

AS.362 (CENTER FOR AFRICANA STUDIES)

Courses

AS.362.102. Anti-Racism 101. 3 Credits.

What is Anti-Racism? How do we identify racism's presence and effects, and how do we direct social and civic resources to end it? In this Freshman 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 course introduces students to the interdisciplinary field of African American Studies, with attention to the literature, film, culture, history, and politics of black life in the United States. Our reading list will likely include texts by David Walker, Frederick Douglass, Frances E.W. Harper, Sutton Griggs, W.E.B. Du Bois, James Baldwin, Amiri Baraka, Toni Morrison, and others.

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.

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.362.119. Abolition and the University. 3 Credits.

This course explores “critical university studies” through the lens of abolitionist thought, from W.E.B. DuBois to Ruth Wilson Gilmore. It historicizes universities’ growth within U.S. cities during the twentieth century.

Writing Intensive

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.362.140. Blackstorytelling: Public Health in the Black World. 3 Credits.

What about performance offers a unique opportunity to learn from and with communities? How might dramatic performance be used to share information while learning from an audience? This course examines the work and research of young artists from Liberia, West Africa who used street theatre to teach best practices for prevention during the Ebola crisis and considers how their use of dialogical performance contributed to critical knowledge which iteratively informed interventions throughout their awareness campaign. This community engaged course connects public health education efforts in Africa to community health education in Baltimore through the Blackstorytelling tradition with local expert Janice the Griot. Course co-educator and artist Janice the Griot Green will share her firsthand experiences and guide the class through the principles of Blackstorytelling for community change. Students will design public performance projects around local-global community-based concerns using the tools they have learned. In partnership with the Great National Blacks in Wax Museum in Baltimore, students will develop performance-based public health messaging drawing on their collection to support community outreach curricular materials development. This performance work will be created collaboratively in workshops during class and in team meetings. Public health researchers who are looking for innovative ways to share their data will gain insights into this experimental ethnographic method and practitioners who want to offer their communities ways to connect best practices to lived experience will develop new pedagogical tools. This is a Community Engagement course in partnership with the Center for Social Concern.

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

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.362.204. Anti-Black Racism and Black Freedom Struggles: History, Theory, and Culture. 3 Credits.

In Anti-Black Racism and Black Freedom Struggles: History, Theory, and Culture, students will learn about key historical, intellectual, and political aspects of white supremacy as a system or racial domination, and anti-black racism as a central feature of that global system. This class will explore the historical forms that white supremacy has taken—from colonialism and plantation slavery to Jim Crow, gentrification, and mass incarceration—racial ideologies, and how modern political systems have hinged on racial oppression. Most important, we will explore how black people have responded to the structures and ideologies of white supremacy, their thinking about freedom, being, and rights, and their efforts to fit into the worlds in which they found themselves, to improve those societies, and those projects that sought radical alternatives to the an anti-black world.

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

AS.362.211. Justice and the Healing Arts Summer Institute. 1 Credit.

This summer institute is a week long opportunity that takes place abroad with a theme focused on the healing arts. Grounding this theme is the pursuit of reparatory justice in the Rastafari faith. The summer school will integrate learning activities with existing community projects, for instance, the School of Vision and Rastafari Indigenous Village. Students will study Rastafari as an African-centered ethos, inclusive of culture and economic sustainability.

Area: Humanities

AS.362.216. The Politics of Black Cultural Production. 3 Credits.

Rather than being a niched form of popular culture, black music, films, and art has in some ways become synonymous with American culture. These productions and the workers associated with them have been used to sell everything from life insurance to computer chips. But accompanying these cultural productions are a whole host of questions regarding racial authenticity, the reproduction of urban space, and various gender/class dynamics, that have gone relatively understudied. In this class we will seek to trace the politics of the production, circulation, and consumption of black cultural production.

