AS.362 (CENTER FOR AFRICANA STUDIES)

AS.362.102. Freshman Seminar: Anti-Racism 101. 3 Credits.
what is Anti-Racism? How do we identify racism’s presence and effects, and how do we direct societal and civic resources to end it? In this Freshmen Seminar, students will learn from a series of faculty experts and invited guests about the history, workings, and legacies of racism. They’ll also study present-day and past approaches attempted and theorized to abolish racism in the modern world.
Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

AS.362.109. Introduction to African American Literature- Part II. 3 Credits.
This course will offer students an introduction to the central novels, plays, short stories, essays and poetry that have constituted African American Literature from 1930-1980. By focusing on representative works that span each of the major periods from the Harlem Renaissance to the Black Arts Movement, we will continue to consider the question of race and representation. How does one represent the race? And, for whom should black authors write -- a white audience in order to change their minds about black people, or to black people for their pleasure and edification? Over the course of the semester, we will trace the various ways early to late-20th century black writers sometimes borrowed from earlier literary traditions and, at other times, developed new ones. In addition, we will hone in on the major debates and central texts that have come to define African American Literature and explore how it has long served as a creative, political, and intellectual enterprise.
Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

AS.362.111. Introduction to African American Studies. 3 Credits.
This is the gateway class to the study of African American life, culture, politics and history in the United States and the Caribbean. African American Studies is a multi-disciplinary field of study that includes history, social sciences, literature and the arts. This academic discipline is often taught under parallel terms emphasizing related geographies and identifying concepts: Black Studies, Afro-American Studies, Africana Studies, Pan-African Studies and African Diaspora Studies. Unlike every other modern academic discipline in the college, African American Studies was founded because of a social and political revolution. The class has two purposes, operating in tandem: (1) provide students with a generous historical, political and cultural overview of the lives of African descendants in the western hemisphere, but principally in North America; (2) explicitly address the problem of regularized systemic inequality in American society as a response to and an attempt to dominate a core nugget of identity difference that is the operative mechanism in black protest, resistance and revolt. This is a difference that includes, but is not limited by or reducible to morphology, culture, history, and ontology. We accept as an operating principle that an inquiry into an enslaved group of nonwestern human beings marked by difference cannot rely solely on the western episteme for its excavation. Thus, we will examine a body of diverse evidence during the semester, works of literature, history, sociology, political science, music and film. The course requirements include essays, examinations, and presentations.
Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

AS.362.112. Introduction to Africana Studies. 3 Credits.
This course introduces students to the field of Africana Studies. It focuses on the historical experience, intellectual ideas, theories, and cultural production of African-descended people. We will consider how people of the black diaspora remember and encounter Africa. We will explore, too, how such people have lived, spoken, written, and produced art about colonialism and enslavement, gender and mobility, violence and pleasure. This course will be thematically organized and invite you to center your own stories about black people within your understanding of the modern world and its making.
Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

AS.362.115. Introduction to Police and Prisons. 3 Credits.
This introductory course will examine policing and prisons in the United States and beyond, with a focus on racial inequality. It will consist of three parts. First, we will define key concepts in police and prison studies. Then, we will explore the contemporary state of prisons and policing in the United States and look at debates around the rise of “mass incarceration” and aggressive forms of policing in the final third of the 20th century. Third, we will explore policing and prison in other parts of the globe in the contemporary moment, highlighting similarities and differences from the U.S. case. What can studying the instruments of social control in other societies reveal about our own? Students will develop an understanding of major trends, keywords, and debates in the literature on policing and prisons, with particular reference to race and racism.
Area: Humanities

AS.362.118. Cutting Through the Gaze: An Introduction to Social Justice Cinema. 2 Credits.
This course will introduce students to the fundamentals of community-engaged documentary filmmaking with a focus on both theory and practice. It will examine documentary filmmaking as an educational tool for raising social- and racial-justice issues from an African diasporic and global perspective. The course is taught by award-winning professional documentary filmmakers. Students will produce their own 3-5 minute film or audio podcast. Students will select their documentary film topic, conduct their own research, and move from pre-production into production. No prior experience in filmmaking is required for this course.
Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

AS.362.123. Introduction to African American Literature (Part 1). 3 Credits.
This course will survey African American Literature from the 19th century to the late 20th century. We will turn to prose, poetry, and drama to explore the various ways black writers have engaged U.S. culture, history, and politics.
Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

Writing Intensive
AS.362.160. Land, Labour and Environmental Rights and Struggles in Contemporary Africa. 3 Credits.

