BK 110 / SC 045 – Introduction to African Diaspora Studies: Commonalities, Differences, and Power within the Diaspora

Fall 2012

Professor: C. Shawn McGuffey, Ph.D. mcguffey@bc.edu
Office: McGuinn 431 Office Hours: M, W 3:30 – 4:30 p.m. or by appointment

Classroom and Time: Devlin 10, MWF 2 – 2:50 p.m.

The ways in which to teach a course on African Diaspora Studies is almost as diverse as the Diaspora itself. This interdisciplinary field can be approached from a variety of perspectives. Although literary scholars, historians, and social scientists all have important contributions to Diaspora Studies, most courses in this area primarily reflect the disciplinary training of the professor as well as her or his research interests. As such, this course will primarily examine the African Diaspora from a sociological and social science perspective, with a focus on the ways in which the Diaspora intersects with gender and sexuality. Nonetheless, the course will underscore how other perspectives compliment and amend social science inquiry. And while we will acknowledge the historical foundations for many of the contemporary issues now facing the African Diaspora, we will primarily focus on topical issues and modern-day dynamics in the U.S. and across the globe. This course will center on the following guiding questions: What is African Diaspora Studies? How has global racism impacted people of African descent around the world? How does socio-economic class, sexuality and/or gender influence individual and group experiences of being “Black”? How has society shaped the African Diaspora? And conversely, how has the African Diaspora shaped particular societies and the world?

To help tackle these questions, this reading and participation intensive seminar will not assume a uniform “Black” experience and will analyze family dynamics from a critical race feminist perspective. Four central themes of critical race feminism (CRF) are:

1) Social identities are historically and culturally specific and change over time.
2) Race, class, gender, and sexuality are not separate identities that are easily distinguishable from one another. These social identities intersect and reinforce each other. For example, one cannot talk about race without examining its implications for gender and vice versa.
3) CRF acknowledges the importance of laws, policies, and institutions in the perpetuation of inequalities.
4) Finally, CRF is skeptical of concepts such as objectivity, neutrality, and meritocracy. Therefore, ideas of equality must be critically examined.

**Course Expectations and Evaluation:**
1) This is a reading and participation intensive course. Readings are due on the date they are listed. Come to class ready to discuss them.

2) If you miss class, you are responsible for getting notes from a classmate. A doctor, school administrator, or other certified official must verify an absence in order for it to be excused. Notes from parents or legal guardians will not be accepted.
3) You will be evaluated in three areas.

**a. Class Participation (30%)**: This includes contributing to class discussions, in-class writing assignments, and pop quizzes. In-class texting is strictly prohibited and will negatively impact your participation grade. Other class disruptions and tardiness will also have a negative impact on your class participation. **Do not** come to class if you are more than five minutes late unless you have permission from the professor. After the class has been in session for five minutes the door will be shut. **Do not enter if the door is closed.** You cannot make up in-class assignments or pop-quizzes if you are not present unless you have an excused absence.

Discussions will focus on the readings and pertinent current event. Students are encouraged to critique all the assigned readings, to dissect the debates within them, and to speak at least twice per class period. Also, the guiding questions posed in the first paragraph of this syllabus should be addressed, in one form or another, in every class discussion.

Further, students are **required** to send the professor **two questions per reading by 11:59 p.m. on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays** to help structure class discussions. Questions should demonstrate that you have done the reading, but should not be so particular that it stifles conversation. Questions that connect readings from previous sections of the course are highly encouraged.

Here are examples of **good** questions for the reading “Egypt in America: Black Athena, Racism and Colonial Discourse.”

⇒ How did *Black Athena* challenge the idea of objective scholarship?
⇒ How has Egypt come to symbolize the tensions between Europe and Africa?
⇒ How does Tugrul Keskin’s discussion of Orientalism in “Sociology of Africa” differ from Robert Young’s in “Egypt in America”?

Here are **bad** examples for questions about “Egypt in America: Black Athena, Racism and Colonial Discourse.”

⇒ What is *Black Athena*?
⇒ Why is Egypt important?
⇒ What is Orientalism?

**Mandatory**: On Tuesday, October 23rd, students are **required** to attend a lecture entitled “Have We Forgotten the Darfur Genocide?” in Fulton Hall, Room 511. Students who do not attend will have 15% points deducted from their participation grade. The only excused absences from this event are another class conflict or for student athletes who have practice or game conflicts. If this is the case, the professor and teaching assistants must be made aware of this conflict by the end of September.

**b. Short Statements (50%)**: Short, two page statements will be due via email by the start of class on the assigned dates. There are ten assigned statements. These statements should be focused on the assigned readings and address one or more of the guiding questions in the first paragraph of the syllabus. Although it is not imperative to directly mention each reading, statements should at least tackle the ideas presented in all of them.
Statements will be evaluated based on the following criteria: (a) an introduction that distinctly states your topic and why it is important; (b) responses should have a logical flow with supporting evidence from the readings and lecture; (c) a succinct critique of the pertinent issues; (d) and all papers should be typed, double spaced, and NO MORE than two pages. Each of the two page statements are worth ten points each, for a total of 100. The topic and due dates for the statements are below:

