

**African American Studies 103**  
**Introduction to African American Studies**  
**Fall 2013**

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**Course Description**

Introduction to African American Studies serves as a gateway to the interdisciplinary study of African descendant people across the globe. The goal of the course is to introduce students to a critical and comprehensive analysis of the historical, cultural, and contemporary characteristic of the shared experiences of peoples of African descent around the globe. It will emphasize the interaction of cultural, social, economic, political, and intellectual phenomenon within local contexts and across geographical boundaries.

**Course Objectives**

1. The students will be introduced to the origins and meanings of the concept “Diaspora,” and of the historical events and circumstances that first brought about the African Diaspora.
2. The students will be able to make the African Diaspora and people of African decent the analytical center of inquiry.
3. The students will be exposed to an understanding of the process of cultural history and diffusion, and how syncretism and creolization define the dynamic living cultures that emerged out of the dehumanizing experience of slavery and oppression in the Americas.
4. The students will be able to stimulate and nurture an institutional intellectual culture that integrates methods of inquiry, thus establishing connections among disciplines and encouraging students to pursue knowledge through a variety of sources.
5. The students will be expected to show analytical and interpretive skills that will enable the student to study and research the historical and cultural ties between Africans throughout the Diaspora.
6. The students will be to promote critical thinking, so that in both written and oral communications the student will be able to analyze print and non-print materials, make comparisons of particulars, draw and support conclusions.
7. The students will be able to document sources, synthesize diverse information, scrutinize and apply theory, and evaluate the characteristics and ethical implications of diverse worldviews.
8. The students will be able to understand that a study of the human experience is important to an appreciation of the student's position as a citizen of the globe.

## **Required Text & Readings**

### **Books**

*Africana Studies: A Survey of Africa and the African Diaspora*, 3rd edition, edited by Mario Azevedo

*Sundiata* by D T Niane

Or

*Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe

*The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* by James Weldon Johnson

Or

*Blackberry* by Wallace Thurman

### **Grading Scale**

<b>A</b>	100-90	<b>C</b>	<b>79-70</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Below 60</b>
<b>B</b>	89-80	<b>D</b>	<b>69-70</b>		

<b><u>Assignments</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>	<b><u>Due Date</u></b>
Participation	20%	Daily
Midterm	15%	10/10
Final	20%	12/10
Book Essay	15%	12/03
Cultural Outing	15%	12/03
Quizzes	15%	See Schedule

### **Requirements:**

#### **Exams:**

The class will have a midterm and a final exam. These will cover the readings, lectures, and discussions. You will be expected to know the theories, important people, critiques, history, maps, and cultures of African people no matter their locale. The format of exam questions may include T/F, Multiple Choice, Short Answer, Fill in the Blank, and Essays.

**Quizzes:** Four quizzes will test your comprehension of overarching course themes and theories. These quizzes will take about 15 minutes to complete. The format of quiz's questions may include T/F, Multiple Choice, Short Answer, Fill in the Blank, and Essays.

**Book Essay:**

You are required to write one 3 page essay on one of the novels you are reading for the course. There should be **NO SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL** in your essay (I have read the novels and therefore do not need for you to summarize it). Your essay should consist of themes, characters, and most importantly analysis of the novel by utilizing theories, culture, philosophies, and ideas learned from this course. The essay must have a thesis/argument, have flow and logical transitions/paragraphing, and be free of grammatical and spelling errors. See the rubric at the end of the syllabus as your guideline and the student must print out the rubric and attach it to her/his essay. Your writing must demonstrate that you are a college level student.

The papers must be typed or word-processed, with 12 point font using Times New Roman (the size and font used on this syllabus), double spaced, and with standard margins. Every paper must have citations using Turabian or Chicago Manual Style. You are also required to make use of footnotes when citing your work. The student should not use quotes that need to be put into a block quote format (a quote of 4 lines or more). Also, use quotes when you have to and the paper should not be filled with quotes, a three-page paper should not have more than 4 direct quotes however paraphrase and cite as needed throughout the paper.

The paper must have the following components a title page, a bibliography, the rubric, and content. The paper should be turned in using the following order—content, bibliography, title page, and rubric. The following is a description of each component—title page includes your name, date, assignment, and the class. The rubric is provided for you at the end of the syllabus and it is used to grade your writing assignments. The content section is the essay and analysis of the book. The content should start on the very first line and be indented with none of the information that is on the title page found within this section. The bibliography is where you list the books/articles that you consulted and cited. All papers need to be stapled and have page numbers without any accompanying headers or footers. Please ask any questions or concerns about this format to the professor in a timely manner.

