

1-1-1990

# Humanities 214: Introduction to Black Culture syllabus

Eastern Washington University. Africana Studies Program

John A. Hardin

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## Recommended Citation

Eastern Washington University. Africana Studies Program and Hardin, John A., "Humanities 214: Introduction to Black Culture syllabus" (1990). *Africana Studies Program Publications*. 16.  
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EASTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY  
BLACK STUDIES/HUMANITIES 214  
INSTRUCTOR. JOHN A HARDIN

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

INTRODUCTION TO BLACK CULTURE 5 credit hours (Crosslisted HUMN 214)  
An interdisciplinary survey of Black culture beginning with ancient African history and traditions through contemporary issues in the African American experience. Attention is given to basic principles of history, sociology, political science, economics and the arts in the study of the dynamics of the Black culture. (Satisfies the GUR, Humanities, List B, and the Cultural Diversity).

COURSE GOALS

- 1 To provide the student with a broad overview of Black culture in the United States, Caribbean and South America.
- 2 To develop a multidisciplinary understanding of the richness of Black culture.
- 3 To create a deeper appreciation for the contributions of Black culture to world civilization

COURSE OBJECTIVES.

1. Each student will be expected to demonstrate a working understanding of central concepts and philosophies found in the study of Black culture
2. Each student will be expected to read assigned materials and submit no less than four concise reaction papers relative to the assigned materials in Black culture
3. Each student will be expected to use basic English skills (minimum. English 100) in completing the four required reaction papers.

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

In a departure from most courses, there will be no examinations this quarter. Final grades will be determined by four reaction papers on assigned materials. These materials will consist of scholarly articles and materials located in the JFK Library. It is your responsibility to locate these

materials in the periodicals section or in some cases at the reserve desk. Each reaction paper will count as 25% of the grade with each paper receiving a maximum of 100 points. The total number of points (400) will be divided by four. This number will be compared to the attached scale to determine the final grade.

Attendance in class is required. Each student will be allowed no more than five class absences. Each absence thereafter will reduce total points earned by ten (10) points per day. There will be no exceptions. Roll will be taken daily to verify attendance.

Reaction papers can use the class discussion/presentations, the required reference text and other resources.

Reaction papers will be due according to the attached schedule. Papers received after the due date will lose ten (10) points for every day late.

Reaction papers must examine the following: 1. what did the assigned material describe and/or discuss and 2. provide an informed analysis of the main issues in the assigned material. Do not spend most of the paper summarizing the article. Analysis means intelligent and reasoned discussion on the article based upon what has been discussed in class and what you have read in the text. The minimum length for the reaction papers is two (2) pages typed double space.

#### REQUIRED REFERENCE TEXT.

Maulana Karenga. Introduction to Black Studies. Los Angeles: Kawaida Publications, 1984 (available at the campus bookstore or used copies from former students). Note: articles will not be assigned from the text but it will be helpful in writing your reaction papers.

#### EXTRA CREDIT.

Students wanting to complete extra credit may submit one additional reaction paper with a maximum value of thirty (30) points. This credit will be added to other points already earned. This is optional and should not be necessary for students making good progress in the course. This paper is due one calendar week before the last day of class.

#### REACTION PAPER DUE DATES.

First paper due: Friday of second week of classes.

Second paper due: Friday of fourth week of classes

Third paper due: Friday of eighth week of classes

Fourth paper due: Scheduled final exam period

The first reaction paper topic: "Outside of fulfilling a General University Requirement, why is it necessary to study Black Culture?" Do not give me what you think I want to read but rather your own thoughts and perspectives on the importance of Black Culture

ARTICLES FOR REACTION PAPERS FOR BLST/HUMN 214.

Giddings, Paula "The Women's Movement and Black Discontent," in When and Where I Enter (Bantam, 1984), pp. 299-324.

Karenga, Maulana. "Black Studies and the Problematic of Paradigm: The Philosophical Dimension," Journal of Black Studies 12(Spring 1988)1 1-8

Staples, Robert. "Reflections on the Black Family Future: The Implications for Public Policy," Western Journal of Black Studies 12(Spring 1988)1 19-27

Steele, Shelby "I'm Black, You're White, Who's Innocent?" Harper's (June 1988): 45-53

Taylor, Robert Joseph, Thornton, Michael C. and Chatters, Linda M. "Black Americans Perceptions of the Sociohistorical Role of the Church," Journal of Black Studies 18(December 1987)2: 123-138.

