

## AMS 211 The Africanist Presence in American Studies Fall 2005

### FINE ARTS 269 Tues/Thurs - 2:15-4:05

(\*\* Periodic required convocation attendance. Please take note of films scheduled for Saturday at 10:30 and Sundays at 2:15pm)

**K. Gibel Azoulay (ARH 121 Tel. 4324)**

**Office Hours: Tues 4-5, Thurs 10-12 (and by appointment)**

#### 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

\*\* ed. Harding, Susan. *The 'Racial' Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.

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

-- Stepan Jay Gould. "American Polygeny and Craniometry Before Darwin"

-- 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"

\*\* Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 1967.

\*\* Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. New York: Vintage, 1993.

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

#### Time Management

T You should plan on 2.5-3 hours to prepare for each class meeting.

T 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.

T 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 calendar. 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.

#### Λ **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**

**Thurs 25 Aug**

Introductions -

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

**FILM - Africa and the Making of America – ARH 224**

Λ **SAT 27 Aug 2:05- Parts 1&2**

Λ **SUN 28 Aug 2:05 Parts 3&4**

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

< **WEEK 2 The Science of Race and the Contradictions of Equality**

**Tues: 30 Aug**

§ ed. Harding -- Gould, "*American Polygeny and Craniometry Before Darwin*"

§ Documentary: *The Life and Times of Sarah Bartmann*

**Thurs 1 Sept**

§ ed Harding -- Marshall, "*Racial Classifications..*"

§ Takaki, Ronald. *Aesculapius was a White Man.*"

< **WEEK 3**

**Tues 6 Sept**

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

§ ed, Harding -- Stepan and Gilman, "*Appropriating the Idioms..*"

**Thurs 8 Sept Institutionalizing The American Racial Binary**

§ Carson Woodson. "The Beginnings of the Miscegenation of the Whites and Blacks." *The Journal of Negro History* 3, 4 (Oct 1918), 335-353. [JSTOR]

§ (Lexis Nexis): A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr. and Barbara K. Kopytoff. "Racial Purity and Interracial Sex in the Law of Colonial and Antebellum Virginia." *Georgetown Law Journal* 77 (August, 1989).

**WEEK 4**

Tues 13 Sept

§ Sidney Kaplan. "The Miscegenation Issue in the Election of 1864." *Journal of Negro History* 34, (July 1949), 274-343. [JSTOR]

§ Pegge Pascoe. "Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of 'Race' in Twentieth Century America." *The Journal of American History* 83, 1 (Jun 1996), 44-69. [JSTOR]

Thurs 15 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.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm)

<http://www.newsreel.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](http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm)

(1) Richard Garcia, “The Misues of Race in Medical Diagnosis,” (2) Alan Goodman “The Race Pit,” (3) Jared Diamond, “Races Without Colors.” –

**WEEK 5**

Tues 20 Sept

§ (Blackboard) Barbara Fields, “Slavery, Race and Ideology...” *New Left Review*

Thurs 22 Sept

Documentary *Ida B. Wells: A Passion for Justice*

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: ...”

§ **WEEK 6**

**Tues 27 Sept**

**No Class –use the time to prepare Thurs assignment!!!**

***Recommendation: meet with classmates to discuss the articles before you write (you may want to read together).***

**Thurs 29 Sept Bring typed outlines: focus of Higgenbotham and Welke articles development of arguments in each article**

Λ (Lexis Nexis) Plessy v. Ferguson, No. 210, SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES, 163 U.S. 537; 16 S. Ct. 1138; 41 L. Ed. 256; 1896 U.S. LEXIS 3390, Argued April 13, 1896., May 18, 1896

§ (Blackboard) A. Leon Higgenbotham, Jr. “The Supreme Court’s Legitimization of Racism...”

