Objectives of this course:

This course aims to sharpen skills of critical reading and thinking in order to consider the Africanist presence in American Studies. The cumulative body of material in the class will therefore highlight various approaches, interpretations, and the social and political implications of centering people of African descent and placing the idea of blackness at the center of American Studies.

Class Format

Classes will usually begin with my introductory comments and then move into a roundtable discussion of assigned readings. 2-3 students will be responsible for leading the discussion, introducing key topics, themes and highlighting passages from the reading for particular attention.

All students will be required to keep a weekly journal that critically engages with the assigned readings and films.

Course Requirements

Required Texts


-- Susan Harding. "Preface." & "Introduction"


-- Nancy Leys Stepan. "Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science."

-- Gloria A. Marshall "Racial Classifications: Popular and Scientific."

-- Takaki, Ronald. *Aesculapius was a White Man.*

-- Nancy Leys Stepan and Sander Gilman. “Appropriating the Idioms of Science”


** other readings accessible on Project Muse, JSTOR and e-reserve

Time Management

You should plan on 2.5-3 hours to prepare for each class meeting. Discuss the substantive ideas from the readings and other assignments with your peers – learning is a process which takes place through intellectual engagement with others. This course does not include any exams -- however careful reading, extensive writing and active participation in class discussion are expected and will be graded. In order to facilitate this process, students will be expected to adhere to the following requirements:

1. **Attendance is mandatory** Absence is strongly discouraged and I will expect an email of explanation as a courtesy. Students who miss more than three classes will receive an automatic reduction in the final grade. In the event that you are ill and miss a class, you are responsible for reviewing the material covered with one of your classmates. There are several extra meetings scheduled for viewing films. These meetings are an
integral part of class participation -- please note these on your calender. If you have a conflict with another activity, please arrange to see the film in advance. (Don’t wait for the last minute)

Class begins on time!

2. Film Evaluation (20%). Over fall break you will see three films on your own and will write a short essay which considers them in the context of insights gained from the texts of first half of the semester.

As a class, we will see several feature films and documentaries which are related to the themes we are exploring. The objective is to critically engage with the visual and sensual representations, as well as consider the effectiveness of the film or documentary in comparison to "academic" texts whose audience is more limited. Your reflections on these films should be incorporated into your journals in the context of the relevant readings.

3. Reading Journal (40%) The first half of the semester you will be learning a new vocabulary, new information and new modes of analysis. Therefore, every student must keep a reading journal which notes the main points of the reading assignment and -- of equal importance - records his/her reactions in the context of the reading. As the semester proceeds, your writing will become a conversation with the text, the author and class discussions.

Before writing always ask: What did you learn? What were the main points? What is the significance of the essay? What opinions or preconceptions did you have and did they change? How? Some of the texts present both an analysis and an argument: are the arguments persuasive? Why? Why not? Are there points of identity between your life experience and what you found in the reading? Where are the differences?

The readings are grouped according to similar themes although many of these themes (and therefore foci of essays) intersect, overlap and/or flow into one another.

The journals are to be dated, typed, and paginated. You will be expected to write at least two pages for each reading assignment. Your ideas will not be graded as "correct" or "incorrect" -- rather this is an opportunity to explore, engage with and challenge ideas.

FORMAT
The format for typing your entries is as follows: Left Margin 1.5", Right Margin 1."
Double spaced and standard font. Pages must be numbered sequentially and entries must be dated (the dates are for you to review the development of your thoughts at the end of the semester.)

The journal entries count toward your final grade but will not receive individual grades. Journal entries are due in my mail box in the academic support office in Carnegie by 4:30 p.m. on Fridays. (automatic extension until Mon 8:40)

4. Leading Discussions (20%) For most classes, 2-3 students will be responsible for discussing the main argument(s) of an article (or chapter): how and why the reading is significant to the key themes or topics under discussion? How are issues linked to previous readings and class discussions? Each member of the group will come with a written 5 min. comment/ary (1-2 pp). Questions you pose to the class should be presented with tentative answers that you have considered in advance.

5. Class Discussions (20%). The readings and films provide the main material for class discussion. Therefore you should come to class with notes from your reading and always be prepared to comment on the texts. Sometimes, there are different interpretations and understandings of the texts. It is appropriate for there to be differences of opinion -- the readings provide a common ground of reference. This furthers our own
understanding of the topic. You may refer to material from other classes where relevant, and should always be prepared to provide a reference (author, title and, where possible, a page number).