Paper 1: Covers sections one and two, and is due on Sept. 21\textsuperscript{st}  
Paper 2: Complicating Identity, Experiencing the Diaspora, due on Sept. 26\textsuperscript{th}  
Paper 3: Black Women and U.S. Citizenship, due on Oct. 3\textsuperscript{rd}  
Paper 4: Education, due on Oct. 12\textsuperscript{th}  
Paper 5: Genocide, due on Oct. 22\textsuperscript{nd}  
Paper 6: Religion and Morality, due on Oct. 31\textsuperscript{st}  
Paper 7: The Politics of Sex, due on Nov. 9\textsuperscript{th}  
Paper 8: HIV & AIDS in the Diaspora, due on Nov. 16\textsuperscript{th}  
Paper 9: Interpersonal Violence, due on Nov. 28\textsuperscript{th}  
Paper 10: Hip Hop Nation or Hip Hop Diaspora?, due on Dec. 7\textsuperscript{th}  

\textbf{d. Final Exam (20\%):} The last fraction of your final grade will consist of an in-class, 5 -7 page written exam.

\textbf{Grading Scale:}  
94-100= A  
70-73= C  
90-93= A-  
66-69= C-  
86-89= B+  
62-65= D+  
82-85= B  
58-61= D  
78-81= B-  
54-57= D-  
74-77= C+  
53-00= F  

\textbf{Academic Integrity}  
Academic integrity is a standard of utmost importance in this course. Guidelines for academic integrity in written work are posted on the Boston College website at:  

www.bc.edu/integrity  

If you have any questions pertaining to the academic integrity guidelines, please come and talk with me for more clarification. If you are caught violating Boston College’s policies on academic integrity, you will receive a failing grade for the assignment and the appropriate Dean will be notified in accordance to the rules set forth by Boston College.

\textbf{Required Readings:}  
\textbf{Books:}  

Readings marked with an (*) indicates that they are from one of these two books.

**Ereserve Readings:** To access e-reserve readings (a) go to the libraries home page; (b) click on “more catalog search options;” (c) click on “Course/On-line Reserves;” and (d) Search by my last name, McGuffey.

*The professor reserves the right to incorporate additional readings throughout the course.*

**Reading Schedule:**

*What is African/Africana/Black/Diaspora Studies?*

**Sept. 5:** First Day of Class – No Readings

**AND**  

**AND**  

*Thinking About “Blackness,” Thinking About Race*

**The Work of Du Bois**

**AND**  
**AND**  


**Africa in the Western Imagination**


Sept. 21: PAPER 1 is DUE!

Complicating Identity, Experiencing the Diaspora
AND
AND

Sept. 26: PAPER 2 is DUE!
AND

Black Women & U.S. Citizenship


*Oct. 3: PAPER 3 is DUE!

Education

Oct. 8: NO CLASS – Enjoy Your Break!


*Oct. 12: PAPER 4 is DUE!

Genocide

AND

Oct. 22: PAPER 5 is DUE!

Oct. 23: MANDATORY Lecture entitled “Have We Forgotten the Darfur Genocide at 5:00 p.m. in Fulton 511

Oct. 24: NO CLASS!!

Religion & Morality
*Oct. 26: Harris-Perry, Melissa V. 2011. Chapter 6 “God”


Oct 31: PAPER 6 is DUE!
AND

The Politics of Sex


AND
Nov. 9:  **PAPER 7 is DUE!**

**AND**

**HIV & AIDS in the Diaspora**

**AND**

**AND**


Nov. 16:  **PAPER 8 is DUE!**

**AND**

**Interpersonal Violence**

**Nov. 21 – 23:  NO CLASS!!! Have a Great Break!!!**

Nov. 28: PAPER 9 is DUE!
AND

Hip Hop Nation or Hip Hop Diaspora?
AND

AND

AND
Fatima El-Tayeb. 2003. “‘If You Can’t Pronounce My Name, You Can Just Call Me Pride;’ Afro-German Activism, Gender and Hip Hop.” Gender & History 15(3): 460-486.

Dec. 7: PAPER 10 is DUE!
AND

Dec 10: No Assigned Readings (Last day of regularly scheduled class)
LAST EXAM will be given during finals week (TBA)
Health Service Resources

Boston College Resources

Health Services, 119 Cushing Hall
552-3225
Emergency (24 hours): 552-3227

Counseling Services, 108 Gasson Hall
552-3310

Women’s Resource Center, 213 McElroy Hall
552-3489

Sexual Assault Network
552-BC11

BC Police Dept.
Emergency: 552-4444
Non-emergency: 552-3475

Boston Area Resources

Boston Area Rape Crisis Center
617-492-7273

Battered Women’s Hotline
617-661-7203

Casa Myrna Vazque
English/Spanish Hotline
617-521-0100

Gay Men’s Domestic Violence Project
Serves gay and bisexual men, men who have sex with men & transgendered men
Hotline: 1-800-832-1901
Office: 617-354-6056

Mass. Coalition for Battered Women
1-800-799-SAFE
617-248-0922

The Network/ La Red
English/Spanish Hotline
Serves lesbians and bisexual women, women involved with other women, and transgendered individuals (MTF & FTM)
Hotline/Linea de Crisis: 617-742-4911
TTY: 617-227-4911

New England Area Resources

New England Learning Center for Women in Transition
413-772-0806