

Skidmore College AM264 African-American Experience

Prof. Amber N. Wiley
Spring 2017
TR 11:10A-12:30P
TISCH 302
awiley@skidmore.edu
Office: TISCH 329
Hours: Thursday 9:30-11:00A



**"My challenge was to weave into the fabric of American history enough of the presence of blacks so that the story of the United States could be told adequately and fairly."
John Hope Franklin, 1997**

This lecture course is a survey of the 20th century urban African-American experience. The purpose is to provide an understanding of the role African-Americans have played in the history of the nation, from Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) to Obama's "Post-Racial" America. This includes African-American contributions to, and exclusions from, various aspects of a democratic American society. We will engage in pluralistic discourse over the progression of the semester. We will hear from many sources while analyzing individual voices on the topic, with an understanding that the African-American experience is neither univocal nor monolithic. The course pays particular attention to migratory patterns of African-Americans within and outside of the United States, but is not meant to be a comprehensive history of African Americans in the United States. This consideration illustrates how industry, war, social segregation, international diplomacy, and family ties helped shape the relationship between the rural and urban African-American experiences.

The course is interdisciplinary in nature: our investigation into the African-American experience will include methods and theory from anthropology, art criticism, environmental studies, ethnomusicology, geography, history, literary studies, and urban planning. We will use both primary and secondary sources to gain an understanding of the African-American experience over time; the course readings will be coupled with film, music, poetry, narratives, novels, and art. Students should be willing to complete the reading, think deeply about the themes covered, and come prepared to participate in class.

LEARNING GOALS

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a fuller understanding of the historical development and social construction of black America
- Critique various representations of black America
- Evaluate notions of individual and group identity within black culture
- Illustrate a knowledge of African-American expressive traditions
- Identify the historical roots of contemporary issues confronting African-Americans
- Understand how to set a research agenda driven by an investigative problem or question

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, eds. *Let Nobody Turn Us Around, An African American Anthology*, Second Edition (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009)
- Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2011)

GRADING

Attendance and Participation	(15%)
Thesis Analysis	(15%)
Map Production + Analysis	(20%)
Film Analysis	(25%)
Art Analysis	(25%)

ATTENDANCE

Your success in this course depends entirely on your attendance, participation, reading, and completion of course assignments. This lecture course meets twice a week and attendance is mandatory. Special circumstances such as excused absences are the exception. These include illness, religious holiday, or a personal/family crisis that is documented by an academic administrator. Please notify me in advance if you expect to be absent. You are allowed two unexcused absences; absences after that are detrimental to your class grade. Each unexcused absence will result in a 2% lowering of the final grade in this course. Timeliness is paramount, class meetings are 80m, and tardiness can cause you to miss important class announcements and information in lecture.

PARTICIPATION

Participation includes contributing to in-class discussions by speaking, being intellectually present and engaged for each meeting, paying attention to what is said by your peers, and being an active learner and listener. In order to make meaningful contributions to class discussions your participation should reflect your engagement with, and understanding of, the assigned course readings. Students should therefore have the texts read prior to the date on which it first appears on the syllabus. Not participating in lectures and classroom discussions will result in a lower class grade. Laptops will not be permitted in class unless for a documented learning accommodation, or for in-class workshop.

Mutual respect. Each person in this course has unique prior experiences and a unique viewpoint to share. This offers a great opportunity for us to learn from each other. Though disagreement and even conflict may occur, I expect your cooperation in maintaining an atmosphere of mutual respect. When participating in discussions, it is perfectly acceptable to have strong opinions – in fact I encourage you to do so. In the process, however, I expect you to respect the basic intelligence and humanity of each of the other participants in the discussion. Disagreement is not necessarily a bad thing, as long as there is a commitment to mutual respect. Hateful and demeaning speech will not be tolerated.

BLACKBOARD

Some of our course material will be available through our course Blackboard site: <https://learn.skidmore.edu/>. From Blackboard, you will be able to download articles; review the syllabus and assignments; submit assignments; and check your grades. Articles available on Blackboard are labeled with (Bb).

SOCIAL EXPLORER

The course depends on Social Explorer as a source about the United States, its regions, and its cities. Demographic information about the United States is available for online research, dating from 1790 to present day estimates. Skidmore has an institutional subscription so if you log on while on campus you can create an account and access it for 3 months before having to log on while on campus again. You should save your projects in an account created with your Skidmore email. Visit www.socialexplorer.com.