Critical thinking and exchanging ideas depends on listening carefully to another person's perspective and responding respectfully. This does not mean that disagreement is not productive -- being challenged by another perspective enables you to sharpen and refine your ideas or points. Therefore, the focus should be specifically on what and why there are points of agreement or disagreement -- how is one interpretation different and in what ways should it be valued as more or less persuasive? Personal experience is important, but you may draw on it as an additional resource -- not a substitute -- for information or evidence from the texts we will be reading. In other words, your arguments need to be situated within the context of the readings. These may be supplemented with outside sources.

You should keep a hard-back folder for your written material (journal entries and documentary assignment) which will be submitted at the end of the semester (do not reprint!) in a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be submitted by Tues 13 Dec at 4:30 pm – there are NO extensions to this deadline!
**WEEK 1 Introductions Stereotypes, Myths**

PLEASE NOTE FOR ALL ASSIGNED READING: (Bring outline of reading to class with highlighted passages to discuss)

*FILM - Slavery and the Making of America* - Location TBA

SAT 26 Aug 2:05 - Parts 1 & 2
SUN 27 Aug 2:05 - Parts 3 & 4

(NOTE: These are important reading assignments – read once, then read again taking notes)

**WEEK 1 The Science of Race and the Contradictions of Equality**

Mon 28 Aug:
- Documentary: *The Life and Times of Sarah Bartmann*

Wed 30 Aug:
- ed Harding -- Marshall, "Racial Classifications.."
- Takaki, Ronald. Aesculapius was a White Man.

**WEEK 2 Institutionalizing The American Racial Binary**

Mon 04 Sept:
- ed, Harding -- Stepan and Gilman, “Appropriating the Idioms..”

Wed 06 Sept:

**WEEK 3**

Mon 11 Sept:

Wed 13 Sept:

*Film in Class Race Power of an Illusion Part 2*

Transcripts are available on line at California Newsreel
http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm
http://www.newsreel.org/guides/race/pressreleasecredit.htm
http://www.newsevel.org/films/race.htm

- Read at *Science Background Readings* at pbs.org. Race Power of an Illusion:
  - http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm
  1. Richard Garcia, “The Misues of Race in Medical Diagnosis,”  (2) Alan Goodman
WEEK 4
Mon 18 Sept:
• (E-reserve) Barbara Fields, “Slavery, Race and Ideology...” *New Left Review*

Wed 20 Sept:
Documentary *Ida B. Wells: A Passion for Justice*

• WEEK 5
Mon 25 Sept:
Read: (Blackboard) John Edward Philips, “The African Heritage of White America”
Read: (Blackboard) Amii Barnard. “The Application of Critical Race Feminism to the Anti-Lynching Movement:

Wed 27 Sept:
Bring typed outlines: focus of Higgenbotham and Welke articles development of arguments in each article [RECOMMENDATION: read assignments in listed order]

★★ (E-reserve) A. Leon Higgenbotham, Jr. “The Supreme Court’s Legitimization of Racism...”

(As you read Justice Harlan’s dissent, please underline his comments on the Chinese so you can return to it when we watch *Mississippi Triangle*)

• WEEK 6 History and Erasures

Mon 2 Oct:
Write 2 page comment to be read in class: drawing on the differing perspectives of Fields, Higgenbotham and Welke comment on the relationship between racial status and privilege. This requires a careful reading of *Plessy v Ferguson* (1896) decision with particular attention to Justice Harlan’s dissent: consider the labor involved in institutionalizing a particular kind of whiteness (white Anglo-Saxon Protestants) as the standard against which Americanness would be defined and measured

Wed 4 Oct:
• (Black Board) Michel Rolph-Trouillot, “An Unthinkable History.”
• Bring a map of Haiti and the territories encompassing the Louisiana Purchase to class and answer the following question: when did the Louisiana Purchase took place? From whom was it bought? Why was it sold?

In Class Documentary: *Afroargentines / Filimagem Producciones, Lagartija Muda Producciones presentan un documental de Jorge Fortes, Diego Ceballos.*
WEEK 7
Mon 9 Oct:

“Barbara Fields Presentation” In: Background Readings - History on pbs.org Race:
Power of an Illusion –

Type up a quiz and bring 2 copies to class:
5 questions based on Mercer article and Fields’ presentation – the questions should be
based on what you think are essential points that your peers need to remember after
they’ve read the material. At least 3 of the 5 questions should be based exclusively on M
and F; the other 2 questions can require reference to other materials.

