

## AMST 385: African American Culture & Society

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Fall 2001      Lecture 10210R      T/Th 2-3:50PM      WPH 200

**Professor:**      **Lanita Jacobs-Huey**

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Course Webpage: <http://www-rcf.usc.edu/~jacobshu/> ((Click on AMST 385: African American Culture & Society))

### Required Texts:

1. Gwaltney, John Langston. 1993. *Drylongso: A Self Portrait of Black America*. New York: The New Press. (\$14.95 new, \$11.25 used at University Bookstore)
2. Naylor, Gloria. 1986. *Linden Hills*. New York: Viking Penguin. (\$12.95 new, \$9.75 used at University Bookstore)
3. Hurston, Zora Neale. 1998 [1937]. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; with a foreword by Mary Helen Washington. New York: HarperCollins. (\$13.50 new, \$10.15 used at University Bookstore)
4. AMST 385 Reader. (\$30, purchase in class) [This text is abbreviated RDR in the reading schedule.]

**NOTE:** Texts by Gwaltney, Naylor, Hurston, as well as select articles from the AMST 385 Reader (RDR) are on reserve in Leavey Library.

**Course Description:** This course will focus broadly on social and cultural issues affecting the past and present lives of African Americans in the United States. Special attention will be paid to some of the following themes: The African Diaspora: Cultural Continuity and Change in America; Past and Contemporary Acts of Struggle and Resistance; Race, Class, and Gender; African American Worldviews; The Construction of “Black” Identity; Representations of “Blackness” in Popular Culture; Cultural Politics of Hair and Identity; Black Oral Genres; and Language, Identity, and Culture. This course will apply an interdisciplinary approach to addressing what it means (and has meant) to be African American in the U.S. This course will also integrate scholarly and popular texts (e.g., films, videos, music) to illuminate the cultural, economic, and socio-political complexity of African American life and society. Because learning at its best is a collaborative endeavor, I encourage you to ask questions and complete the readings so that we maximize our learning experience. **Recommended Course Prerequisites:** Intro to Anthropology, Intro to Sociology, or comparable course to be approved by instructor.

**Grading:** You will be required to submit TEN weekly discussion papers (1-2 pages in length) which analyze the week’s assigned readings and/or films. These discussion papers (DPs) *must* be typed and should also suggest 2-3 questions or topics for discussion. The discussion papers are due at the beginning of class of your choosing and will account for 10% of your final grade. (More information on DPs can be found on course webpage.) In addition, there will be TWO midterms and a final exam covering assigned readings and film/video viewings. Your scores on each midterm will constitute 25% of your grade (totaling 50%), and your score on the final exam will constitute the remaining 40%. Each of the three exams will include short-answer and essay questions and will be “non-cumulative.” The grading scale is as follows:

90-100 = A

86-89 = B+

80-86 = B

76-79 = C+

70-75 = C

66-69 = D+

60-65 = D

≥ 59 = F

GRADE BASIS
10 Discussion Papers: 10%
Midterm 1: 25%
Midterm 2: 25%
Final Exam: 40%

**An Official Note on Examinations:** Make-up exams will only be given under extraordinary circumstances and will require documentation from your doctor. The content and form of any make-up exam will be at my discretion. *In* any case, do inform me via email or phone prior to missing an exam. If you feel you must reschedule an exam on account of having (a) two additional exams scheduled at the same time or (b) three exams in a 24-hour period, do inform me at least two weeks prior to our scheduled midterm. The final exam, however, **must** be taken at the time noted below.

**Attendance:** A grading percentage will not be given for class attendance. However, consistent and punctual attendance is strongly encouraged as I expect it will increase your understanding of course materials. Your record of attendance may also be considered in the case of borderline grades. Do note that it is ultimately your responsibility to be aware of what has transpired in class. Should sickness, family emergencies, or other events necessitate your absence from class, I recommend that you consult your student colleagues for copies of their lecture notes.

**Academic Accommodations:** Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability should register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when necessary documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday-Friday, 8:30AM - 5PM. The office is in Student Union 301 and their phone number is 213-740-0776.

**Class Structure:** Class meetings will consist of both lecture and discussion, with a clear emphasis on the latter. As such, it is essential that you keep up with the weekly readings and that you hand in weekly discussion papers on time. (NO late papers will be accepted.)

