

Anthropology 3130.001 - African American Anthropology
SYLLABUS - Fall 2018
MW, 2:00-3:30, Sage 230

Instructor: Beverly Ann Davenport
Email: bad@unt.edu
Phone: 940-565-2292
Office Hrs.: Tuesdays 10:30-1:00, Wednesdays 2:00-3:30 or by appointment
Office: Anthropology Department, Chilton Hall, 330H

Class Facebook Group: African-American Anthropology Fall 2018

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Description: In this class my goal is for you to develop an understanding of the “double consciousness” that most African-Americans have, practically from birth. If this concept is something you don’t understand, you will. We start with a deep questioning of what “culture” is, how it develops, how it is maintained, and how it changes through the case of African American (or Black) culture in the United States. You will become more adept at recognizing the impact of Blacks on mainstream American culture and vice versa. It is not possible to study African American culture without taking into account unique features of U.S. history, politics and economics. These aspects of U.S. culture as a whole have both shaped and been shaped by the presence of people of African descent on this continent and in this hemisphere. The notion of double consciousness will be the foundation upon which we build our explorations of the following topics:

- ❖ Identifying “culture” – Challenging assumptions
- ❖ Historical roots of African-American culture in the U.S.
- ❖ Language - linguistic roots of AAVE (African-American Vernacular English), oral and musical traditions, and speech styles.
- ❖ Black identity through the lenses of gender politics

My goals for this class: Though I will be lecturing, I have planned for as much class discussion as is possible, sometimes in smaller groups, sometimes among the class as a whole. There is experiential knowledge that you, as American “culture-bearers” and/or as “participant-observers” of American culture, bring to the class. ***Your job during this semester will be to share what you know and/or have experienced, but also to learn to be aware of your tacit assumptions, the taken-for-granted way of seeing things that may distort your understanding of the materials we will be studying in this class.*** My job as the instructor is to bring those assumptions to the fore, and to notice my own assumptions and model for you how I try to challenge them. Regardless of what “club” you’re a member of, we all have distortions in the way we have learned to see the world

I want you to learn how to think critically about what you are reading. It is not holy writ; these are ideas that can be challenged but which must be challenged thoughtfully. **Your feelings matter here, and your feelings must be backed up by a coherent thinking.** It is OK to “not like” or “like” something, but that’s only the beginning. You have to make yourself go a little bit deeper and explain to yourself (and occasionally to me) WHY you like or don’t like something by creating a logical intellectual framework to support your ideas.

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Objectives – Content: By the end of this course you should:

- ❖ Be conversant with the names and ideas of *some* of the key thinkers in the field
- ❖ Be able to summarize the arguments, pro and con, about the “African-ness” of African American culture
- ❖ Understand and be able to articulate the social structural variables that impact Black culture
- ❖ Know how to define and how to criticize the concept of the “culture of poverty”
- ❖ Be able to articulate the role of the church in U.S. Black communities
- ❖ Have a grasp of linguistic terms associated with African-American Vernacular English (AAVE)
- ❖ Be able to identify elements of style in oral traditions associated with African-American culture
- ❖ Understand and be able to articulate the different sides of the argument surrounding Black English
- ❖ Be able to dissect gendered representations of African Americans in the media and articulate the impact of those representations on Black self-identity

Objectives – Process: By the end of the course I expect that:

1. **You will have participated in class.** I will do my best to find ways to make it possible for everyone to feel comfortable about speaking in class. (Discussing ideas from the reading is an important practice – it helps you to learn and it sharpens your critical thinking skills.)
2. **You will have become an ACTIVE READER,** asking questions of the assigned reading and making connections to other sources of information, building on your existing knowledge. In order to hone your skills as a critical thinker and active reader, I expect you to have completed the reading assignments BEFORE class.
3. **You will have become** comfortable with regular writing assignments and will be **MORE SKILLED IN WRITING** in the essay form.