ASSIGNMENTS

The essay assignment material will be covered both in class lectures and assigned readings. It will be necessary to attend all lectures and read all assigned material in order to be prepared for these assignments. Please follow the Chicago Style for citations. Skidmore's guide to writing can be found here: https://www.skidmore.edu/writing_guide/. Full credit will not be given to papers that do not meet minimum length requirements. There will be no extension granted on the essay due date, except for a legitimately documented excused absence. You will receive a 1/3 reduction in your grade for each day that exceeds the stated submission deadline, meaning, an A will become an A- after one day, a B+ after two days, a B after three days, etc.

GRADE SCALE

A (Excellent): Exceptional performance, exceeding the requirements of the course, showing strong academic initiative and independent resourcefulness.

B (Good): Performance above the norm; accurate and complete; beyond the minimum requirements of the course; work demonstrates marked progress and initiative.

C (Average): Satisfactory work that adequately meets minimum requirements and demonstrates satisfactory comprehension, communication skills, and effort; demonstrates little initiative to investigate the problem without substantial prodding of the instructor; work shows little improvement.

D (Inferior): Unsatisfactorily meets minimum requirements; demonstrates minimum comprehension, communication skills, and effort at an inferior level; initiative lacking; improvement not noticeable.

F (Failing): Does not meet minimum requirements; fails to adequately demonstrate comprehension, communication skills, and effort.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The integrity of Skidmore Honor System is based on the absolute honesty of the entire community in all academic endeavors. As part of the community, students have responsibilities regarding the originality of all independent work that forms the basis for the evaluation of their academic achievement. For more information see the Honor Code: <https://www.skidmore.edu/advising/integrity/>. Students should be familiar with the College's Honor Code and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. Please pay particular attention to Skidmore's policies on documentation and plagiarism; you may also find it helpful to refer to the Definitions and Guidelines document published on-line through the Office of Academic Advising (OAA). Violating Skidmore's policies on academic honor can lead to course failure, suspension, and even expulsion. Examples of a violation of academic honor include, but are not limited to: submission of the same written work in more than one course; plagiarism – the use of someone else's words, ideas, information, or original material without acknowledging the source. If you are unclear about how to cite sources in your papers, you should ask. I have a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism – plagiarizing sources will result in a failing grade for an assignment.

DISABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Office of Student Academic Services at 518.580.8150 to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <https://www.skidmore.edu/accessibility/>.

COUNSELING SERVICES

The Counseling Center assists students in addressing academic, career, and personal problems. Support services include: adjustment to college, depression, family problems, anxiety, sexual assault and eating disorders, or other situations that may arise. Call 518.580.5555 or visit: <https://www.skidmore.edu/counseling/>.

MISCELLANEA

I reserve the right to make changes to the readings and assignments as the semester moves along, but will stay within the boundaries of the workload signaled in this syllabus. I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours, except on weekends and holidays, and I do not check email after 5pm.

RELATED SKIDMORE PROGRAMS

February 9	Screening: Jordan: Home Away from Home	@ Case Center SPA	6 pm
February 13	Screening: Después De Trujillo	@ Davis Auditorium	6 pm
February 21	Lecture: Bringing the Past into the Future	@ TBD	7 pm
March 21	Screening: The Settlers	@ Emerson Auditorium	6pm
April 13 & 14	Radical Black Sonic Arts	@ The Tang	
April 22	Exhibit: If I Had Possession Over Judgment Day	@ The Tang	

Week 1 Introduction

01.24.17

- Please spend some time tonight familiarizing yourself with the online course space on Blackboard. Review the syllabus, make sure you can access and print the articles for next class.
- Read for Thursday, January 26.