Wed 11 Oct
In Class Documentary:
West Indians and their descendants in Cuba) My footsteps in Baraguá [videorecording] / Mundo
Latino presenta ; a documentary film by the "Imágenes del Caribe" Filmmakers ; production,
Chester King ... [et al/] ; script and directed [by] Gloria Rolando
Mexico's often-overlooked African populations La raíz olvidada [videorecording] = The
forgotten roots / realizacin, Rafael Rebollar; giun, Antonio Noyola, Beatriz García ;
Producciones Trabuco S.C

FALL BREAK

OVER FALL BREAK:
Assignment due: at the beginning of class on Mon 23 Oct.
You are responsible for seeing the three (3) films listed below on your own (or with classmates) and
submitting a 5-6 page essay on what you learn from each documentary and the movie as well as how they
compliment each other (specifically addressing the following: what common questions and themes are
raised in the documentaries? Where and in what ways do they differ? How do these documentaries
resonate with Spike Lee’s Bamboozled?). What connections can you make with the assigned readings so
far?
All films are on reserve in Burling Library
• Midnight Ramble
• Color Adjustment
• Bamboozled (Spike Lee)

WEEK 8 Racial Identities
Mon 23 Oct. Franz Fanon
BSWM: Intro-Chpt 5

BSWM:
In Class Documentary Fanon BSWM:

WEEK 9
Mon 30 Oct:
BSWM  Chapt  7-8

**Wed 01 Nov:**
Re-read Fanon’s Introduction carefully. Bring to class a 2 (typed) page discussion on the relationship between Fanon’s Introduction and Conclusion. The second half of your discussion should include comments on how Fanon’s insights may be applied to current social interactions at Grinnell College and the USA in general (alternatively, if you think the insights are limited by significant differences in time and place, then use this as your focus).

- **Film Mississippi Triangle**

**JOURNAL ENTRY DUE IN CLASS ON Mon** – A reflective paper focused on Mississippi Triangle and Grant article (that is: engage your thoughts with Grant’s discussion – this is not an opinion paper! It is a critical engagement with the issues in the film and should be informed by the material of the semester up to this point.)

**WEEK 10 The Africanist Presence in the Anglo-American Mind and Body**

**Mon 06 Nov.:** (bring journal entries for Mississippi Triangle)

- Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*

  *Race: Power of an Illusion Part 3* - Transcripts are available on line at California Newsreel
  - [http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm](http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm)

**Wed 08 Nov:**

- Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*
  - In Class Documentary: *Rhythm, Country & Blues*

**WEEK 11 -- Octavia Butler Kindred**

- **JOURNAL ENTRIES FOR KINDRED DUE in class on Mon _27th_ (week 13) in class – entries will cover your reflections on reading novel, class discussion, discussion questions 285-287 and supplementary articles.

**Mon 13 Nov:**

- *Kindred*

**Wed 15 Nov:**

- *Kindred*
  - Bring responses to Discussion Questions pp. 285-287 (these will not be turned in – instead be prepared to offer an oral presentation of your responses)

**WEEK 12**

**Mon 20 Nov:**

Wed 22 Nov:


• WEEK 13 -

Mon 27 Nov:

Journal Entry for Kindred Due in Class

Documentary Scandalize my name [videorecording] : stories from the blacklist / [presented by] Starz Encore Entertainment ; Black Starz! ; written and directed by Alexandra M. Isles

Wed 29 Nov:

• Strange Fruit –
• Guest: Dr. Rebecca Stuhr, Collection Development Librarian

WEEK 14

Mon 04 Dec:

W.E.B. Du Bois in Four Voices

You are responsible for taking careful notes during the documentary including the historical events through which Du Bois lived.

Your final journal entry is due Mon 11 Dec.. This is a 7-8 page evaluation of what you have learned throughout the semester. Your discussion should include comments on the links between the various texts covered this semester and the documentary about W.E.B. Du Bois. Part of this discussion, therefore, should focus on whether, how and why the problem of the color line has persisted into the 21st century.

Wed 06 Dec: – LAST MEETING

Read http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/race/Ombdir15.html

In class Stuart Hall (video-lecture), “Race: the Floating Signifier”

Take careful notes during this lecture and submit them (typed).

Write 2-3 pages that comment on the five most significant insights you gained from watching this documentary: how do these insights provide new or broader perspectives to your cumulative academic (learning) education? What is the relevance of presenting this lecture, by a British sociologist of Jamaican background, as closure for a course titled “The Africanist Presence in American Studies.”

Your folder of journal entries and the two documentary assignments (Du Bois & Hall) must be submitted in the box outside my office door in a stamped, self-addressed envelope by Mon 11th, no later than 4:30 pm – there are NO extensions to this deadline!
AMS 211 Fall 2006 Film Schedule

**FILM - Slavery and the Making of America**
SAT 26 Aug  2:05-  Parts 1&2
SUN 27 Aug  2:05  Parts 3&4

<table>
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