



Topics in Black, African and African Diaspora Studies

FALL 2020

Instructor: Kojo Damptey

Email: dampteok@mcmaster.ca

Course Hours: Mondays 3:30 pm - 5:20 pm and Thursdays 3:30 pm - 4:20 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This interdisciplinary course will explore selected topics from Black, African, and African Diaspora Studies, as determined by the instructor. Topics will focus on historical and contemporary issues that connect Black and African communities around the world. This course will interrogate the intersections of race with other concepts and experiences including gender, class, sexuality, culture, power, politics, violence, and globalization. To do this a wide variety of scholarly and non-scholarly work will be explored to introduce students to the past and contemporary socio-cultural varieties of African societies across the globe. In addition, students will be exposed to ideas and research from interdisciplinary scholars within the African & Caribbean Faculty Association at McMaster (ACFAM).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course provides an introduction to the history, ideas, realities, and research of Black, African and African Diaspora scholars, organizers and their respective communities. Topics of concern explored in this course will be ideas and concepts around resistance, resilience, liberation, and decoloniality. They will be discussed through various theoretical frameworks including post/anti/neo/de(colonial studies), critical race theory, African Indigenous Knowledge Systems, analyses of whiteness and anti-racism/anti-oppression.

- You will gain a historical, social, and political understanding of Black, African, and African diaspora ways of being particularly in a global context.
- You will undertake an interdisciplinary approach to academic inquiry.
- You will gain an understanding of how to critically analyze foundation texts in Black, African and African Diaspora scholarship.

METHOD OF INSTRUCTION:

This course will use a variety of integrative pedagogical approaches including a lecture format, but on occasion, there will be group discussions, group presentations and guest lectures from faculty members from the African & Caribbean Faculty Association at McMaster (ACFAM).

- Students are expected to read all the assigned readings, videos, and other class material PRIOR to coming to class. Therefore, students should come to class having some



thoughts and some questions pertaining to course readings and be **READY TO DISCUSS/REFLECT**.

- Students are expected to mutually respect all class members, including guests to the class. Such respect is paramount. We will have an opportunity to discuss this during our first class

Inclusivity/Universal Design Principles:

I will be providing summary notes via Avenue 2 Learn for all students prior to our classes each week. There are no multiple-choice examinations or examinations to be held during the examination period. Disclosures to the instructor of personal issues, illness or injury or extenuating circumstances are not required for accommodation requests. Students will not be called upon in class unless they indicate a willingness to contribute. I am both approachable and flexible so please feel free to contact me as soon as learning needs or concerns arise so that I can help anyway I can. I understand that not all needs are foreseeable as well so I can also help with alternative assignments and make-up work planning to foster successful learning and completion of the course. Please see below the University policy on academic accommodation for students with disabilities and accessibility statements.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Until We Are Free (2020). Rodney Diverlus, Sandy Hudson and Syrus Marcus Ware.

Links to electronically available course readings will be posted on the course website via Avenue 2 Learn.

Course Requirements/Assignments

Participation: 15% this includes, attendance, discussion posts, readings, group, in-class and assignment participation.

Assignment 1: 15% Reflection paper on Africa and its diaspora.

4 Pages in Length, DATE of SUBMISSION: Sept 24th, 2020

Assignment 2: 35% Group Readings Presentation and Facilitated Discussion
Percentage of grade: **20%** will be group grade and **15%** individual grade.
Sign up will be the first day of class for classes/readings

Assignment 3: 35% One Page Final Essay Outline: **5%** Final Critical Essay: **30%**

* Note: this is the final assignment for purposes of the Late Withdrawal Policy.

Due:



1. **Early submission- DATE** (grade provided with feedback from the instructor)
2. **Late submission- DATE** (grade provided with no/limited feedback)

Requirements Overview and Deadlines

ASSIGNMENTS:

Participation: 15%

Reflection Paper: 15% Due Date: **Sept 24th, 2020**

Group Assignment: 35%

Critical Essay: 35% Due Date: Early Submission (**Dec 11th, 2020** *Grade provided with feedback*); Late Submission **Dec 18th, 2020** (Grade provided with no/limited feedback)

Requirement/Assignment Details

Assignment 1: Reflection paper on Africa and its diaspora (15%). Due Sept 24th, 2020

