation is vital to your success in this course, thus regular attendance and thorough academic work are expected of each and every student enrolled. Your class participation and final grade will depend greatly on your contribution to the class discussion of each assigned text. In addition, your grade will be negatively affected if you miss more than two classes in the semester; for each absence after that it will be lowered by ½ a letter grade. *However, if you must miss class due to illness or personal problems, please contact me in advance at email or phone number above.* (50 points total)

**Discussion Leaders:** Each week, students will lead class discussions. Discussant groups should meet in person or via email well before class time, and be prepared to offer a *critique* and *interpretation* of the week's readings and films (not just a summary). The group should also formulate at least three critical discussion questions on which the class can focus. (30 points total)

**Movie "Views and Reviews":** Over the course of the semester you will watch a number of documentaries and feature length films in class and you must write a review of three. I will give you a review outline explaining what I expect you to look for when watching the films; however, these reviews **MUST** be written in your own words and consist of 500-750 words. The reviews are worth 10 points each and they will be submitted via [turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com). (30 points total)

**Weekly Writing Blog:** During Friday class meetings, you will be presented with writing prompts that explore topics related to the readings and discussion. These topics will engage you in critical thinking and analysis. Your journal entries/responses then need to be posted to the course blog (Web CT) by the following Friday morning each week (I will not accept a late posting). They are worth 5 points each. (50 points total)

**Mid-Term:** The mid-term will be taken in-class and cover information from the readings, lectures, and class discussions. You will take the mid-term on Friday, October 23, and it will roughly cover the first half of the course material. The format will include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Prior to the test, we will have a review session, where you'll have the opportunity to ask clarifying questions. You will need to purchase a blue book for the test (100 points total)

**“New Media” Presentation and Final Research Paper:** Each student will identify a contemporary issue confronting the African American community in which to conduct further research. The topic ideas are due to me in class on October 9, 2009. For example, you may want to explore the role of gangs or male/female relationships in greater detail or consider the current importance of the Black church. Your research must be original and extensive, while using ample primary and secondary resources (we will discuss this during the semester). You will submit a 10-12-page write-up of your findings on [turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com) due no later than December 11 at 10am. In addition to your research paper, you will compile your research findings on a website, myspace or facebook page, weblog, or some other visual form of “new media” and present the information in class beginning on November 20 and continuing on December 4. I will grade you on the presentation as well as the coherency and originality of your research topic. In addition to my evaluation of your presentation and write up, your classmates will also evaluate the clarity, and creativity of your presentation (150 points total)

**Paper Format:** Formal papers and their drafts should be typed and double-spaced (no larger than 12pt. font) with one-inch margins, according to MLA format. You are responsible for correct grammar, spelling, and typography. Pages must be numbered, and your name should appear on each page. You will submit all formal papers via “turnitin.com” on the assigned date. (I will only accept late papers at my discretion and they will automatically be reduced by at least one letter grade.)

**Policy on Academic Dishonesty:** All WRITING, IDEAS, and INFORMATION from journal articles, the Internet, textbooks, etc. must be acknowledged. If you use words directly from these sources, the author(s) must be quoted and referenced. It is also considered plagiarism to recycle papers from other classes. I expect all assignments completed for PAS 300 to be original and innovative work. According to the CSUN Policy on Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: “The maintenance of academic integrity and quality education is the responsibility of each student within this university and the California State University system. Cheating or plagiarism in connection with an academic program at a campus is listed in Section 41301, Title 5, California Code of Regulations, as an offense for which a student may be expelled, suspended, or given a less severe disciplinary sanction. Academic dishonesty is an especially serious offense and diminishes the quality of scholarship and defrauds those who depend upon the integrity of the campus programs. Such dishonesty includes:

- A. CHEATING (see catalog for details)
- B. FABRICATION (see catalog for details)
- C. FACILITATING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY (see catalog for details)
- D. PLAGIARISM: Intentionally or knowingly representing the words, ideas, or work of another as one’s own in any academic exercise” (pp. 553-554).

**NOTES ON BUDGET CUTS, TUITION INCREASES, and WORK FURLOUGHS:** For the past 10 years the CSU system has suffered chronic under-funding. This year, because of the state economic crisis, the budget cuts are draconian, \$584 million, the worst ever in decades. The CSU administration is attempting to manage these cuts by dramatically increasing student fees and by furloughing almost all University employees, including faculty, staff, and administrators. A furlough means mandatory un-paid days off for employees; there are 18 of these this year for the faculty, nine per semester.

For students this means that on some days the campus will be closed. The library will have shorter hours and many campus support services will be decreased or eliminated. It will, for example, be more difficult to

get signatures to meet deadlines. Additionally, many classes you need have been cut from the class schedule or are full. These cuts have consequences, especially for you.

As a professor, the days when I'm forced to cancel class because of the furloughs are marked on your syllabus below. These days off are not holidays; they are a very concrete example of how budget cuts have consequences for education.