White, Barnetta McGhee "The Paper Trail: A Historical Exploration of the Black Family," Western Journal of Black Studies 12(Spring 1988)1 1-8.

Additional articles will be provided during the term. ALL ARTICLES USED FOR REACTION PAPERS MUST BE APPROVED BY THE INSTRUCTOR. I WILL NOT ACCEPT A REACTION PAPER ON AN UNAPPROVED ARTICLE.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the course, feel free to discuss them with me. My office is in Room 107, Monroe Hall, phone number 359-2205 or from Spokane 458-6276. Hours: 12:30 P.M. to 2:00 P.M. Monday through Friday

## SAMPLE REACTION PAPER

Leon F Litwack. "Trouble in Mind. The Bicentennial and the Afro-American Experience," Journal of American History 74(September 1987) 2 315-337

Leon Litwack discussed how the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution was viewed by Blacks. To put this celebration in context, he analyzed how Blacks in 1887 perceived the Centennial of the Consitution.

He argued that African-Americans then saw those events "as a white people s affair " This perception was particularly real since Blacks were lynched, disfranchised and deprived of their constitutional rights under the guise of the 'rule of law " One hundred years later, the president and members of Congress told the the American people the Constitution brought everyone "freedom and opportunity." This rhetoric effectively excluded three centuries of slavery and segregation which were regularly protected on constitutional grounds.

Thus, the Constitution's Centennial in 1887 became an indirect celebration of the legal tradition of white oppression of Blacks and other persons of color Using nineteenth century examples, Litwack described the resentment of common Black folk toward a legal system that overtly oppressed them

Litwack s citations also suggested that this resentment was not isolated nor repressed. Blacks fought against the legal structure both in and out of court. Those who achieved minor legal victories used them as precedents for larger ones. Those who used extralegal means were either imprisoned or were lynched by mobs under the proterction of local law enforcement officials. Again, white man s law reigned triumphant.

By the twentieth century, African-American scholar/activists such as W.E. B. DuBois and M.L. King publicly challenged these conditions. To these persons, the Constitution applied to all citizens and not to whites only. Their protests, coupled with two decades of civil rights protests in the 1950s and 1960s led to the ultimate downfall of legal or de jure segregation.

Yet, the United States all but ignored these individuals who forced the government to live up to the Constitution's ideal of "liberty for all." In the celebrations and speeches, slave rebels, abolitionists and civil rights activists were hardly mentioned as part of the Constitution's history.

This essay underscored the narrow vision of American political traditions. Rhetoric coming from this tradition painted a picture of proud colonials fighting British tyranny but said little of British actions perpetrated by slaveholders in the name of law. Thus, the article asked the reader to remember the Blacks and whites who fought to make the constitution live up to its promises of justice and freedom for all.

The only flaw in the article was the absence of suggestions of how we should remember these unsung protectors of the Constitution's moral vision. In the hoopla over the Constitution's Bicentennial, few took time out to mention these persons or even consider their role. This weakness in the article is a minor one and does not detract from his central thesis. Overall, his analysis was lucid and compelled the reader to rethink how great--or not so great--the Constitution has served the U. S. in the last two hundred years.

# GRADING SCALE

**% of Points Earned**

**Corresponding  
Final Grade Point**

100	-----	4.0
99	-----	4.0
98	-----	3.9
97	-----	3.9
96	-----	3.8
95	-----	3.8
94	-----	3.7
93	-----	3.7
92	-----	3.6
91	-----	3.6
90	-----	3.5
89	-----	3.5
88	-----	3.4
87	-----	3.4
86	-----	3.3
85	-----	3.3
84	-----	3.2
83	-----	3.2
82	-----	3.1
81	-----	3.1
80	-----	3.0
79	-----	2.9
78	-----	2.8
77	-----	2.7
76	-----	2.6
75	-----	2.5
74	-----	2.4
73	-----	2.3
72	-----	2.2
71	-----	2.1
70	-----	2.0
69	-----	1.9
68	-----	1.8
67	-----	1.7
66	-----	1.6
65	-----	1.5
64	-----	1.4
63	-----	1.3
62	-----	1.2
61	-----	1.1
60	-----	1.0
59	-----	9
58	-----	8
57	-----	7
56	-----	6
55	-----	5
54	-----	4
53	-----	3
52	-----	2
51	-----	1