- This assignment builds on each student's perspective and experience about issues related to Black, African and Diasporic communities. In this paper, you may explore your own personal ethnic and/or racial identity (identities) reflecting on what you perceive as Black, African and/or Diasporic issues that exist presently or historically from your viewpoint. Students are required to engage in concepts such as race, racism, racialization, colonialism, orientalism, ethnicity, social location/confluence, assimilation, marginalization, dominant conformity, supremacy, privilege, power, oppression, cultural imperialism, globalization, social activism etc. Limit your choices to 2-3 of the above concepts.
- Some questions to address when exploring the above include: How does my own social location/subject position/confluence impact ideas around Blackness, discourse around Africa and its diaspora? Where do these personal/social/academic ideas come from? Who're the voices centred in the ideas presented in your paper and why? What might that say about the limitations of how you perceive and talk about issues around Blackness, Africa and its diaspora?
- Please conclude the paper by discussing how your reflection is related to the reason(s) you took this course.
- The assignment will be marked with a focus on the following:
 1. The complete fulfillment of the requirements identified above especially clear elaboration of chosen course concepts
 2. The clarity, coherence, and orderliness of presentation
 3. Depth of critical analyses
 4. Adherence to the 4-page limit
 5. Correct spelling and grammar



6. Conformity to academic style with appropriate referencing

Assignment 2 (Group): Group Readings Presentation and Facilitated Discussion (35%)

- The class will be divided into groups of 3 to 4 students each. Each group will be assigned a reading. The groups will be formed on the first day of class. It is expected that each group will meet to discuss the reading, to prepare the presentation and select the questions that will be presented to the larger class. It is also expected that all members of the group actively participate in the planning, organizing and delivery of the presentation.
- For the group presentation, you are asked to:
 1. Summarize the main issues, questions, arguments presented in the assigned reading.
 2. Creatively and critically raise issues, questions, arguments that were generated by the article. (You may include audiovisual materials, illustrate with scenarios, debates, etc.).
 3. Engage the class with discussion. This should be a key component of your presentation
 4. Synthesize or summarize your presentation and class discussion as it relates to the interplay of themes and concepts discussed in class.
- Please keep in mind that students arrive to class with the readings already done; therefore it is not necessary or recommended that students spend a lot of the class time describing or explaining the reading(s). In other words, it is not recommended or necessary that students lecture on the readings.
- Rather, the objective of your presentation is to generate a discussion on the topics raised in the reading. You may utilize questions to pose to the class to stimulate student engagement and discussion. The questions are not intended to produce easy answers or definitive solutions. Rather the questions should try to open up discussion and conversations with your peers. Usually, queries that seem to produce open discussion are questions which engage with key themes, contradictions, tensions, dynamics, concerns and/or issues raised by the readings.
- Each group is required to submit to the instructor a typewritten copy of your questions on the day of your facilitation.
- The duration of the group presentation and facilitated discussion will be about 35/40 minutes.
- Presentations will be assessed based on content and presentation effectiveness. All presentations will be peer-evaluated using a rubric provided by the instructor.
- The individual grade will be based on a 2-page paper that each group member will individually prepare and submit on the day of their group presentation.
- The hand-in will:
 - 1) detail the individual's contribution to the group presentation



- 2) and reflect upon the individual's personal experience of the presentation group with a critical focus on course concepts.

This is not a discussion of the topics raised in the reading but rather a reflection on working with the reading with your presentation group i.e., debates generated among group members, and perspectives analyzed using course concepts. Cite any references to the course material used.

*For example, this may include a reflection on HOW your own confluence/subject position/social location impacted your perspectives of the presentation topic and how or why this was the same or different than other perspectives offered in your group. This might also include a reflection on a particular debate generated by the topic and how those might be explained using course concepts i.e., communality, racialization, blackness, colonization, decoloniality, etc.

Group assignments will receive a common grade for all the group members (i.e. all members of that group will receive the same group grade). All members of the group are expected to actively participate to ensure the success of the presentation. It is the entire group's responsibility to facilitate and ensure the full participation of all members, assignments that are incomplete or compromised because of a lack of participation or groups disbanding will be the responsibility of the entire group. In very rare circumstances, the instructor may adjust the grade of individual group members based on a lack of participation in the group process, or based on excluding someone in the group from full participation in the group.

Assignment 3 – Critical Essay (35%) Due - Dec 11th, 2020 *Grade provided with feedback*;
Late Submission **Dec 18th, 2020** *Grade provided with no/limited feedback*

- Students are required to write a critical essay on a topic of interest, which is related to the first assignment based on concepts/theories which are raised in the course. If you decide to focus on an entirely different topic from the first assignment do consult with the instructor. The length of the paper is to be 8-10 pages maximum (double spaced) plus references. Please use at least 10 refereed sources.
- The assignment requires that you explore a local/social/political/cultural/global issue relating to topics discussed in class and describe the implications of your analysis for Black folks, Africans and the African diaspora.

In the assignment students should:

1. Briefly detail the origins, history, and political foundation of the topic of discussion.
2. Explore significant historical/political/cultural/social issues that have emerged in relation to your topic of discussion.
3. Explore the meaning and effects of concepts learned in the class through application upon and reflection on the topic of discussion.



