Black Hermeneutics

Professor: April L. Kinkead
Email: akinkead@uta.edu
Office Location: 518 Carlisle Hall
Office Number: 817-272-0966
Class Meetings: MWF PH 306 9-9:50 a.m.
Office Hours: MW 11 a.m. - 12 p.m.; F 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Required Texts:


4) Race Matters Author: Cornel West ISBN: 0-679-74986-1 Publisher: Vintage Books

Course Description: This course explores, examines, and analyzes Black hermeneutical practices as particular ways of interpreting the world informed by historically and culturally-specific Black American experiences. We will read and discuss Western hermeneutic theories as well as specifically Black hermeneutic theories to establish a theoretical foundation for discussing ways of interpreting. Excerpts from novels, poetry, speeches, sermons, biography, film, and pop culture will provide opportunities for examining Black hermeneutics in productive practice. In addition to examining what these texts reveal about Black ways of interpreting, we will attempt to understand how language creates, reveals, and conceals perceptions and, subsequently, identities. The primary goal for this course is to investigate Black hermeneutics as a cultural phenomenon that addresses the "race" question while at the same time desiring to move beyond conceptual limitations of “racial” identities and move towards a colorblind society.

Course Goals: There are six interdependent goals this course will attempt to accomplish this semester: to introduce students to several genres of Black literature; to understand the relationship between experience and interpretation; to allow students to connect reading to their own experiences through reflection; to provide students with a general understanding of black hermeneutic practices and their significance to literary productions; to enable students to enjoy, analyze, and write critically about literary texts; and, to address complex issues (such as race) productively and respectively. In order to
accomplish these goals, students will be asked to read assigned texts and participate fully in class discussions, assignments, and exams. The atmosphere of the class will depend greatly upon student willingness and eagerness to participate.

**Attendance and Drop Policy:** Attendance and participation are important. Frequent absences will negatively impact your grade. It is extremely important that you read the assigned material **before** coming to class, as class discussions and activities will depend upon your experiences with the readings. Participation grades will be calculated according to WebCT and any **impromptu in-class** assignments. **No** in-class assignments can be made-up if missed.

At times there will be impromptu writing assignments and/or quizzes in class. Missed assignments may **not** be made up and **no late work** will be accepted **without official documentation explaining the necessary absence (i.e. doctor’s note).** All assignments will be turned in via WebCT unless otherwise instructed. There will be a specific timeframe in which you will turn in assignments and take exams; late assignments without official documentation will not be accepted – NO EXCEPTIONS. Any communication outside of class will be done via WebCT email; therefore, you need to check this email daily. If you miss class, for whatever reason, you are **responsible** for ensuring you are current on what you missed. Oftentimes there are discussions in class that result in changes being made to assignments; you are responsible for being aware of these changes if you miss class – I may not always have time to change the WebCT Course Content page in time to reflect these changes. So, make friends with someone reliable in class and/or utilize your access to WebCT to get what you missed by emailing other students and/or me. If you are unfamiliar with WebCT, contact the help desk for assistance immediately.

If you must drop the course, do so officially through your advisor. If you fail to attend class and/or do not complete assignments and fail to drop, you will fail the semester. I cannot drop you!!

**To assist me with learning your name, please have a piece of paper with your first name on it, folded, and setting on your desk so that I may see it clearly**

**Course Requirements:** There will be daily readings and discussions, weekly WebCT* writing assignments and/or quizzes, in-class writing, in-class pop-quizzes, mid-semester and final exams (short answer), and three brief essays.

**WebCT Daily Assignments:** As a major part of your 20% daily/WebCT grade, you are expected to write a 300-500 word Summary/Analysis for each reading assignment. This summary/analysis is to be completed by midnight before the scheduled time to discuss that particular reading. On WebCT, you will submit each Summary/Analysis on the Discussion Board under the appropriate reading/date. The “Subject” line will be your first and last name. You are free to read and comment on one another’s, but are not required to do so. The Summary/Analysis will be graded on your effort to understand the readings. I acknowledge that some texts will be more difficult than others to understand, which is why we will discuss them in class. The purpose of this assignment, however, is to help you prepare for the class discussion. By having to write about the readings first, you will be better prepared to discuss them in class and feel more confident speaking about the readings with others.
**Course Evaluation and Final Grade:** All in-class and WebCT assignments [including impromptu writing, quizzes (each reading assignment will have a quiz on WebCT), summary/analysis, and discussions] will count for 20 percent of your final grade. The two exams will each count for 25 percent of your final grade; and, the three essays will count 10 percent (each) of your final grade.

**Rewrites:** Students may rewrite 1 paper in the semester. To request a rewrite, you must schedule a conference with me to discuss your paper. If your request is accepted and you rewrite an essay, you must provide the original essay with your own highlighted comments as to what needs revision along with the rewritten version. You also must make an appointment with the Writing Center and provide proof of your WC tutoring when you turn in your rewrite. A rewrite replaces the original grade, unless it is worse; then, we will have another conference during my office hours.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and the letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 93112: The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled American with Disabilities Act [ADA], pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

As a faculty member, I am required by law to provide “reasonable accommodation” to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty at the beginning of the semester and providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels.

**Academic Dishonesty:** It is the philosophy of the University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University.

“Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or an attempt to commit such acts.” (Regents’ Rules and Regulations, Part One, Chapter VI, Section 3, Subsection 3.2, Subdivision 3.22)

**Offensive Behavior** is unacceptable in any academic environment, and students are expected to maintain an acceptable level of decorum at all times. Although some of the subject matter we will cover may be considered offensive to some, we will maintain respect for one another in the classroom. This means sexual harassment, civil rights violations, or public rudeness will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Students are expected to support the learning purposes of this classroom by carefully listening attentively to other speakers, providing helpful and respectful feedback, and devoting time to speaking and writing on topics and issues that promote collective learning goals.

