

**Capstone Seminar UN 551401/BK551301
Growing Up Ethnic in America**

**Akua Sarr - Spring 2018
Thursdays 4:30-6:50, Stokes Hall 117N**

In this seminar students will read narratives by primarily AHANA writers that navigate the complex terrain of race and ethnicity in America. The novels and stories will depict a variety of experiences but suggest that what constitutes an American identity is far from settled. Ethnic difference has a profound effect on personal and social understandings of what it means to be an American. As we discuss the literature, students will be expected to share their own personal narratives of growing up - stories of race, ethnicity, class, gender, faith, and nationality - and what it means to be "ethnic" in America. Some of the writers we will read include: Mat Johnson, Chang Rae-Lee, Sherman Alexie, Celeste Ng, Junot Diaz, Edwidge Danticat, Jesmyn Ward, JD Vance, Ayad Akhtar, Jesmyn Ward, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Claudia Rankine, Jennifer DeLeon, and Ta-Nehisi Coates.

Reflecting on Your Past - Personal Histories

- Who are you?
- What have you made of your BC Education? Why Capstone?
- What has your BC education made of you?
- The Student-Centered Classroom & Capstone Expectations

- Writing Assignment: Reflecting on Your Past
- Peak Experience Exercise
- Reading:
 - *Cracking the Code* - Jesmyn Ward
 - *The White Space* - Jennifer DeLeon
 - *Proving My Blackness* - Mat Johnson

Relationships and Family

- Who are the important people in your life?
- How have your family and its traditions shaped who you are today?
- What lessons have you learned from your close relationships?

- Reading
 - *Everything I Never Told You* - Celeste Ng
 - *Hillbilly Elegy* - JD Vance
 - *The Namesake Excerpt* - Jhumpa Lahiri

Citizenship, Country, City and Community

- What does it mean to be a good citizen?
- How can I make a difference in the world? In my city/community?
- How have I come to understand my role in the world?
- Reading
 - *Between the World and Me* - TaNehisi Coates
 - *A Message to My Daughters* - Edwidge Danticat
 - *The Refugees* - Viet Thanh Nguyen

Faith, Spirituality and the Search for Meaning

- Many spiritual quests involve a journey. What is your spiritual journey?
- How will you live a life that is fulfilling and purposeful?
- How do you understand faith? Religion?
- For what/whom are you grateful? How do you express your gratitude or appreciation?
- Reading:
 - *American Dervish* - Ayad Akhtar
 - *Daisy* - Chang Rae Lee
 - *The Red Convertible* - Louise Erdrich
 - *This is What It Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona* - Sherman Alexie

Envisioning the Future: Career, Work and Living a Fulfilled Life

- How will you carry-out the lifelong commitments you have begun to envision?
- What are the unique gifts you can offer the world?
- What are your hopes and fears?
- What is your dream for your future?
- Reading:
 - *Breath, Eyes, Memory* - Edwidge Danticat
 - *Drown* - Junot Diaz
 - *The Condition of Black Life is One of Mourning* - Claudia Rankine
 - *Where Do We Go from Here?* - Isabel Wilkerson
- Video: *The Man in the Red Bandana*
- Writing Assignment: Envisioning Your Future
- Ten Years Out Exercise