Is the continent of Africa the historical antecedent, and therefore, the intellectual pedestal of the Black Studies discipline? After all, albeit during tragic circumstances, Africa gave birth to the Black Diaspora that informs the discipline. An Introduction to African American and African Studies I (African Studies) interrogates the role that Africa plays in shaping Black Studies. From the original Pan Africanist writings of scholars such as 19th century scholars W.E.B DuBois to the more contemporary tripartite ideological perspectives on the study of Africa placing African Americans (and other African descendents), White Americans (and other Westerners) and continental Africans in separate schools of thought, the course explores the transformations and trajectories that constitute the study of Africa in relation to the Black Studies discipline.

In doing so, the course equally provides graduate students with the comprehensive knowledge base that informs the deep historicity, the cultural diversity and the political-economic complexity of the continent required for advanced research study of Africa by graduate students. We examine the works of Cheik Anta Diop and Tsehoane Keto to excavate the historical and intellectual roots of African-centered philosophies. We present the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism as historical events that have shaped modern Africa while also insightfully examining them from African perspectives and standpoints, using the works of Boubacar Barry, Walter Rodney, Frantz Fanon, and Joseph Inikori; we also read and view the original biographies of Kwame Nkrumah and Patrice Lumumba. We intellectually navigate the contours of Africa’s so-called, “postcolonial condition” by reviewing the classic works of Mudimbe and Mbembe; and the noted studies by African gender scholars, Amadiume, Oyewumi and Vera on African formations of gender difference and feminisms.

Political and economic issues constitute much of the current misrepresentation of Africa. As such, deploying the works of the likes of Nyerere, Mamdani, Grovogui, Makau, Adekeye and Zeleza, the course critically examines pertinent issues dominating African public and global affairs such as economic development, democracy and security albeit presenting what are these well-known Western ‘Africa’ policy signifiers through alternative, self-determined African-authored tropes and voices.
Required Books


Course Reader (Select Book Chapters and Journal Articles)


Mbiti, John *African Religions and Philosophy*: Heinemann, 1992


Groovgui, Siba N’Zatioula.*Sovereigns, Quasi Sovereigns and Africans* University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
Teaching and Research Method

The AAAS Core Curriculum and the Black Studies Disciplinary Teacher-Scholar

The course is a graduate seminar and scheduled in weekly 160 min sessions (two hours and fifty minutes). AL 829 (soon to be AAAS 829) is one of three of AAAS’ doctoral program’s core curriculum introductory seminars. Graduate student participants completing this course will become deeply knowledgeable about the academic study of Africa as well as in the prevailing issues that constitute the continent required for successful completion of the African American and African Studies general comprehensive exam.

The course will also prepare participating graduate students in research writing, development and design skills required for successful dissertation completion of a topic in African American and African Studies. The course is reading, writing and discourse intensive. Students are expected to read all of the selected chapters from a book a week, sometimes accompanied by multiple, select article or chapter readings compiled in a course reader. The importance of intensive and multiple reading is critical for the training of the interdisciplinary Black Studies teacher-scholar. Academic careers in the field require a deep and extensive knowledge base of the discipline for effective future research and teaching.

Seminar Format, Assignments and the Doctor of Philosophy Method of Knowledge Production

The seminar format will be structured around a thirty to forty-five minute background lecture by the professor whereas the remainder of the course time will be dominated by student discussion of the topical readings. Requiring students’ active discussion of the readings is a pedagogical tool consciously used by the professor to facilitate critical thinking about the course content’s topics. Participants will be expected to present their interpretations, analyses, summations, and contentions of the readings in a sustained, informed and scholarly manner. Students will earn up to 10 points for class participation. Sessions will also be digitally engaging by supplementing textual analysis with the audio and video enhancements necessary for the ethnic and area nature of Africana studies. There are many ways of knowing.

Students will submit weekly five-page response reading essays. Essays will be discussion facilitators that outline readings’ theses, themes, argument/s, method, and evidence linking these heuristic elements of the readings to the select weekly topic. Essays should also include author bios and regional contextualization where appropriate. You are required to submit a total of 13 essays – one at the close of each weekly session. Essays reflecting weeks 1-12 will be scored at 3 points per essay; Week 13’s essay will be scored at 4 points. Total weekly essay points constitute 40 points of your grade.

The twenty-five page minimum, final research essay will constitute 50 points of your total grade. Pick a topic (week 1 through 13) of your interest and write a research paper around a thesis linked to the topic. A word about the research method and the AAAS doctoral study is important consideration with regards to this assignment. There are a couple of things to note here. Firstly, AAAS works within the assumption that our academic enterprise is a ‘discipline’ reflected by the principles of the National Council of Black Studies (NCBS) as follows:

The National Council for Black Studies (NCBS) is the leading organization of Black Studies professionals in the world. For more than 30 years our members have been at the forefront of driving the development of Black/Africana Studies as a respected academic discipline. Our commitment to putting theory into practice, however, has also led us to the front lines of community issues throughout the African Diaspora. Our guiding philosophy is that education should engender both academic excellence and social responsibility. Our members include top scholars, community leaders and students focused on a variety of issues related to the African World experience (http://www.ncbsonline.org/about_ncbs)
Also review AAAS’ core curriculum statement where we define Black Studies/Africana Studies as a multi-disciplinary, theoretical and methodological academic study, consisting of an existing— but nascent— body of systematically and critically-derived knowledge about the political, economic and socio-cultural lived experiences of African descendant and African peoples and communities.