If you turn in your essays earlier than 11/05, I will allow you to do a rewrite and make corrections. You have this option even if you decide to write your essay on *Blacker the Berry*.

**Cultural Field Trip:**

Students must visit one cultural/historical institution or exhibit that has relevance to our course. The Black History Museum as an off campus possibility is preapproved and you can also do their walking tour. On campus, attend a lecture, brown bag luncheon, play, ballet, musical performance that centers people of Afrikan descent. Please get prior approval to attend any events except the Black History Museum. You will need to turn in to me the receipt/program, a short write up on the event, your reaction to it, and how it fits into the class.

**Participation:**

Each student is expected to contribute to the dialogue/discourse/discussion.

You may participate by:

1. Asking poignant questions about the readings, lectures, and/or discussions.
2. Responding to a question asked by the professor, faculty, guest speakers, or other class members.
3. Making an analytical comment or observation.
4. Bring in newspaper/magazine/media that deals with an aspect of class that we are currently discussing or have discussed.

It is necessary and important for you to read the assigned readings prior to coming to class to be able to fully participate and contribute to class. I would advise you to follow my example on how to discuss the material in class—integrating readings, discussions, and outside materials from other courses.

**Attendance:**

Attendance is vital during the semester and I will be taking attendance daily. The student will receive two days of unexcused absences before her/his attendance adversely affects their grade. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> absence, the course grade will be dropped one letter grade per occurrence. For example, if you missed 4 days and had an A in the class, the new grade would be a C for the two extra days. Of course, emergencies happen and will be considered only with written documentation (doctor's note, funeral program, traffic accident, ticket, etc). Also, tardies will be counted. Tardy constitutes being more than ten minutes late or leaving before the end of the class session. Two tardies will count as one absence, so please come to class on time.

**Excused Absences for Students Representing the University**

Students who represent the university (athletes and others) do not choose their schedules. Student athletes are required to attend games and/or meets. All student athletes should provide their schedule to the instructor at the beginning of the semester. The Intercollegiate Athletic Council strongly encourages faculty to treat missed classes or exams (because of a scheduling conflict) as excused absences and urges faculty to work with the students to make up the work or exam.

**All work is due when specified and late materials will not be accepted unless accompanied with written documentation (e.g. doctor's note, funeral program).** If you have an emergency please contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss how to handle the assignment.

**E-mail Policy:**

Electronic mail or "e-mail" is considered an official method for communication at VCU because it delivers information in a convenient, timely, cost effective and environmentally aware manner. Students are expected to check their official VCU e-mail on a frequent and consistent basis in order to remain informed of university-related communications. The university recommends checking e-mail daily. Students are

responsible for the consequences of not reading, in a timely fashion, university-related communications sent to their official VCU student e-mail account. This policy ensures that all students have access to this important form of communication. It ensures students can be reached through a standardized channel by faculty and other staff of the university as needed. Mail sent to the VCU e-mail address may include notification of university-related actions, including disciplinary action. Please read the policy in its entirety: <http://www.ts.vcu.edu/kb/3407.html>

### **VCU Honor System: Upholding Academic Integrity**

The VCU Honor System policy describes the responsibilities of students, faculty and administration in upholding academic integrity, while at the same time respecting the rights of individuals to the due process offered by administrative hearings and appeals. According to this policy, "Members of the academic community are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity." In addition, "All members of the VCU community are presumed to have an understanding of the VCU Honor System and are required to:

- Agree to be bound by the Honor System policy and its procedures;
- Report suspicion or knowledge of possible violations of the Honor System;
- Support an environment that reflects a commitment to academic integrity;
- Answer truthfully when called upon to do so regarding Honor System cases, and,
- Maintain confidentiality regarding specific information in Honor System cases."

[View the Honor System](#) in its entirety. More information can also be found on the [Division of Student Affairs](#) website.

### **Students with Disabilities**

SECTION 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended require that VCU provides "academic adjustments" or "reasonable accommodations" to any student who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. To receive accommodations, students must request them by contacting the Disability Support Services Office on the Monroe Park Campus (828-2253) or the Division for Academic Success on the MCV campus (828-9782). More information is available at [Disability Support Services](#) or the [Division for Academic Success](#).