4. Demonstrate awareness of relevant theoretical frameworks from Black, African and diasporic activist, scholars, and organizers
5. Discuss implications of your analysis for Black, African and Diasporic communities.

The assignment will be marked with a focus on the following:

1. The complete fulfillment of the requirements identified above especially clear elaboration of course concepts and effective application of these in the chosen context
2. The clarity, coherence, and orderliness of presentation
3. Depth of critical analyses
4. Adherence to the 8-10 pages limit
5. Correct spelling and grammar
6. Conformity to academic style and appropriate referencing

Assignment Submission and Grading

Form and Style

- Written assignments must be typed and double-spaced and submitted with a front-page containing the title, student's name, student number, and the date. Number all pages (except the title page).
- Assignments should be stapled together. Please do NOT use plastic report covers or binders.
- The paper format must be in accordance with the current edition of **MLA** (Modern Language Association) style publication manual with particular attention paid to font size (Times-Roman 12), spacing (double spaced) and margins (minimum of 1 inch at the top, bottom, left and right of each page) as papers not meeting these requirements will not be accepted for grading.
- Students are expected to make use of relevant humanities and social science literature and other bodies of knowledge in their term assignments. When submitting, please keep a spare copy of your assignments.
- Please see me if an alternative approach might would best for you for accessibility reasons or for accommodation

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Weekly Topics and Readings

Week 1: Sept 14

Topics: Africa's Unknown History



Introductions and Group Assignments

Required Reading:

George Ayittey, Defeating Dictators. Chapter 2: Traditional Societies

Recommended Readings:

Chancellor Williams, The Destruction of Black Civilization.

Binyavanga Wainaina - How to write about Africa <https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/>

Week 2: Sept 21

Topics: African Indigenous Ways of Knowing & Being

Required Reading:

Kwame Gyekye, Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience.
Chapter 2: Person and Community: In Defense of Moderate Communitarianism

Recommended Reading:

George Dei, Reclaiming Development Through Indigeneity and Indigenous Knowledge

Week 3: Sept 28

Topics: Guest Lecturer from ACFAM

Week 4: Oct 5th

Topics: Obronni - Stories of the Enslaved

Required Readings:

Ana Lucia Araujo Dahomey, Portugal and Bahia: King Adandozan and the Atlantic Slave Trade

Akosua Adoma Perbi, A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana: From the 15th to the 19th
Century, Chapter Chapter 2: Slavery & The Slave Trade

Recommended Reading:

Saidiya Hartman, The Belly of the World: A Note on Black Women's Labors.

Week 5: Oct 12th - 18th -MID TERM RECESS

Week 6: Oct 19th

Topics: Blackness & Racism

Required Reading:

Kwame Ture & Charles Hamilton. Black Power. Tuskegee of Alabama: Politics of Difference



Recommended Readings:

Hall, S. (2007). The west and the rest: Discourse and power. In T. Das Gupta, C.E. James, R.C.A. Maaka, G. Galabuzi, & C. Andersen. (Eds). Race and racialization (pp. 56-60). Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press.

Hudson, S (2020). Unborderable Blackness: How Diasporic Black identities pose a threat to Imperialism and Colonialism everywhere. In Rodney Diverlus, Sandy Hudson, & Syrus Marcus Ware. (Eds). Until We Are Free Chapter 6. Regina: University of Regina Press.

Week 7: Oct 26th

Topics: Guest Lecturer from ACFAM

Week 8: Nov 2nd

Topics: Black, African & Diasporic - 2SLGBTQ+ & Disability

Required Readings:

Mohamed, W (2019). Deconstructing Homosexuality in Ghana.

Ware, Syrus Marcus (2020). Power to All People: Black LGBTTI2QQ Activism, Remembrance, and Archiving in Toronto. In Rodney Diverlus, Sandy Hudson, & Syrus Marcus Ware. (Eds). Until We Are Free Chapter 20. Regina: University of Regina Press.

Recommended Readings:

Gossett, C. (2014). We will not rest in peace: AIDS activism, Black radicalism, and queer and/or trans resistance. In J. Haritaworn, A. Kuntsman, & S. Posocco (Eds.), Queer necropolitics (pp. 31-50). New York, NY: Routledge

Jama, S (2020). The Need to Root Disability Justice into Movements. In Rodney Diverlus, Sandy Hudson, & Syrus Marcus Ware. (Eds). Until We Are Free Chapter 12. Regina: University of Regina Press.