01.26.17

- George Lipsitz, "What is American Studies?" American Studies Association White Papers (2015) (Bb)
 - Sarah-Jane (Saje) Mathieu, "The African American Great Migration Reconsidered," *OAH Magazine of History* October 2009: 19-23 (Bb)
-

Week 2 Jim Crow and the Caste System

01.31.17

- Wilkerson, 1-15
- Kimberly Jade Norwood, "Global Perspectives on Colorism: 'If You is White, You's Alright,'" *Washington University Global Studies Law Review* 14 (2015): 585-607 (Bb)

02.02.17

- Wilkerson, 17-46
-

Week 3 Work, Labor and the Economy

02.07.17

- Wilkerson, 72-88
- Marable and Mullings, "Labor and Capital Are in Deadly Conflict," 135-138

02.09.17

- Wilkerson, 89-106
-

Week 4 Washington vs. Du Bois

02.14.17

- Wilkerson, 113-127, 139-149

02.16.17

- Marable and Mullings, "Booker T. Washington and the Politics of Accommodation," 174-181, and "William Edward Burghardt Du Bois," 195-209

Due: Thesis Analysis

Week 5 Migration

02.21.17

- Wilkerson, 157-170
- Marable and Mullings, "Black Conflict Over World War I," 224-228

Screening: Lemonade @ Zankel, Room TBD

02.23.17

- Wilkerson, 172-184
- Jacob Lawrence and Henry Louis Gates Jr., "An Interview with Jacob Lawrence by Henry Louis Gates Jr.," *MoMA* no. 19 (Spring 1995): 14-17 (Bb)

Film: Slavery by Another Name

Week 6 Exodus: Traveling While Black

02.28.17

- Wilkerson, 186-192, 193-198

03.02.17

- Wilkerson, 199-214, 215-226

- Michael Ra-Shon Hall, "The Negro Traveller's Guide to a Jim Crow South: Negotiating Racialized Landscapes During a Dark Period in United States Cultural History, 1936–1967" *Postcolonial Studies* 17 no. 3 (2014): 307–319 (Bb)

Film: The Howlin' Wolf Story

Week 7 Canaan: The North and the West

03.07.17

- Wilkerson, 230-246, 253-275

- Marable and Mullings, "James Weldon Johnson and Harlem in the 1920s," 267-273

03.09.17

- Wilkerson, 280-292, 297-305

- bell hooks, "Black Vernacular Architecture as Cultural Practice," *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (New York: The New Press, 1995): 145-151 (Bb)

Film: On the Shoulders of Giants

Spring Break

03.14.17 NO CLASS

03.16.17 NO CLASS

Week 8 Work, Labor and the Economy II

03.21.17

- Marable and Mullings, "Black Women Workers during the Great Depression," 300-306

- Hazel V. Carby, "Policing the Black Woman's Body in an Urban Context," *Critical Inquiry* 18 no. 4 (Summer 1992): 738-755 (Bb)

03.23.17

- Wilkerson, 309-319, 327-340, 345-356

Due: Map Production + Analysis

Week 9 Civil Rights

03.28.17

- Wilkerson, 361-378, 381-389, 394-398

03.30.17

- Marable and Mullings, "'We Need Group-Centered Leadership,'" "Martin Luther King, Jr., and Nonviolence," and "The Salvation of American Negroes Lies in Socialism," 375-383, 385-395

Film: Freedom Riders

Week 10 Paradigm Shift

04.04.17 Trip to Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery

- Wilkerson, 401-419, 422-437

04.06.17

- Marable and Mullings, "Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam," and "Malcolm X and Revolutionary Black Nationalism," 401-418

Film: The Trials of Muhammad Ali

Week 11 Black Power

04.11.17

- Wilkerson, 441-450, 451-457, 460-464

04.13.17

- Amber N. Wiley, "The Dunbar High School Dilemma: Architecture, Power, and African American Cultural Heritage," *Buildings & Landscapes* 20 no. 1 (Spring 2013): 95-128 (Bb)

- Marable and Mullings, "Black Power," 418-425

Film: Chisholm '72: Unbought & Unbossed

Week 12 Hip Hop

04.18.17

- Wilkerson, 465-468, 471-473, 477-485, 488-490

04.20.17

- Marable and Mullings, "The Movement against Apartheid," Afrocentricity," and "Hip-Hop Activism," 529-532, 546-552, 603-604

Film: Paris is Burning

Week 13 Dawn of a New Millennium

04.25.17

- Wilkerson, 494-511, 516-525

04.27.17

- Marable and Mullings, "Black Radical Congress," 592-99

Film: Street Fight

Week 14 "Post-Racial" America

05.02.17

- Wilkerson, 527-538

- Julian Bond, Skidmore Commencement Remarks, May 16, 2015 (Bb)

- Barack Obama, Farewell Address (Excerpt), January 10, 2017 (Bb)

05.09.17 Art Analysis Final Due