**Technology Rules:** NO CELL PHONES, PDAs, iPODS, MP3s, and/or LAPTOPS. As a parent, I recognize there may be people outside of class who need to contact you – if this is the case, enter class with your mobile on silent and if you receive an important call - leave the classroom to take your call if you must. If you need to leave for any reason, please excuse
yourself respectfully and exit quietly. Appropriate classroom etiquette is expected and will be enforced at all times. If you cannot refrain from using such devices in class, you will be asked to leave and will not receive credit for that day.

**Student Support: The Writing Center**

The Writing Center, Room 411 in the Central Library, offers tutoring for any writing you are assigned while a student at UT-Arlington. During Spring 2010, Writing Center hours are 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Thursday; 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Friday; and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday and Sunday. You may schedule appointments online by following directions available at www.uta.edu/owl/appointments, by calling 817 272-2601, or by visiting the Writing Center. If you come to the Writing Center without an appointment, you will be helped on a first-come, first-served basis as tutors become available. Writing Center tutors are carefully chosen and trained, and they can assist you with any aspect of your writing, from understanding an assignment to revising an early draft to polishing a final draft. However, the Writing Center is not an editing service; tutors will not correct your grammar or rewrite your assignment for you, but they will help you become a better editor of your own writing. I encourage each of you to use the Writing Center.

If you find yourself falling behind or struggling with the course – see me during my office hours or contact me via WebCT email. I am here to help you learn, but only you know if you are willing to take advantage of my assistance.

**Reading and Assignment Schedule**

*Dates and assignments are tentative and subject to change – you are responsible for keeping up with these changes*

You should have the assignments **completed** by the dates listed. These are not the dates they are assigned but **due dates**.

*Each assigned reading requires you to write a summary/response on WebCT before we discuss the assignment in class.*

Jan. 21 Introduction to course


20 *Hermeneutics* pgs. 3-45

22 *Hermeneutics* pgs. 46-71

25 *Hermeneutics* pgs. 75-97

27 *Hermeneutics* pgs. 98-123

29 *Hermeneutics* pgs. 124-161

Feb. 1 *Hermeneutics* pgs. 162-217

3 *Hermeneutics* pgs. 221-253
5  *Understanding African American Rhetoric* (excerpts provided)

8  MUSIC TBA (see WebCT); **Essay #1**

10  Slave Narratives (See WebCT for reading assignment and link)

12  *Tribal Talk* pgs. 3-52

15  *Tribal Talk* pgs. 53-106

17  *Tribal Talk* pgs. 107-136

19  *Tribal Talk* pgs. 137-170

22  *Tribal Talk* pgs. 171-194

24  **Title: W. E. B. Du Bois's Evolving Africana Philosophy of Education**
    Author(s): Reiland Rabaka
    Publisher(s): Sage Publications, Inc.

26  **Katie's Canon** 9-46

Mar 1  **Katie's Canon** 47-76

3  **Katie's Canon** 77-112

5  **Katie's Canon** 113-135

8  **Katie's Canon** 136-170

10  VIDEO TBA (see WebCT for assignment and link)

12  Midterm Exam on WebCT (do not meet in class)

Mar. 15-19  **Spring Break**

22  **Feminism and Hermeneutics** by Georgia Warnke
    Published by: Indiana University Press

24  **hooks Killing Rage** TBA (see WebCT)

26  **Title: Du Bois's Humanistic Philosophy of Human Sciences**
    Author(s): Lewis R. Gordon
    Study of African American Problems: W. E. B. Du Bois's Agenda, Then and Now (Mar.,
    2000), pp. 265-280
    Publisher(s): Sage Publications, Inc. in association with the American
    Academy of Political and Social Science

29  **Title: Race and Ideology: African-American Images in Television Advertising**
    Author(s): Julia M. Bristor, Renée Gravois Lee, Michelle R. Hunt
    Publisher(s): American Marketing Association
31  **Essay #2**; Title: Race and Revisability  
   Author(s): Richard A. Jones  
   Publisher(s): Sage Publications, Inc.  

Apr. 2 Title: Signing in the Flesh: Notes on Pragmatist Hermeneutics  
Author(s): Dmitri N. Shalin  
Source: Sociological Theory, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Sep., 2007), pp. 193-224  
Publisher(s): American Sociological Association  

5 Title: Black Theological Ethics: A Bibliographical Essay  
Author(s): J. Deotis Roberts Sr.  
Publisher(s): Blackwell Publishing  

7 Title: Black Theology in American Religion  
Author(s): James H. Cone  
Publisher(s): Oxford University Press  

9 Title: Martin and Malcolm on Nonviolence and Violence  
Author(s): James H. Cone  
Publisher(s): Clark Atlanta University  

12 MLK speech [http://www.mlkonline.net/progress.html](http://www.mlkonline.net/progress.html)

14 Malcolm X [http://www.malcolm-x.org/speeches/spc_12__62.htm](http://www.malcolm-x.org/speeches/spc_12__62.htm)

16 Malcolm X [http://www.malcolm-x.org/speeches/spc_021465.htm](http://www.malcolm-x.org/speeches/spc_021465.htm)

19 *Race Matters* pgs. XIII-13

21 *Race Matters* pgs. 17-50

23 *Race Matters* pgs. 51-90

26 *Race Matters* pgs. 91-116

28 *Race Matters* pgs. 117-159

30 VIDEO TBA (see WebCT)

May 3 TBA

5 TBA

7 **Essay #3**

8-13 Final Exam Week (See WebCT for Due date/time)