REQUIRED READINGS

At the bookstore – required texts to buy:

- Elijah Anderson (1999). *Code of the Street*. New York: W.W. Norton
- Patricia Hill Collins (2004). *Black Sexual Politics*. New York: Routledge
- John Russell Rickford and Russell John Rickford (2000.) *Spoken Soul: The Story of Black English*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Articles on Canvas and elsewhere:

- If an assignment does not come from one of the required books, it will either be posted on Canvas with the file named by the author’s last name and if necessary, an abbreviated title, or information about the URL for finding on line will be posted there.
- **I reserve the right to assign additional short readings not listed on the syllabus. You must check your UNT email address every day to get the latest news.**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Essays: There will be three variable length essays (page range 3-7) assigned over the course of the semester. These essays will address significant questions pertaining to the unit of the class in which

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they are assigned. Essays must be uploaded to Turnitin on Canvas. **Due dates for essays are on the last page of this syllabus**

Final Project: For the final project you have a choice of writing an essay or working on a creative project (visual art, music, poetry) that interprets a chapter from the last book we'll be reading for this semester, *Black Sexual Politics*, by Patricia Hill Collins. If you choose to write an essay, you will upload it to Canvas. Other projects must be delivered to the Anthropology Department in 330Q Chilton Hall.

In-class exercises: There will be *at least eleven short additional in-class exercises* (writing assignments and/or pop quizzes) pertaining to topics under discussion in the class. In some cases, I will assign a short writing exercise to complete during class, in other cases I'll hand an assignment out in class for you to complete at home for the next class. (These will be announced on Canvas.) **In most cases, there will be no advance warning.** Therefore, it is important that you come to class having done the reading. **There will be no opportunity to make up these assignments. Your total score for these in-class exercises will be calculated by adding up the best 8 scores out of however many in class exercises we have. Each assignment is worth fifty points.**

It is YOUR responsibility to keep up with the class when you don't come to lecture. This means doing what is necessary to learn about assignments discussed in class (checking Canvas), and to download or otherwise obtain handouts and readings. I will post all class handouts and PowerPoints on Canvas after class.

Student Evaluation

Essays/Papers:	600 points (200 points each)
Final Project:	200 points
In-class exercises:	200 points (you must do 8 for full credit, 25 points each)
Total Possible:	1000 points

Grading Scheme: On a **percentage basis**, I will use 4 grades for most assignments:

A = 90% or better

B = 80% or better

C = 70% or better

Z or 0 = do-over opportunity*

*If you do not perform on a writing assignment at the C level you will receive **one do-over** opportunity with a due date determined in consultation with me. Improving your writing is one of my goals for the semester.

STUDENT EVALUATION

- ❖ **Your performance on the essays/papers** (I will use these terms interchangeably) **and the final project** will be evaluated on the following criteria: Analytic Reasoning (i.e. how well developed is the logic chain for your thesis and its sub points), Writing Effectiveness (i.e. how does your writing flow?), Writing Mechanics (i.e. how have you demonstrated mastery of spelling and grammar). Prompts for papers and the final projects will be found on canvas in appropriately labeled folders.
- ❖ **Your grade for the in-class exercises** will be based on my judgement of how comprehensively you have done what is required. The instructions for each development task will be found in the lesson module.

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HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS CLASS

1. Come to class regularly.
2. Take notes in class.
3. Do the reading BEFORE class, and **read actively!** Underline (but not too much), write notes in the margins of your book, and think about the reading in relation to the lectures and class discussions.
4. Check the Canvas webpage for supplemental material I will post there.
5. Read assignment instructions carefully; ask questions if you don't understand what you are being asked to do.
6. Don't assume anything – ask me! (*For example, don't assume I'm completely inflexible.*)
7. See me in office hours or after class (to make an appointment) EARLY if you begin running into problems.
8. Do not submit work that you did not write (see Undergraduate Plagiarism Policy below).

Non-Discrimination Policy: The Anthropology Department does not discriminate on the basis of an individual's disability as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Our program provides academic adjustments or help to individuals with disabilities in its programs and activities. I will make every possible attempt to meet any and all of your needs.

Make-ups: Make-ups will not be given unless you provide a reasonable excuse (athletic team trip, *documented* illness, etc.) You may not reschedule exams because of personal trips out of town and/or plane reservations. **I REPEAT, NO MAKE-UPS FOR IN-CLASS EXERCISES.**

No religious discrimination: To advance and honor the religious diversity in our community, UNT makes reasonable accommodations for students, staff and faculty whose religious observances or religious holy days coincide with their work schedules and academic obligations.

Acceptable student behavior: Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. If you engage in unacceptable behavior, I will direct you to leave the classroom and potentially refer you to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether your conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.unt.edu/csrr

Undergraduate Policy on Plagiarism and Cheating: The Department of Anthropology does not tolerate plagiarism, cheating, or helping others to cheat. Students suspected of any of these will be provided the opportunity for a hearing; a guilty finding will merit an automatic "F" in the course. In addition, I reserve the right to pursue further disciplinary action according to UNT policies as set forth in the Code of Student Conduct system, which may result in dismissal from the university.