Any student who has a disability that requires an academic accommodation should schedule a meeting with the instructor at the student's earliest convenience. Additionally, if coursework requires the student to work in a lab environment, the student should advise the instructor or a department chairperson of any concerns that the student may have regarding safety issues related to a disability. Students should follow this procedure for all courses in the academic semester.

### **Statement on Military Short-Term Training or Deployment**

If military students receive orders for short-term training or deployment, they should inform and present their orders to Military Student Services and to their professor(s). For

further information on policies and procedures contact Military Services at 828-5993 or access the [corresponding policies](#).

### **Student Conduct in the Classroom**

According to the [Faculty Guide to Student Conduct in Instructional Settings](#), "The university is a community of learners. Students, as well as faculty, have a responsibility for creating and maintaining an environment that supports effective instruction. In order for faculty members (including graduate teaching assistants) to provide and students to receive effective instruction in classrooms, laboratories, studios, online courses, and other learning areas, the university expects students to conduct themselves in an orderly and cooperative manner." **Among other things, cell phones and beepers should be turned off while in the classroom.** Also, the university Rules and Procedures prohibit anyone from having "in his possession any firearm, other weapon, or explosive, regardless of whether a license to possess the same has been issued, without the written authorization of the President of the university..." For more information, visit the [VCU Insider online](#).

Eating in class is acceptable if it is a snack e.g. potato chips, candy bar, or a drink. Please do not bring a full course meal to class and expect to eat it. I do not allow the use of laptops, iPads, or any other computing device to be used during class unless absolutely necessary. However, if you are caught using it for Facebook, surf the internet, play games, anything that is not dealing with the class then you will lose the privilege of having the ability to use the device in the class for the rest of the semester.

Please no hats, caps, sunglasses, or any other headgear unless you need them for religious purposes ("bad hair days" are not a reason that I accept and this policy is for men and women). **Remove these items prior to entering the classroom even if you are early.** Please as much as possible—ladies do not wear revealing clothing that is either too short, too loose, too tight, etc. and gentlemen refrain from sagging your pants to show undergarments, wearing revealing clothing that is also too tight, too short, too loose, etc.

### **INCOMPLETE GRADES:**

An Incomplete grade is assigned when extenuating circumstances, such as illness, the death of a family member, or a family emergency, prevent a student from completing assignments and other course requirements by the end of the semester. An incomplete grade must be changed by the deadline specified on the college calendar or will be automatically changed to an "F." The removal of an "I" grade does not guarantee a passing grade.

**My professor often said, "The law of common courtesy has not yet been repealed." I hope that we will engage in many debates over the semester. I expect that we will all treat each other and each other's ideas with respect.**

### Schedule

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics &amp; Activities</b>	<b>Readings Due</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b>
08/22	Introductions What is African and African American Studies? What is a Diaspora?		
08/27	Introduction to African American Studies.	Ch. 1	
08/29	Introduction to African American Studies		
09/03	Human Genesis	Ch. 3	
09/05	Sundiata		
09/10	Africa @ Contact	Ch. 4	
09/12	Slavery	Ch. 5	Quiz 1
09/17	Colonization	Ch. 6	
09/19	Things Fall Apart		
09/24	Post-Slavery	Ch. 8	
09/26	Post-Slavery	Ch. 7	
10/01	Pan-Africanism	Ch. 10	
10/03	Decolonization/Independence	Ch. 9	Quiz 2
10/08	Review		
10/10	Midterm		
10/15	Contemporary Diaspora	Ch. 11	
10/17	No Class Fall Break		
10/22	Contemporary Diaspora	Ch. 12	
10/24	Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man		
10/29	Family	Ch. 20	
10/31	Family	Ch. 21	Quiz 3
11/05	African Women	Ch. 26	
11/07	Women of the Caribbean	Ch. 24	
11/12	African American Women	Ch. 25	
11/14	Blacker the Berry		
11/19	Health of the Diaspora	Ch. 27	

11/21		Quiz 4
11/26	No class	
11/28- 12/01	Thanksgiving Break	
12/03	Class wrap up	All outstanding class assignments are due
12/05	Review	
12/10	Final Exam Day	1pm-3:50pm

\*\*\*\*\*The Syllabus & Schedule is subject to change\*\*\*\*\*  
Some readings may be added or others may be taken away