### READING & EXAM SCHEDULE\*

**WEEK ONE:** T 8/28, Th 8/30

**Theme:** *Course Introduction, Theories on Identity and the Representation of Culture*

**Readings:** Berger & Luckmann [in RDR]; Geertz [in RDR]

**WEEK TWO:** T 9/4, Th 9/6

**Theme:** *Researching African American Culture*

**Readings:** Gwaltney (read Introduction only); Baugh [in RDR]

**Film:** *The Deadly Deception*

**WEEK THREE:** T 9/11, Th 9/13

**Themes:** *Slavery as a “Total Institution”*; *African American Worldviews on Slavery*

**Readings:** Goffman; Lester [both articles are in RDR]

Gwaltney (read section entitled, “The Legacy of Slavery”); Ball [in RDR]

Hurston (begin reading book)

**WEEK FOUR:** 9/18, Th 9/20

**Themes:** *Emancipation and Beyond*; *The Harlem Renaissance/ Contextualizing Zora Neale Hurston*

**Readings:** Hurston (complete book)

Walker [in RDR]

**WEEK FIVE:** T 9/25, Th 9/27

**Theme:** *The Great Black Migration*

**Readings:** Adero; Marks [both articles are in RDR]

**Film:** *Goin’ to Chicago*

1<sup>ST</sup> EXAM: TUE. 10/2

**WEEK SIX:** T 10/2, Th 10/4

**Theme:** *Interrogating ETIC Notions of “Blackness”*

**Film:** *Ethnic Notions* [OMT #2674]

**WEEK SEVEN:** T 10/9, Th 10/11

**Theme:** *Interrogating EMIC Notions of “Blackness”*

**Readings:** Handout

**Film:** *Black Is ... Black Ain't* [OMT #2432]

**WEEK EIGHT:** T 10/16, Th 10/18

**Theme:** *African American Comedy as a Trope of Resistance and Cultural Critique*

**Readings:** Watkins; Levine [both articles are in RDR]

Gwaltney [skim section entitled, “The Mojo and the Sayso”]

**Film:** Assorted clips from comedy sketches

**WEEK NINE:** T 10/23, Th 10/25

**Theme:** *Language, Identity, and Culture*

**Readings:** Morgan, “More than a mood...” [in RDR]

**Film:** TBA

**WEEK TEN:** T 10/30, Th 11/1

**Theme:** *Issues of Class: Testimonies from Middle Class and Working Class Blacks*

**Readings:** Feagin & Sikes; Cose [both articles are in RDR]

Wilson [in RDR]

Naylor (begin reading book)

**2<sup>ND</sup> EXAM: TUE 11/6**

**WEEK ELEVEN:** T 11/6, Th 11/8

**Theme:** *Issues of Class: “Reading” Linden Hills*

**Readings:** Naylor (complete book)

**Film:** *Excerpts from “In Black and White: Conversations with African American Authors, Part 2”* [OMT #2321]

**WEEK TWELVE:** T 11/13, Th 11/15

**Theme:** *Issues of Class: “Reading” Linden Hills; Race, Class and Gender: Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas Hearings*

**Readings:** Naylor

**Film:** TBA

**WEEK THIRTEEN:** T 11/20, [no class Th 11/22]

**Theme:** *Race, Class, and Gender: The Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas Hearings*

**Readings:** Crenshaw; hooks [both articles are in RDR]

**WEEK FOURTEEN:** T 11/27, [no class Th 11/30; Reading Day]

**Theme:** *Cultural Politics of Hair and Identity*

**Readings:** Jacobs-Huey 1996 [in RDR]

Mercer [in RDR]

Gwaltney [skim section entitled, “The Many Shades of Black”]

**Film:** “Nappy” [OMT #3056]

**WEEK FIFTEEN:** T12/4, Th 12/6

**Theme:** *The African Diaspora: Cultural Continuity and Change in America*

**Readings:** Holloway [in RDR]

Morgan “The Africanness of Counterlanguage...” [in RDR]

Mufwene [in RDR]

**FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13<sup>th</sup>, 4:30-6:30PM WPH 200**

## **COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY (Articles appear in reader in the following order)**

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### **I. African American Worldviews and Lived Experiences**

Gwaltney, John Langston. 1993. *Drylongso: A Self Portrait of Black America*. New York: The New Press.

### **II. Theories on Identity and the Representation of Culture**

Berger, Peter and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Geertz, Clifford. 1971. *Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture*. In *The Interpretation of Culture*. New York: Basic Books.