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

Writing Intensive

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 our world, and who cares? We will approach these questions by delving into the historical, aesthetic, socioeconomic, and political dimensions of hip hop culture. Classes will historically explore specific themes, either examining issues that hip hop has dealt with (e.g., police brutality) or employing theoretical frameworks that we can use to help us think more critically about hip hop (e.g., subcultural theory).

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

AS.362.309. Performing the Archive 2022: 200 Years of US-Liberia Migration. 3 Credits.

This seminar will explore some of the pivotal historical and contemporary connections between the US and Liberia since the first Black American settlers arrived in West Africa with the American Colonization Society in 1822. This course asks: What are implications of these stories of migration and reception for how we make sense of global anti-Blackness in the contemporary moment? How does performance provoke new questions about shared histories of those impacted by colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade? Why is a more in-depth understanding of 19th century Black political thought and the precolonial West African indigenous category necessary for developing theory on the political economy of race today? Through the lens of performance studies, students will analyze the documents in the American Colonization Society archive, to reimagine these early encounters as informed by historical documentation including folklore and pan-Africanist theory. Through exploring a range of historical and contemporary materials that center the problematic "indigenous/settler" binary, students will engage in a dramaturgical process which presents powerful possibilities for unlearning historical misrepresentations. In particular, students will develop theater-based projects that interrogate the spatio-temporal connections between the stories of both, free Blacks and those who were enslaved in Maryland and manumitted to go to Liberia, and the contemporary politics of Liberia-US migration.

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

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.362.318. Liberation in the African Diaspora. 3 Credits.

This course explores the historical, theoretical, and political question of liberation in the African diaspora from the period of enslavement up to the current era. We will consider three major themes: enslavement, marronage, and freedom; Pan-Africanism and anti-colonialism; Black Power and national liberation. We will examine how African peoples conceptualized freedom and liberation in each period, the major organizations and intellectuals who framed them, and how popular activity developed and informed all three (ideas, organizations, and intellectuals). Some of the questions taken up include: How did enslaved Africans conceptualize freedom? Did their ideas and activities merely extend western notions of liberty and freedom, or did they develop distinct conceptions of freedom, rights, and humanity? Why, in the early Twentieth Century, did African peoples around the world pursue pan-Africanism as a political philosophy? How do class, nationality, gender, and sexuality inform such movements? Did national liberation struggles from the 1950s through the 1970s in Africa and the Caribbean bring about fundamental changes to those societies or merely replicate colonial regimes? What connections existed between national liberation movements in Africa and the Caribbean, and Civil Rights and Black Power in the United States and England?

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

Writing Intensive

AS.362.335. Unlocking Knowledge: Theorizing Prison from the Inside. 3 Credits.

What can we learn about mass incarceration, and social life in the USA more broadly, when we listen to incarcerated people themselves? This course centers the voices, experiences, and expertise of the incarcerated and will combine scholarly readings on life inside prisons with a range of writings by incarcerated people. Topics of discussion may include censorship, rehabilitation, Covid-19, solitary confinement, sexuality, racism, etc. Students will learn to probe primary-source collections to amplify silenced and overlooked voices, while completing a multi-stage research project. Prior course experience on mass incarceration preferred.

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

Writing Intensive

AS.362.402. Arts and Social Justice Practicum. 3 Credits.

This course introduces students to concepts of social justice and practices of community-engaged artmaking. It also provides students an opportunity to explore the history and legacies of the Black Arts Movement, and contemporary intersections of art and social justice in Baltimore City. Local artists and scholars will share their expertise using art to challenge social injustice. In turn, students will examine their personal creative practices and how they can be used to create and advocate for change. Throughout the semester, students will develop individual art projects that respond to course topics and are rooted in the principles and process of social practice art.

Area: Humanities

AS.362.501. Independent Study. 1 - 3 Credits.

This course is available to students who wish to pursue selected, special work that may not be included in the Center's other courses.

Prerequisite(s): You must request Independent Academic Work using the Independent Academic Work form found in Student Self-Service: Registration, Online Forms.

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, 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, Online Forms.

Writing Intensive