§ (Lexis Nexis) Barbara Y. Welke, “Beyond Plessy: Space, Status, and Race In the Era of Jim Crow.” *Utah Law Review* (2000)

§ Write 1-2 paragraphs 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. (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 7 History and Erasures**

**Tues 4 Oct No Class Rosh HaShana**

**Thurs 6 Oct**

- § (Black Board) Michel Rolph-Trouillot, “An Unthinkable History.”
- § (Project Muse) Darrell R. Meadows, “Engineering Exile: Social Networks and the French Atlantic Community, 1789-1809.” *French Historical Studies* 23, 1, (Winter 2000), pp. 67-102.
- § Bring a map of Haiti and Louisiana to class and answer the following question: when did the Louisiana Purchase take place? From whom was it bought? Why was it sold?
- < In Class Documentary: *Afroargentines / Filmimagem Producciones, Lagartija Muda Producciones presentan un documental de Jorge Fortes, Diego Ceballos.*

**Λ WEEK 8**

Tues: 11 Oct

{Blackboard} Kobena Mercer, “Black Hair/Style Politics” *New Formations* 3 (1987), 33.54.  
“Barbara Fields Presentation” In: *Background Readings - History* on pbs.org *Race: Power of an Illusion* – see Blackboard Assignments -- Bring typed responses of questions to class.

- < 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*

**Thurs 13 Oct No Class Yom Kippur**

NO JOURNAL ENTRIES DUE for this week.

## FALL BREAK

OVER FALL BREAK:

Assignment due: at the beginning of class on Tues 1 Nov

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 (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)

**Λ WEEK 9 Racial Identities**

Tues 24 Oct Franz Fanon

BSWM: Intro-Chpt 5

Thurs 27 Oct

BSWM:

Λ In Class Documentary *Fanon BSWM*:

**WEEK 10**

Tues: 1 Nov

BSWM Chapt 7-8

Thurs: 3 Nov

Re-read Fanon's Introduction carefully. Then write 1 (one) page on the links between the Introduction and Conclusion. Include a discussion on the relevance of Fanon's insights for USA in 2005.

Film *Mississippi Triangle*

{Project Muse} Nathan Grant, "Delta Scalene: A Passage Through Mississippi Triangle." *Black American Literature Forum*. Vol. 25, No. 2, Black Film Issue (Summer, 1991), pp. 409-416

*JOURNAL ENTRY DUE IN CLASS ON Tues 8 Nov – reflections on Mississippi Triangle and comments on Grant article (that is: engage your thoughts with Grant's discussion)*

**WEEK 11 The Africanist Presence in the Anglo-American Mind and Body**

Tues 8 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)

<http://www.newsreel.org/films/race.htm>

Thurs 10 Nov

§ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*

§ **WEEK 12 -- Octavia Butler *Kindred* –**

§ \*\* JOURNAL ENTRIES FOR *KINDRED* DUE TUES 29 NOV BY 4 pm – entries will cover your reflections on reading novel, class discussion, discussion questions 285-287 and supplementary articles.

Tues 15 Nov

*Kindred*

Thurs 17 Nov

*Kindred*

Review Discussion Questions pp. 285-287

§ **WEEK 13**

Tues 22 Nov

{JSTOR} Ashraf H. A. Rushdy, "Families of Orphans: Relation and Disrelation in Octavia Butler's *Kindred*." *College English*, Vol. 55, No. 2. (Feb., 1993), pp. 135-157.

THURS 24 Nov – NO CLASS THANKSGIVING

§ **WEEK 14 -**

Tues 29 Nov

{Project Muse} Rowell, Charles H. "An Interview with Octavia E. Butler"  
Callaloo - Volume 20, Number 1, Winter 1997, pp. 47-66.

{JSTOR} Angelyn Mitchell, "Not Enough of the Past: Feminist Revisions of Slavery in Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred*." MELUS, Vol. 26, No. 3, Confronting Exiles. (Autumn, 2001), pp. 51-75.

Thurs 1 Dec

§ *Strange Fruit* –

§ {Project Muse} Dora Appel, "On Looking: Lynching Photographs and Legacies of Lynching after 9/11." *American Quarterly* 55, 3 (2003), 457-478.

§ Guest: Dr. Rebecca Stuhr, Collection Development Librarian

X **WEEK 15**

Tues 6 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.

T Your final journal entry is due Tues 13 Dec. This entry should be a 6-8 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 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Thurs 8 Dec – LAST MEETING

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

Λ In class Stuart Hall (video-lecture), "*Race: the Floating Signifier*"

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

**Your folder of journal entries and the documentary assignment must be submitted in the box outside my office door in a stamped, self-addressed envelope by Tues 13 Dec no later than 4:30 pm –**

**there are NO extensions to this deadline!**