### **III. Past and Contemporary Acts of Struggle and Resistance**

#### **Atlantic Slavery as a Total Institution**

Ball, Edward. 1998. *Slaves in the Family*. New York: Viking.

Goffman, Erving. 1961. *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.

Lester Julius. 1968. *To Be A Slave*. New York: Dell.

#### **Emancipation and Beyond**

Hurston, Zora Neale. 1998 [1937]. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; with a foreword by Mary Helen Washington. New York: HarperCollins.

Walker, Alice, Ed. 1979. *I Love Myself When I Am Laughing... and Then Again When I Am Looking Mean and Impressive: A Zora Neale Hurston Reader*. New York: The Feminist Press. [includes piece by M.H. Washington]

#### **The Great Black Migration**

Adero, Malaika, Ed. 1993. *Up South: Stories, studies, and Letters of This Century's African American Migrations*. New York: The New Press.

Marks, Carole. 1989. *Farewell – We're Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

### **IV. Language, Identity, and Culture**

Baugh, John. 1983. *Black Street Speech: Its History, Structure, and Survival*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Morgan, Marcyliena. 1998. *More Than A Mood or An Attitude: Discourse & Verbal Genres in African American Culture*. In S. Mufwene, J. Rickford, G. Bailey, J. Baugh (Eds.) *African American English: Structure, History and Use* (251-181). London: Routledge.

### **V. Black Oral Genres: Representing Core "Blackness" in Popular Culture**

#### **Themes of Resistance and Cultural Critique in African American Comedy**

Levine, Lawrence W. 1977. *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*. London: Oxford University Press. [Excerpt from Chapter 5: Black Laughter]

Watkins, Mel. 1994. *On the Real Side: Laughing, Lying, and Signifying - The Underground Tradition of African American Humor that Transformed American Culture, from Slavery to Richard Pryor*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

### **VI. Issues of Class**

Cose, Ellis. *The Rage of a Privileged Class*. New York: Harper Collins.

Feagin, Joe R. and Melvin P. Sikes. 1994. *Living with Racism: The Black Middle-Class Experience*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Naylor, Gloria. 1985. *Linden Hills*. New York: Penguin Books.

Wilson, William Julius. 1996. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. New York: Random House.

### **VII. Race, Gender, and Class**

#### **Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas Hearings**

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1992. *Whose Story Is It Anyway?: Feminist and Anti-Racist Appropriations of Anita Hill*. In T. Morrison (Ed.) *Race-ing Justice, En-Gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality* (402-440). New York: Pantheon Books.

#### **Black "Womanism"/Black Feminism**

hooks, bell. 1992. *A Feminist Challenge: Must We Call Every Woman Sister?* In *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (79-86). Boston: South End.

### **VIII. Cultural Politics of Hair and Identity**

#### **Negotiating Aesthetic Rights and Professional Expertise**

Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 1998. *We Are Just Like Doctors, We Heal Sick Hair: Cultural and Professional Discourses of Hair and Identity in a Black Hair Care Seminar*. In C. Chalasani, J. Grocer and P. Haney (Eds.) *SALSA V: Proceedings of the 5th Annual Symposium about Language and Society-Austin, TLF 39* (213-223). Austin: Texas Linguistics Forum.

Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 1996. *Negotiating Social Identity in an African American Beauty Salon*. In N. Warner et al. (Eds.) *Gender and Belief Systems: Proceedings of the Fourth Berkeley Women in Language Conference*. Berkeley (331-343). University of California, Berkeley Women and Language Group.

**Hair and Identity Politics**

Mercer, Kobena. 1994. Black Hair/Style Politics. *In* Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies (97-138). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

**IX. African Diaspora: Cultural Continuity and Change in America**

Felder, Cain Hope, Ed. (1991). *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretations*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Freedman, Samuel G. (1993). *Upon This Rock: The Miracles of the Black Church*. New York: HarperPerennial.

Holloway, Joseph E. 1990. *Africanisms in American Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Morgan, Marcyliena. 1993. The Africanness of Counterlanguage among African Americans. *In* S. Mufwene (Ed.) *Africanisms in Afro-American Language Varieties* (423-435). Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Mufwene, Salikoko. 1993. Investigating Gullah: Difficulties in Ensuring "Authenticity." *In* A. Glowka and D. Lance (Eds.) *Language Variation in North American English: Research and Teaching* (178-190). New York: The Modern Language Association of America.