Secondly – and related to this point— is the fact that as producers of social and human knowledge, we belong to the community of scholarship that presumes a given method and that is governed by rules shared by the academy. While our core curriculum study of Black/Africana studies is interdisciplinary and while that core discipline aligns with multi-disciplines of which we ask you to select through ‘disciplinary specialization’ study; our PhD training must be guided by a broader, overarching, ‘scientific’ method. That is to say, our inquiry must be an observable evidence of reality (object or subject of study) that is underlay by a process of thinking and asking questions, a way to claim that we know something, a strategy for researchers to use to approach an inquiry and a mode to critically assess how evidence has been developed and used in reaching a conclusion (Hoover and Donovan, *The Elements of Social Science Thinking*, Wadsworth, 2004).

Neither our discipline’s penchant toward ‘interdisciplinarity’ nor ‘multidisciplinarity’ precludes our allegiance to the scientific method for doctoral study and dissertation research. Nor does our particular orientation toward community impact and engagement research preclude our recognition of the multi-dimensionality of all disciplinary genres of academic knowledge production. Eric Erickson (1974) refers to the multidimensionality of research in terms of its factuality (facts, evidence, verification, measurement, deduction), reality (perspective, subjectivity, induction) and actuality (praxis, participant observation research, policy-orientation).

While the cornerstone of our ‘methodology’ suggests that our discipline boldly underscores our moral objective to improve the quality of human life – the lives of Africana communities around the world— we also acknowledge that we are a part of an academic community that must produce communicable (expressed in clear terms), valid (measurable) and compelling (persuasive/logically-sound, knowledgeably-accurate, significant and relevant) knowledge in a formulaic manner. The African American and African Studies disciplinary method employs the fused, holistic, multidimensional approach to knowledge production.

Your final research papers need to reflect this process. You will need to formulate inquiries, problems, questions and/or theses and hypotheses that propose relationships between or among an array of complex variables, issues, concepts and sub-topics. You will need to test your problem formulation using a measurable method (this can vary from the humanities’ tendency to use speculative inquiry and/or theory induction, or textual/discourse analysis, to social science qualitative or quantitative method types). Your papers must use rigorous evaluative mechanisms to analyze and support your theses that will verify the accuracy of a deep and complex knowledge base; as well as present findings that are compelling (persuasive) and significant.
Assignments and Grading Structure

Assignments

1. Thirteen Response Reading Essays (3pts per essay, 4 for last essay) 40pts
2. Seminar Participation and Attendance 10pts
3. Final Research Paper/Due 12/15 (Thursday) 50pts
TOTAL POINTS 100pts

Grading Scale

1. at least 95 points - 4.0 2. at least 90 points - 3.5 3. at least 85 points - 3.0 4. at least 80 points - 2.5 5. at least 75 points - 2.0 6. at least 70 points - 1.5 7. at least 65 points - 1.0

Code of Conduct

** Full attendance and seminar participation is required. You will be penalized for unexcused absences.

** Late assignments are not encouraged; however, lose 1 point a day for up to two days for late assignments (a day begins 10 minutes after the assignment due date deadline)

** I’m sorry; I cannot accept emailed copies of assignments.

** Refer to the Student Handbook for Academic Honesty Policy

** You are first-year doctoral students; take advantage of my office hours. Much of your training form now on will be self-determined, self-styled and based on self-motivated performance. AAAS core faculty are your research facilitators. Call up the AAAS Office at 432-0869 to schedule an appointment Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 – 4:00 pm.
CALENDER OF EVENTS

State of the Discipline

Week 1: September 7th
Orientation and the Study of Africa


Week 2: September 14th
African Studies in Black Studies
Concerned CAS Students: Humanities Faculty Forum Statement, UCT, 25 February 2011
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1AQhxsyyIbo&feature=related

Mfundo Shabalala: Humanities Faculty Forum Statement, UCT, 25 February 2011
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ernNvqIqpx8&feature=related

Africa Day 2011 - 25 May
The story of Africa in the post-colonial African University Panel discussion chaired by acting vice-chancellor Professor Thandabantu Nhlapo
Sound: Full speech (43.4 mb)


Identity, Philosophy and Aesthetics

Week 3: September 21st
African-Centered Philosophies


Mbiti, John African Religions and Philosophy: Heinemann, 1992

Week 4: September 28th
African Philosophical Precepts: Foundations and Currents


Week 5: October 5th
Understanding Modern Africa thru Aesthetic Lenses


Huge Events: Slavery, Colonialism, and Nationalism

Week 6: October 12th
Slavery and Colonial Impact


Week 7: October 19th
African Nationalism and Pan Africanism


Gender Identity and Difference

Week 8: October 26th
African Gender Difference and Women of Zimbabwe


Vera, Yvonne *Nehanda*. Tsar Publications, 1999
Development and Underdevelopment

Week 9: November 2nd
African Economic Foundations and Alternatives


Recommended

Week 10: November 9th
Neoliberalism, Structural Adjustment and Aid Dependency Critique


Politics and International Relations

Week 11: November 16th
Democracy and Human Rights


No Class: November 23rd

THANKSGIVING BREAK – WORK ON RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSALS/BRING TO OFFICE HOURS AFTER BREAK; FINAL PAPERS DUE DECEMBER 16th
Week 13: November 30th
Africa in the Global Geopolitical Arena and African Views on the Rwanda Conflict

“An Inconvenient Genocide: Ethnic Cleansing and Racial Lynching in Libya” Dr. Maulana Karenga H-AFRO-AM@H-NET.MSU.EDU October 28, 2011

Walters, Ronald W. Pan Africanism and the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afro-centric Political Movements Wayne State University Press, 1993


Recommended


Grovgogui, Siba N’Zatioula. Sovereigns, Quasi Sovereigns and Africans University of Minnesota Press, 1996


Week 14: December 7th
Final Research Presentations