So let's talk today about what is happening, after you leave class you can stop by the tent on the quad this week during lunch hour to tell your stories of how these cuts effect students and when you ask yourself what can you do - get involved (Students for a Quality education is one way – they will be at the tent).

**Course syllabus and schedule subject to change at professor's discretion**

## COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Week	Theme	Assignments
1 August 28	Course Orientation and Overview	Course Introduction, Syllabus Overview and Student Introductions <b>Reading Assignment:</b> Obama, "A More Perfect Union"; Williams, "Barack Obama and the Complicated Boundaries of Blackness"; and Thompson, "Obama officials sharpen tone on race," <i>The Washington Post</i> , 28 February 2009 (On WebCT) <b>Purchase Books and Print Syllabus</b>
2 September 4	The African American Community in the Age of Obama	Writing Prompt and Class Discussion Discuss What Obama Means for Black Politics and the African American Community? <b>Reading Assignment:</b> <i>Race and Resistance</i> , Chapter 1 and <i>The Hip-Hop Generation</i> , Chapter 1 <b>Review:</b> <a href="http://www.census.gov/pubinfo/www/NEWafamML1.html">http://www.census.gov/pubinfo/www/NEWafamML1.html</a>
3 September 11	Race and Racism in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century	Writing Prompt and Class Discussion <b>View:</b> <i>Race, The Power of An Illusion</i> Discuss Film and the Current Realities of Race and Racism <b>Reading Assignment:</b> <i>Race and Resistance</i> , Chapter 2 and 3; <i>The Hip-Hop Generation</i> , Chapter 2
4 September 18	"It's all about the Benjamins": The Economics of Being Black	Writing Prompt and Class Discussion Discuss Economics and Social Class within African American Communities <b>Reading Assignment:</b> <i>Race and Resistance</i> , Chapters 6 and 7; and <i>Gender Talk</i> , Chapters 1 and 2; and <i>The Hip-Hop Generation</i> , Chapter 4
5 September 25	Race and Gender	Writing Prompt and Class Discussion <b>View:</b> <i>Black Women on the Light, Dark Thang: A Film</i> Discuss Film and Black Feminism/Agency <b>Reading Assignment:</b> <i>Gender Talk</i> , Chapter 5 & 6
6 October 2	Intersectionality: Race, Gender and Sexuality	Writing Prompt and Class Discussion <b>View:</b> <i>Watermelon Woman</i> Discuss being "Trapped in the Closet": To be Young, LGBT and Black <b>Reading Assignment:</b> <i>Race and Resistance</i> , Chapter 5; and <i>The Hip-Hop Generation</i> , Chapter 3
7 October 9	Prison Industrial Complex and the Crisis of Black Youth  Final Paper Topics Due	Writing Prompt and Class Discussion <b>View:</b> <i>Bastards of the Party</i> Discuss Film, Racial Profiling and Profiting from Prisoners <b>Reading Assignment:</b> <i>Race and Resistance</i> , Chapters 9; <i>Gender Talk</i> , Chapter 7; and <i>The Hip-Hop Generation</i> , Chapters 6 and 7
8 October 16	Music and Hip-Hop Culture Mid-term Review Session	Writing Prompt and Class Discussion Discuss African Americans as the Harbingers of "Cool" <b>Reading Assignment:</b> Receive Study Guide for Mid-Term

9 October 23	Mid-Term	<b>Reading Assignment:</b> <i>Race and Resistance</i> , Chapter 10; <i>The Hip-Hop Generation</i> , Chapter 5; and Campbell, "I Love New York: Does New York Love Me?" (On WebCT)
10 October 30	Media and Representation	Writing Prompt and Class Discussion <b>View:</b> <i>Bamboozled</i> Discuss Film and Mediated Images of Blackness <b>Reading Assignment:</b> <i>Race and Resistance</i> , Chapter 14; and National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors, "A Turning Point: Confronting HIV/AIDS in African American Communities" (On WebCT)
11 November 6	<b>NO FORMAL MEETING: Library Research Day</b>	Work on new media presentations in library
12 November 13	African American Health: From High Blood Pressure to HIV/AIDS	Writing Prompt and Class Discussion <b>View:</b> <i>Life Support</i> Discuss Film and Contemporary Black Health Issues <b>Reading Assignment:</b> <i>Gender Talk</i> , Chapter 8 and <i>The Hip-Hop Generation</i> , Chapter 8
13 November 20	"Where do we go from here?" and begin "New Media" Presentations	Writing Prompt and Class Discussion Discuss Possible Solutions to Overcoming External and Internalized Oppression <b>Reading Assignment:</b> Read for Final Papers
14 November 27	<b>NO CLASS</b>	<b>THANKSGIVING BREAK</b>
15 December 4	Continue "New Media" Presentations	Presentations <b>Work on Final Papers</b>
16 December 11	<b>Final Paper Due</b>	Submit Final Papers to Sierra Hall 184 between 8-10am