Week 9: Nov 9th

Topics: Guest Lecturer from ACFAM - Dr Bonny Ibhawoh

Week 10: Nov 16th

Topics: Post Colonial or Decolonization

Required Readings:

Martin, G (2012). African Political Thought. Chapters 5 & 6. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Recommended Reading:

Sharma, N., & Wright, C., (2008). Decolonizing Resistance, Challenging Colonial States. Social Justice, 35, (3), 120-137.



Week 11: Nov 23rd

Topics: Global Discussions about Black Liberation

1. Combahee Collective
2. Expressions of Black Liberation

Required Readings:
Combahee Collective

Hudson, S (2020). Indigenous and Black Solidarity in Practice: #BLMTOTentCity. In Rodney Diverlus, Sandy Hudson, & Syrus Marcus Ware. (Eds). *Until We Are Free* Chapter 21. Regina: University of Regina Press.

Week 12: Nov 30th

Topics: Global Discussions about Black Liberation

1. Black Lives Matter
2. Summary

Required Readings:

Keleta-Mae, N (2020). Black Lives Matter- Toronto Sit-in at Pride. In Rodney Diverlus, Sandy Hudson, & Syrus Marcus Ware. (Eds). *Until We Are Free* Chapter 19. Regina: University of Regina Press.

Wingz, R, & Ware, S.M, (2020). Black Arts and the movement: A conversation. In Rodney Diverlus, Sandy Hudson, & Syrus Marcus Ware. (Eds). *Until We Are Free* Chapter 8. Regina: University of Regina Press.

Turner, C (2020). The Afronautic Research Lab. In Rodney Diverlus, Sandy Hudson, & Syrus Marcus Ware. (Eds). *Until We Are Free* Chapter 19. Regina: University of Regina Press.

Week 13: Dec 7th

Summary & Questions for Critical Essay

Groups Assignments

1. Ware, S., Ruzsa, J., & Dias, G. (2014). It can't be fixed because it's not broken: Racism and disability in the prison industrial complex. *Disability incarcerated: Imprisonment and disability in the United States and Canada*, 163-184.
2. Sylvia Bawa. (Un)African women: Identity, Class, and Moral Geographies in Postcolonial Times.
3. Wunpini Mohamed. A Feminist Reading of Hashtag Activism in Ghana.
4. African Fractals
5. Rinaldo Wilcott. The End of Diversity.



6. Liveson Tatira. The role of Indigenous Shona cultural beliefs and practices in the conservation of the environment.
7. Blessing Makunike and Munyaradzi Mawere. The role and efficacy of Indigenous knowledge in fostering sustainable development in Africa: A case study of Zimbabwe.
8. Kojo Damptey. The death of international development.
9. Ali A. Mazrui. Who Killed Democracy in Africa? Clues of the Past, Concerns of the Future.
10. Amilcar Cabral. The Weapon of theory.
<https://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/cabral/1966/weapon-theory.htm>
11. Keguro Macharia. Black (Beyond Negation) <https://thenewinquiry.com/blog/black-beyond-negation/>
12. Stuart Hall. Cultural Identity and Diaspora.
<http://sites.middlebury.edu/nydiasporaworkshop/files/2011/04/D-OA-HallStuart-CulturalIdentityandDiaspora.pdf>
13. James Smalls. The Visual Life of Black Queer Diaspora.

University Policies

Avenue to Learn

In this course, we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss it with the course instructor.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

Student Responsibilities

- Students are expected to contribute to the creation of a respectful and constructive learning environment. Students should read the material in preparation for class, attend class on time and remain for the full duration of the class. A formal break will be provided in the middle of each class, students are to return from the break on time.



- In the past, students and faculty have found that non-course related use of laptop computers and hand-held electronic devices during class to be distracting and at times disruptive. Consequently, during class, students are expected to only use such devices for taking notes and other activities directly related to the lecture or class activity taking place.
- Please check with the instructor before using any audio or video recording devices in the classroom.

Academic Integrity

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty, please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#)

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- Improper collaboration in group work.
- Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Accessibility Statement

I recognize that people learn and express their knowledge in different ways. As the instructor, I am committed to reducing barriers to accessibility in the classroom, and working towards classrooms that welcome diverse learners. If you have accessibility concerns or want to talk about your learning needs, please be in touch with the course instructor.

Disclosures to the instructor of personal issues, illness or injury or extenuating circumstances are not required for accommodation requests. I am both approachable and flexible so please feel free to contact me as soon as needs arise so that I can help anyway I can. I understand that not



all needs are foreseeable as well so I can also help with alternative assignments and make-up work planning to foster successful learning and completion of the course.

Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of the term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests. Please review the [RISO information for students in the Faculty of Social Sciences](#) about how to request an accommodation.

E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that communication has come from an alternate address, they may not reply.

Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".