‘Africa rising’ has become an influential, albeit contested, narrative used by institutions like the International Monetary Fund and World Economic Forum to describe the rapid economic growth in 21st century Africa. This rapid ‘economic growth has been accompanied by another type of ‘Africa Rising’ – a mushrooming of social protest and popular uprisings across the continent. The course will introduce important theoretical perspectives, debates, and examples to equip students to critically examine contemporary social dynamics through the interconnected themes of land, labor and environmental rights and struggles that have gripped the African continent. What has given rise to these awakenings? Who are the actors involved in these actions? What are their demands and strategies? What lessons does it hold for social movement theory and development more broadly? The first section focuses on land reclamation movements, the new wave of ‘land grabs’ and responses from below. The second section presents the role of labour movements and its intersection with popular uprisings. The third section considers responses from communities and movements to the ecological destruction and climate change.

Area: Humanities

AS.362.201. African American Poetry and Poetics. 3 Credits.

In this course, we will follow the development of black poetry primarily as it has evolved in the United States. Beginning with the first published African American writers of the eighteenth century and ending with several important poets writing and performing today, we will consider the shape of the African American poetic tradition as commonly anthologized and as defined by our own theoretically-informed readings of the assigned literature. Attention will be given to both canonical and neglected literary movements and groups. Readings will include poetry and essays by Frances E.W. Harper, James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, Amiri Baraka, Harryette Mullen, Tracie Morris, and others.

AS.362.203. Passing in American Culture. 3 Credits.

This course will examine film and literary narratives of “passing” in 20th century America. We will study texts that feature people who cross social boundaries of race, class, sexuality, and gender, and consider what “passing” reveals about American social mobility.

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

AS.362.207. Race and public policy in comparative perspective. 3 Credits.

This course will explore the relationship between racial inequality, racial politics, and policy-making in the western world, particularly as it concerns the fight for equality by people of African descent in the US, Canada, Britain, and France. It will cover historical and contemporary struggles over policy, beginning with the African-American civil rights movement, the ensuing War on Poverty and War on Drugs, and followed by contemporary debates over immigration, racial segregation, poverty and racial economic inequality across the four countries. We will take insights from theory and empirical research to study the role that racial constructs and politics play in policy designs, contests over power and resources, electoral representation, public opinion, social movements, and political change. Through case studies of policies aimed at racial inequality (e.g., affirmative action, police reform, urban revitalization), we will examine why and under what circumstances they arise, what form they take, and in what ways they alleviate or reproduce racial inequality. These questions will be considered in light of the broader impact of neoliberalism on normative ideas about policy, race, and inequality.

Area: Humanities

AS.362.216. The politics of contemporary black film. 3 Credits.

Over the past few years films such as Black Panther, Get Out, and Black KKKlansman have been both critical and economic successes, significantly changing how we think of “black films” as a genre. What do these films tell us about what it means to be black at this specific moment in time? How is what these films tell us shaped by how they are produced? How do the circulation of concepts like “Wakanda Forever!” shape political imaginations? When we watch these films how are our own ideas change? As a particularly powerful form of popular culture, film not only entertains, but it educates, and in some instances propagandizes. This is no less true of black films than it is of non-black ones. In this class we will examine a range of recent popular black films with an eye to examining the politics of their production, circulation, and consumption.

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

AS.362.219. Freshman Seminar: Black Narratives and the Archive. 3 Credits.

This course will explore the various ways black people have narrated stories. From the slave narrative to fiction, biography to oral history, we will consider the relationship between historical events and the stories that people tell about those events. Where does history and imagination meet in the telling? How does one weave together story material to give it shape? While we will spend the first half of the semester engaging published and more popular narratives about black life, the second half of the course will focus on interviewing and archiving the stories of black workers and staff at JHU. What kinds of stories do they tell? How do they tell them? What do their stories help us understand about the past? Ultimately, this course will concern itself with what it means to be black and the various ways everyday people and artists alike have attempted to narrate their experiences in both writing and oral forms.

Area: Humanities

AS.362.271. Hip Hop Culture: From the Boogie Down to Black Lives Matter. 3 Credits.

