GE 20CW-2 - Special Topics: Identity, Freedom and Responsibility in African American and Afro-Caribbean Political Thought

Instructor: Anuja Bose  
Spring 2015
Class Location: Public Affairs 2278
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Office Hours: Tuesday 9-10AM & 2-3PM
at Bunche Hall 3288

Course Description:

This course will focus on the core themes of identity, freedom, and responsibility as they emerge in African American and Afro-Caribbean Political thought. These two intellectual traditions grew out of an attempt to understand and transform modern structures of racism, colonialism and patriarchy. Three questions will structure our inquiry in this class: What is the meaning of freedom in societies shaped and structured by racial ideology? How has identity been constructed and reconstructed by African descendent people in the Americas? What is the responsibility of blacks who have achieved some degree freedom, wealth and education in the project of racial uplift?

We approach these questions from a transnational and comparative perspective. The onset of the transatlantic slave trade meant that African peoples were scattered like sand through out the Atlantic world. Any attempt to come to terms with the artistic and intellectual production of Afro-descendent people in the Americas must therefore go beyond the confines of the nation-state. In this spirit, we will explore the central themes of identity, freedom and responsibility through a series of literary, poetic and philosophical works by thinkers of the Black intellectual tradition in the US and the Caribbean. Among the range of thinkers we will study are Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Sylvia Wynter, W.E.B Du Bois, James Baldwin, Angela Y. Davis and Audre Lorde. The practices and ideas that emerge from this intellectual tradition will help us come to grips with race and racism in contemporary American and Caribbean societies.

Required Texts:

James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955)
Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (New York: Grove, 1967)
Course Requirements:

(1) Participation - Class attendance, discussion, presentation (30%)

Active and thoughtful participation is an integral part of this class. There will be three graded components to participation divided up as attendance (5%), discussion in class (15%), in-class presentation on a week’s readings (10%)

(2) Reflection Papers (40%)

Students will be required to submit a reading response to the assigned readings for each week. This response is intended to help prepare you for class discussion and prepare you for your final essay by carefully constructing your thoughts in written form every week. All responses are due in class. The response should be between 200-350 words and should comment on a question posted each week by the instructor. They will be graded out of 5.

(3) Final Paper (30%)

The final paper will be comparative in scope where you will bring into dialogue the ideas of an African-American and Caribbean thinker. The paper will be 6-8 pages long and you will be able to choose from three prompts assigned by the instructor. Due date: Monday June 8, 2015.

Academic Integrity:

Please make sure that all written work is your own. This is a writing intensive class that encourages you to do the hard work of transforming your thoughts into clear written expression. To plagiarize would defeat the purpose of this class, and you would also be violating the student codes of conduct at UCLA. When you do rely on other sources, please make sure you cite appropriately. For more information: http://www.studentgroups.ucla.edu/dos/assets/documents/studentguide.pdf
Part 1: The African American Tradition

Week 1 (March 31): Introduction

Robert Gooding-Williams, “Introduction: The Authority of Du Bois” (Uploaded on Course Website)

Week 2 (April 7): Slavery and Abolition

Frederick Douglass, My Bondage and My Freedom 1-80; 333-364

Film Screening - Clips from Frederick Douglass: When the Lion Wrote History (20 minutes)

Week 3 (April 14): War, Reconstruction, and Reaction

Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk 9-33; 62-104

Film Screening - Clips from W.E.B. Du Bois: A Biography in Four Voices (30 Minutes)

Week 4 (April 21): The Dawn of the Civil Rights movement

Baldwin, Notes of a Native Son 13-115

Film Screening - Clips from James Baldwin: The Price of a Ticket (30 Minutes)

Part 2: The Afro-Caribbean Tradition

Week 5 (April 28): Colonialism and Négritude in the Antilles

Stuart Hall, “Negotiating Caribbean Identities” (Uploaded on Course Website)

Césaire, Discourse on Colonialism 31-78

Film Screening – Clips from Aimé Césaire: A Voice for History (20 minutes)

Week 6 (May 5): Decolonization and the Birth of a New Humanism

Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks 7-40; 83-140; 210-232

Film Screening: Clips from Frantz Fanon: Black Skin White Mask (20 minutes)
Part 3: Feminist Re-Foundings of the Tradition

Week 7 (May 12): Envisioning an Independent Caribbean Nation

Wynter, *The Hills of Hebron* (entire)

Audio Recording: *IOJ Induction of Fellows Acceptance Speech* (13 minutes)

Week 8 (May 19): Radicalizing the Struggle against Racism

Davis, *Women, Race and Class*, 3-29; 87-98; 137-171

Film Screening: *Free Angela and All Political Prisoners* (30 minutes)

Week 9 (May 26): Care of Self and Political Warfare

Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 36-59; 72-80; 111-133

Film Screening: *A Litany of Survival: The Life and Work of Audre Lorde* (30 minutes)

Week 10 – June 2

Conclusion and course summary.