Definition of Plagiarism: Misrepresenting the work of others (whether published or not) as your own. It may be inadvertent or intentional. Any facts, statistics, quotations, or paraphrasing of any information that is not common knowledge, should be cited. For more information on paper writing, including how to avoid plagiarism, and how to use citations, see <http://www.unt.edu/anthropology/writing.htm>. For

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information on the University's policies regarding academic integrity and dishonesty, see the UNT Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities, <http://www.unt.edu/csrr/>.

COURSE OUTLINE – ALL READINGS SHOULD BE COMPLETED BEFORE CLASS

UNIT I: CULTURE AS BOTH PRACTICE AND PROCESS

Monday, August 27 - Introduction to course and each other

Wednesday, August 31– Culture – what do we mean by this?/Double consciousness in Black culture

- REQUIRED: Dubois, 2003

Monday, September 3 – Labor Day – no class

Wednesday, September 5 – The case of ‘cool pose’

- REQUIRED: Richard Majors and Janet Billson (1992). Chapter 5 and Chapter 1 [READ IN THAT ORDER]: *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America*. New York: Lexington Books

Monday, September 10 – Continue with the case of ‘cool pose’

- REVIEW Richard Majors and Janet Billson (1992). Chapter 5 and Chapter 1

Wednesday, September 12 – Historical overview African origins/slavery in the U.S.

- REQUIRED: Howard Zinn (2007). “Drawing the Color Line,” pp. 9-20. IN Charles A. Gallagher, ed., *Rethinking the Color Line, 3rd edition*. Boston: McGraw-Hill (Canvas)

Monday, September 17 — Making the connection/The Gullah people

- REQUIRED: Joseph A. Opala (1987). *The Gullah: Rice, Slavery and the Sierra Leone-American Connection*. http://www.africanaheritage.com/Gullah_and_Sierra_Leone.asp, pp. 1-19. (Access on-line)
- Movie shown in class: “The Language You Cry In.”

Wednesday, September 19 – Herskovits-Frazier Debate

- REQUIRED: Norman Whitten and John Szwed (1970). “Introduction,” pp. 23-30. FROM: N. Whitten and J. F. Szwed, editors. *African American Anthropology*, New York, The Free Press. (Canvas)

Monday, September 24 – Movie: Herskovits at the Heart of Blackness

- REVIEW: Whitten and Szwed

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UNIT II: STRUCTURE AND CULTURE

Wednesday, September 26 – Code of the Street

- REQUIRED: Anderson (1999). Preface and Introduction, pp. 9-34.
- *Suggested reading*: Carol Stack (1970). “The Kindred of Viola Jackson: Residence and Family Organization of an Urban Black American Family,” pp. 303-311. IN: N. Whitten and J. F. Szwed, *African American Anthropology*. New York, The Free Press. (Canvas)

Monday, October 1 – Economic and Social Effects of Segregation

- REQUIRED: Anderson (1999). Chapter 1, pp. 35-65.
- *Suggested reading*: Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton (1993). “The Perpetuation of an Underclass,” FROM: *American Apartheid*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press (Canvas)

Wednesday, October 3– Culture of Poverty: Theory and Critique

- REQUIRED: Anderson (1999). Chapters 2 and 3, pp. 66-141
- *Suggested reading*: Oscar Lewis (1970). “The Culture of Poverty,” pp. 67-80. IN: *Anthropological Essays*. New York: Random House. (Canvas)

Monday, October 8 – Applying what we’ve learned to *Code of the Street*, I

- REQUIRED: Anderson (1999). Chapter 4, pp. 142-178.

Wednesday, October 10 – Applying what we’ve learned to *Code of the Street*, II

- REQUIRED: Anderson (1999). Chapters 5 and 6, pp. 179-236

Monday, October 15 – Applying what we’ve learned to *Code of the Street*, III

- REQUIRED: Anderson (1999). Chapter 7, pp. 237-289

Wednesday, October 17 – Analytical Pitfalls in the study of African American Families

- REQUIRED: Anderson (1999). Conclusion, pp. 290-325
- *Suggested reading*: Robert Hill (2001). “Race, Class, and Culture: Common Pitfalls in Research on African American Families,” pp. 99-123. IN: U. J. Bailey and L. Morris, editors, *1/3 of a Nation: African American Perspectives*. Washington, DC: Howard University Press (Canvas)

UNIT III: ORAL TRADITIONS/LINGUISTICS/BLACK ENGLISH

Monday, October 22 -- The Church and the Civil Rights Movement

- REQUIRED: Rickford and Rickford: Chapter 3, “Preachers and Pray-ers,” pp. 39-57
- *Suggested reading*: St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton (1993 [1945]). “The Grip of the Negro Church,” pp. 412-429. IN: *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City, revised and enlarged edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Canvas)
- Movie shown in class: “We shall not be moved.”