Hip hop has become one of the most influential youth cultural movements of the past 40 years. It has moved from being a geographically-isolated African American and Puerto Rican musical scene to influencing every aspect of American and international youth culture, including music, visual culture, language, and politics. How did hip hop develop? Where did it come from, who made it, and why? What do the images and messages of hip hop culture mean, how has it changed over time? How is what these films tell us shaped by how they are produced? How do these films tell us about what it means to be black at this specific moment in time? How is what these films tell us shaped by how they are produced? How do the circulation of concepts like “Wakanda Forever!” shape political imaginations? When we watch these films how are our own ideas change? As a particularly powerful form of popular culture, film not only entertains, but it educates, and in some instances propagandizes. This is no less true of black films than it is of non-black ones. In this class we will examine a range of recent popular black films with an eye to examining the politics of their production, circulation, and consumption.

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

AS.362.301. Black Women Writers. 3 Credits.

This course will introduce students to a variety of works written by black women of the Diaspora with a focus on the U.S. We will consider how women have theorized power, engaged history, and creatively imagined both the past and the present.

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

Writing Intensive
AS.362.305. Black Periodical Studies. 3 Credits.
This course explores the ways in which nineteenth- and twentieth-century black periodical culture fostered (and, at times, hampered) the literary and cultural production of the African diaspora. Authors will likely include Frederick Douglass, “Ethiop (William J. Wilson),” Frances E.W. Harper, Pauline Hopkins, W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, Richard Bruce Nugent, and others.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.362.311. Black Utopias. 3 Credits.
In this course, we will read literary and historical texts that present visions of black utopia. Authors include “Ethiop” (William J. Wilson), Marcus Garvey, Octavia Butler, Toni Morrison, and others.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.362.315. Black Against Empire. 3 Credits.
This course will examine the confrontation of Black social movements with imperialism in the twentieth century. How, we will ask, have key Black internationalist thinkers conceptualized and defined diaspora, capitalism, imperialism, war, and the global? What have been the effects of war and repression, as well as economic growth and globalization, on Black internationalism? Readings may include texts by W.E.B. Du Bois, Angela Y. Davis, Frantz Fanon, Ashley Farmer, Claudia Jones, Robin D.G. Kelley, Claude McKay, Huey P. Newton, Walter Rodney, Malcolm X, etc. Students will complete a research paper on a topic of their own choosing related to Black internationalism in the twentieth century.
Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences
Writing Intensive

AS.362.412. Black Political Thought. 3 Credits.
This course examines how modern black political thought emerged through a series of critical engagements with Enlightenment ideas about universalism, progress, the authority of reason, and the foundations of citizenship. Course readings include texts by W. E. B. Du Bois, Angela Davis, James Boggs, Frantz Fanon, bell hooks, and others.
Writing Intensive

AS.362.413. African American Representations in the Western. 3 Credits.
The course will investigate American cinematic representations of African Americans, slavery (and more specifically its absence), the Civil War, and racial formation along the United States’ southwestern frontier in films produced from the 1950s through the contemporary period. The course closely examines American cinematic fantasies of the western frontier, frontier violence and the desire to escape or erase the tensions of race and slavery that have deeply permeated the American cultural consciousness, strongly shaping the production of American masculine ideals. The course will also take decided note of the national shift from liberal “Great Society Programs” of the 1960s to the conservative “neoliberal” social and cultural ideals in the 1980s and 1990s. Our purpose is to consider the organization and reformation of hegemonic power by way of the complex morality play the western film evokes, typically considering the interstitial geographies between blackness and whiteness, civilization and savagery, belonging and alienation, and metropolis and colonial outpost. We will privilege in our discussions the contested frontiers of racial dominion. Films include “Buck and the Preacher,” “The Battle of Algiers,” “Sgt. Rutledge,” and “Django Unchained.”
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.362.510. Senior Honors in Africana Studies I. 3 Credits.
The first semester of Senior Honors in Africana Studies, conducted as an Independent Study. Interested students should submit an application to the CAS Director of Undergraduate Studies.
Prerequisite(s): You must request Independent Academic Work using the Independent Academic Work form found in Student Self-Service: Registration &gt; Online Forms.
Writing Intensive

AS.362.511. Senior Honors in Africana Studies II. 3 Credits.
The second semester of Senior Honors in Africana Studies, conducted as an Independent Study. Only students who have successfully completed AS.362.510 Senior Honors In Africana Studies I will be allowed to register.
Prerequisite(s): You must request Independent Academic Work using the Independent Academic Work form found in Student Self-Service: Registration &gt; Online Forms.
Writing Intensive

AS.362.590. Independent Study for Africana Studies. 3 Credits.
Prerequisite(s): You must request Independent Academic Work using the Independent Academic Work form found in Student Self-Service: Registration &gt; Online Forms.
Writing Intensive