**AWS 4980: Seminar in Africana-World Studies**

**“The New Racism: Racial Violence, Criminality and Blackness”**

**Sprig 2015**

*“Racism is a much more clandestine, much more hidden kind of phenomenon, but at the same time it's perhaps far more terrible than it's ever been.” - Angela Davis*

*“There's a lot more hypocrisy than before. Racism has gone back underground.” - Richard Pryor*

*“Seems to me that the institutions that function in this country are clearly racist, and that they're built upon racism.” - Stokely Carmichael*

*“We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality.” – Martin Luther King, Jr.*

**Course Description:**

The murder of Trayvon Martin, and the resulting verdict in the case, ushered in a new era of law and order in the United States. Martin’s murder became the first widely acknowledged murder in a long string of murders of Black and Latino men and women. The common thread within each incident has been the perceived threat and criminality tied to Blackness, rendering even the presence of Black bodies dangerous and justifiable reason to murder. Coinciding with these murders is the growing issue of the mass-incarceration of Black men and women at the highest rates in American history. This course investigates the role and function of race and gender within the lived experiences of African descended people in America, particularly in relation to the criminal justice system. The 2008 presidential election spawned the idea that we live in a “post-racial” society where race is no longer important and racism no longer exists. However, the growing violence directed at Black communities—by police and civilians alike—and the imprisonment of millions of Black men and women paints a very different picture. We will examine systemic aspects of social oppression and how they converge to form a “new racism,” characterized by growing disdain for Black life both inside and outside of the prison system. This course will examine the historical legacy of racial violence in the United States in an effort to tie this history to the current social climate surrounding race, violence and criminalization. Through the use of course texts and popular media, a focus will be placed upon the consistency of social oppression throughout history and into the post-Civil Rights era through an analysis of the impact of racism, sexism and heterosexism on such issues as crime, criminality and race.

**Course Objectives:**

1. To define the concepts of race, gender and sexuality and discuss the significance they hold in American society;
2. To define racism, sexism, heterosexism and classism and be able to identify the myriad of ways in which they function;
3. To critically examine the ever-changing forms of oppression in America;
4. To explore the intersecting oppressions: racism, sexism, heterosexism and classism and the critical role they play in our lives;
5. To Understand the historical significance of global white supremacy and patriarchy;
6. To understand the impact of racism and global white supremacy, sexism, classism and heterosexism on the lived experiences of Black people;
7. To develop an understanding of the historical legacy of racialized violence in America;
8. To explore the connection between racial violence and racialized perceptions of criminality;
9. To develop an understanding of how the criminal justice system functions as a racist structure within American society;
10. To explain, discuss and identify how the “new racism” has manifested in relation to perceptions of criminality and in violence aimed at men and women of color.

**Text & Readings:**

Alexander, Michelle. (2010). *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press.

I will be providing supplementary readings for the semester via Blackboard along with any other pertinent course information.

**Schedule**

**Section 1: Introduction**

**Week 1:**

* Introduction to Course
* Black/African American Studies as the disciplinary context for this course
* The current social moment

**Readings: hooks, “Loving Blackness as Political Resistance”**

**Section 2: Race, Racism and Privilege**

**Week 2:**

* What is race?
* What is Blackness? Whiteness?
* Defining racism
* Defining white supremacy

**Readings: Smedley, “’Race’ and the Construction of Human Identity”**

**Harris, “Whiteness As Property”**

**Week 3:**

* Understanding racism
* Understanding white privilege

**Readings: Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness”**

**Bonilla-Silva, Chapter 4, “The New Racism: The Post-Civil Rights Racial Structure in the United States”**

**Collins, “The Past is Ever Present: Recognizing the New Racism”**

**Section 3: Historical Roots of Racial Violence**

## Week 4:

* Enslavement and racial violence
* Racial perceptions of criminality

Readings: White, “Jezebel and Mammy: The Mythology of Female Slavery”

Davis, Chapter 11, “Rape, Racism and the Myth of the Black Rapist”

Vidal, “Private and State Violence Against African Slaves in Lower Louisiana During the French Period”

**Weeks 5 & 6:**

* Emancipation and racial violence
* Lynching and social control

Readings: Wells-Barnett, “A Red Record” and “Lynch Law in America”

Freedman, “The Racialization of Rape and Lynching”

DuBois, Chapter 4, “Science and Empire”

Feimster, Chapter 2 “The Violent Transition from Freedom to Segregation”

Viewing: “Ida B. Wells: A Passion for Justice”

**Week 7:**

* Racial violence during the Jim Crow era

Readings: Lewis, “The Citizens’ Councils: Aims, Organizations and Propaganda Tactics” and “The Case of Emmett Till”

Trotti, “Trends in Racial Violence in the Postbellum South”

Viewing: “The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till”

**Section 4: The New Jim Crow**

**Week 8:**

* Crime and the criminal justice system

Readings: Alexander, Introduction and Chapter 1

**Week 9:**

* Crime and the criminal justice system
* The school-to-prison pipeline

Readings: Alexander, Chapter 2

**Weeks 10 & 11:**

* Crime and the criminal justice system

Readings: Alexander, Chapter 3 & 4

**Week 12:**

* The war on drugs
* The New Jim Crow

Readings: Alexander, Chapter 5

Viewing: “The House I Live In”