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Wednesday, October 24 – Linguistics in a Nutshell

- REQUIRED: Rickford and Rickford: Chapters 6, 7, pp. 91-128, Review Chapter 8, pp. 129-163.
- *Suggested reading*: Smitherman, G. (1999). Talkin' that talk: Language, Culture, and Education in African America. London, Routledge. Chapter 1, "Introduction to Ebonics," pp. 19-40 (Canvas)
- Movie: Do You Speak American?

Monday, October 29 – The Roots of Language

- Rickford and Rickford: Chapter 8, pp. 129-163

Wednesday, October 31 -- The Origins of Rap

- REQUIRED: Rickford and Rickford: Chapter 4, "Singers, Toasters and Rappers," pp. 73-88.

UNIT IV – IDENTITIES AND REPRESENTATIONS

Monday, November 5 – Appearance and Identity: The Color Complex

- REQUIRED: Collins: Introduction, pp. 1-21.
- Movie shown in class: "A Question of Color"

Wednesday, November 7 – Sexual Politics? Introduction to intersectionality theory

- REQUIRED: Collins: Chapter 1, pp. 22-52.

Monday, November 12 – The Past is Prologue: "The New Racism"

- REQUIRED: Collins: Chapter 2 "The Past is Ever Present," pp. 53-86

Wednesday, November 14 – Considering Hetero/Homo and Other Sexualities

- Collins: Chapter 3, "Prisons for Our Bodies, Closets for Our Minds," pp. 87-111

**Week of November 19 – no class Monday or Wednesday
HAPPY THANKSGIVING**

Monday, November 28 – "All that, really?" Representations of Black Womanhood

- REQUIRED: Collins: Chapter 4, "Get Your Freak On: Sex, Babies and Images of Black Femininity"

Wednesday, November 30 – Black Manhood: Representations and Reality

- REQUIRED: Collins: Chapter 5, "Booty Call: Sex Violence and Images of Black Masculinity," pp. 149-180.

Monday, December 3 – Reconstructing Gender Identities from the Inside Out

- REQUIRED: Collins: Chapter 6, "Very Necessary: Redefining Black Gender Ideology," pp. 181-212.

Wednesday, December 5 - Wrap-up Session

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Essay #4 due - Tuesday, December 11
Deliver to Anthropology Department by 5:00 PM (*Art Projects*)
Or upload to Turnitin By 11:59 PM

LIST OF DUE DATES FOR ESSAYS

- ❖ **Essay #1 – Upload to Turnitin by 11:59 PM, Thursday, September 28, 2017**
- ❖ **Essay #2 – Upload to Turnitin by 11:59 PM, Thursday, October 25, 2017**
- ❖ **Essay #3 – Upload to Turnitin by 11:59 PM, Tuesday, November 20, 2017**
- ❖ **Essay #4 - DELIVER ART PROJECTS to Anthropology Department by 5:00 PM, Tuesday, December 11**

OR

- ❖ **Essay #4 - Upload essays to Turnitin by 11:59 PM Tuesday, December 11**

General Policies on Essay Writing Assignments

1. I will hand out and post the prompt for the assignment no later than 2 weeks before it is due.
2. We strongly suggest that **you make sure you understand what you are being asked to do** before you begin writing. Come to office hours, talk to us after class, or make an appointment. Don't lose points because you didn't really answer the question that you were asked.
3. Unless told otherwise, please assume that all writing assignments (in-class or essays) are to be double-spaced, with 12 point font, and 1 inch margins on all sides. We also prefer that you indent the first line of every paragraph.
4. Unless told otherwise, please use "Chicago Style" citations in both the references cited (at the end of your essay) AND for the in-text citations. A 'how-to' for Chicago Style is in Canvas in the Essay/Assignment folder. The references in this syllabus model proper Chicago Style in most cases, but you should check the how-to to be sure.
5. We want you to write well and will provide any help, including reading early drafts with sufficient notice (usually no later than Friday of the week before the final version is due).
6. We may hand an assignment back for a re-write. This is an *opportunity* for you. We will not post the original grade; we will wait to receive the re-write. You will need to come in to office hours or make an appointment to discuss your work in more detail with one of us.