**Week 13:**

* Race, gender and the criminal justice system

Readings: Alexander, Chapter 6

**Section 5: Racial Violence in the Modern Era**

**Week 14:**

* Civilian Violence
* “Stand Your Ground”

Readings: Lewis, “Lynching, Incarceration’s Cousin: From Till to Trayvon”

National Urban League, “Shoot First: Stand Your Ground Laws and Their Effect on Violent Crime and the Criminal Justice System”

**Week 15:**

* Police violence
* Racial Profiling

Readings: Browne-Marshall, “Stop and Frisk: From Slave-Catchers to NYPD, A Legal Commentary”

Asim, “Shooting Negroes”

Staples, “White Power, Black Crime, and Racial Politics”

**Week 16:**

* #BlackLivesMatter

Readings: Wingfield, “Gendering #BlackLivesMatter: A Feminist Perspective”

“Whose Lives Matter?: Trans Women of Color and Police Violence”

**AWS 4980: Seminar in Africana-World Studies**

**“The Black Radical Tradition: Activism and Resistance”**

**Spring 2016**

*“Activism is the rent I pay for living on this planet.” – Alice Walker*

*“These are my last words to all the youth of Africa: organize, organize, organize!” – Kwame Ture*

*“I think the importance of doing activist work is precisely because it allows you to give back and consider yourself not as a single individual who may have achieved whatever, but to be part of an ongoing historical movement.” - Angela Davis*

**Course Description:**

This course examines the tradition of grassroots activism, radicalism, and political engagement of Black people in the United States. Using a socio-historical approach, we will use primary and secondary source materials to understand how Black people in the U.S. have used their economic, social and political power to bring about change. We will look at how methods for organizing reflect traditional forms of “doing politics,” but also strategies and tactics for defining problems and posing solutions particular to Black people. In addition, we will examine how art (music, prose, poetry, sculpture, painting and film) have served as a way to address social injustices and inequality. We will also look at how intersecting identities shape democratic claims for inclusion, citizenship, equality and justice.

**Course Objectives:**

1. To understand the historical tradition of radical activism in the Black community;
2. To explore the connections between various Black activists and organizations over time;
3. To explore the role of activism in the development of the discipline of Africana Studies;
4. To develop an understanding of the role that art can play as a form of activism for equality and social justice;
5. To explain how the tradition of Black grassroots and political activism connects to and influences the “New Civil Rights Movement.”

**Texts & Readings:**

Shakur, Assata. (2001). *Assata: An Autobiography*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books.

Newton, Huey P. (2009). *Revolutionary Suicide*. New York: Penguin Classics.

I will be providing supplementary readings for the semester via Blackboard along with any other pertinent course information.

**Schedule**

**Section 1: Introduction**

**Week 1:**

* Introduction to Course
* Black/African American Studies as the disciplinary context for this course
* #BlackLivesMatter and the current social moment

## Readings: Onion, “Are We in the Midst of a New Civil Rights Era?”

**Section 2: The Historical Roots of Activism**

**Weeks 2 & 3:**

* What is activism?
* What are activists?

# Readings: Akuno, “An Unbroken Line: New Afrikan Resistance from 1619 to the Present”

**DuBois, “The Propaganda of History”**

**Ernest, "Liberation Historiography: African-American Historians before the Civil War"**

**Joseph, “Haiti’s Revolt Inspired Black Activists”**

## Week 4:

* Enslavement and racial violence
* Racial perceptions of criminality

Readings: James, “Dimensions and Main Currents of Caribbean Radicalalism in America: Hubert Harrison, the African Blood Brotherhood and the UNIA”

Taylor, “Reading Men and Nations: Women in the Black Radical Tradition”

**Section 3: Narratives of Radical Activists**

**Week 5:**

* Assata Shakur

Readings: Shakur, Chapters 1-3

**Week 6:**

* Assata Shakur

Readings: Shakur, Chapters 4-6

**Week 7:**

* Assata Shakur

Readings: Shakur, Chapters 7-10

**Week 8:**

* Assata Shakur

Readings: Shakur, Chapters 11-14

**Weeks 9 & 10:**

* Assata Shakur

Readings: Shakur, Chapters 14-21

**Section 4: Art as Activism**

**Week 11:**

* Black Art and Black activism

Readings: Ani, “Writing as a Means of Enabling African Self-Determination”

DuBois, “Criteria of Negro Art”

Neale, “The Black Arts Movement”

Baraka, “The Revolutionary Theatre”

Brown, “Strong Men”

Harper, “Bury Me In a Free Land”

Hughes, “Ballad of the Landlord”

McKay, “If We Must Die”

Sanchez, “right on: white america”

Dunbar, “We Wear the Mask”

**Section 5: Narratives of Radical Activists, Part 2**

**Week 12:**

* Huey P. Newton

Readings: Newton, Manifesto and Part 1

**Week 13 (4/7/15):**

* Huey P. Newton

Readings: Newton, Part 2

**Week 14 (4/14/15):**

* Huey P. Newton

Readings: Newton, Part 3

Viewing: “Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution”

**Week 15 (4/21/15):**

* Huey P. Newton

Readings: Newton, Part 4

**Week 16 (4/28/15):**

* Huey P. Newton

Readings: Newton, Parts 5 and 6