

Boston University
Department of History
HI/489/AA489
The African Diaspora in the Americas: Constructing Identity¹
Mondays, 4-7
AAS 101
Second Semester 2014

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Office Hours:
Mondays 11:00-12:00
Thursdays 11:30-12:30
Second Semester 2014
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Course Description: The course is a conceptual and thematic exploration of the forces that have shaped African-Diasporic identities and communities in the Americas and parts of Western Europe after Emancipation and during 20th century. Students will read scholarly articles and books as well as memoirs and reports by journalists to familiarize themselves with the range of concepts and debates that deal with African-Diasporic identity. Students will also view documentaries and movies that deal with issues relevant to understanding African Diasporic identity. Finally, students will listen to a selection of recent musical performances by African-Diasporic artists such as rap performers and assess what they reveal about changing African-Diasporic identity. By engaging in class discussions and debates and writing critical evaluations of the readings, documentaries, movies, and lyrics, students will gain a deeper appreciation of how and why African-Diasporic identities emerged and diverged during the period. The comparative approach that the course adopts also exposes students to common issues that descendants of enslaved Africans in various parts of the Americas and Western Europe have confronted in their attempts to construct Africa-Diasporic identities. Students will leave the course with a deeper appreciation of the commonalities and divergences between various African-Diasporic populations in the Americas and Western Europe today.

Required Books and Other Readings:

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W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York, Norton, 1999).
Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin: White Masks* (Grove Press, revised ed. 2008).
Claude McKay, *Banjo*
Gary Younge, *No Place Like Home: A Black Briton's Journey Through the American South* (University Press, 2002).
Maria de Los Reves Castillo Bueno et al, *Reyita: The Life of a Black Cuban Woman in the Twentieth Century* (Duke, 2000).
Essie Mae Washington Williams, *Dear Senator: A Memoir* (Harper, 2006).
Additional Readings are available on **Blackboard Learn (BL)**

Required books can be purchased at the bookstore. One copy of each required book is also be available at Mugar Reserve. To obtain a list of the materials on reserve go to <http://library.bu.edu> and click on Reserve Services, selecting either my name or the course number. The additional required readings are available at Blackboard Learn (<http://www.bu.edu/tech/teaching/lms/blackboard/>). **BL**

Attendance: Prompt and regular attendance is required. No late assignments will be considered without supportive evidence of illness or personal hardship, otherwise a grade of “zero” will be given for each graded assignment missed.

Course Requirements

Grading: Essays on 3 of the Weekly Readings	30%
Oral Presentation	10%
Class Participation/Attendance	20%
Research Paper	30%

Essays: Three essays (4 pages-not including footnotes-Font size Times New Roman 12). The essays should be based on the readings from three different weeks. The essays will be graded for critical evaluation of the main themes covered as well as for organization and coherence. Essays must be submitted at the end of Week 4, Week 7, and Week 10 class meetings. Each essay counts for 10% of the course grade for a total of 30%.

Oral Presentation and Class Participation: Each student will be required to make one formal presentations of 30 minutes each. The presentation should be on one of the week's readings. The presentation should not be done on the readings that you have selected for your critical essays. Students must select the date for their oral presentation during the first class session. The oral presentation is worth 10 % of the final grade. All students are expected to attend each class and to be active participants in all class discussions. Oral presentation is worth 10% of the final grade and class participation/attendance will account for 10% for a total of 20% of course grade.

Final Paper: Final paper can be on any of the themes arising from the weekly readings and discussions. Each student must consult with the instructor before deciding on a topic and undertaking research for the paper. Students should submit a one page description of their topic (proposal) on Monday March 3 during class. These will be returned with comments the following Monday. Supporting material for final paper should be selected from the core weekly

readings as well as from outside readings. Final papers from students who have not handed in a proposal will not be accepted. Research papers account for 30% of the final grade. The final paper should be between 3,000-3,500 words –Font Size-Times New Roman 12.

Academic Integrity Policy: Each student is expected to author his/her own work. Students should familiarize themselves with CAS Academic Conduct Code. Students who submit plagiarized papers or other assignments that they have not authored will be subject to the penalties imposed by the CAS Academic Conduct Code. For more on CAS Academic Conduct Code link to: www.bu.edu/cas/academics/programs/conductcode.html.

Weekly Class Meetings

Part One: In Search of Definitions and Concepts of African Diaspora Identities in the Atlantic World

Week 1 1/27: Defining Diaspora

Readings:

Colin Palmer, "Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora" *Perspectives*, 1998. **BL**

Kristian Mann, "Shifting Paradigms in the Study of the African Diaspora and the study of the African Diaspora, *Slavery and Abolition*, 22, 1, pp. 3-21. **BL**

Kim Butler, "Defining Diaspora: Redefining a Discourse." **BL**
Lecture, Discussion

Week 2 2/3: Towards a Theory of Identity and the African Diaspora: Methods and Approaches

Readings:

Stewart Hall, "Cultural Identity." **BL**

James Clifford, "Diasporas", *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1994, pp. 302-338. **BL**

William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies..." **BL**

Lecture, Presentation, Discussion

Part Two: Historicizing African-Diasporic Identities: 1830s-1930's

Week 3 2/10 North America, 1830s-1930's

Readings:

DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Begin to Chapter V11)

Roberta S. Gold, "The Black Jews of Harlem." **BL**

Lecture, Presentation, Discussion

Week 4 2/19 (Wednesday) Brazil and Cuba/Latin America, 1830s-1930

Reading:

Kim Butler, "Africa in the Re-invention of nineteenth Century Afro-Brazilian Identity," *Slavery and Abolition*, 22, 1, 2001, pp. 135-54.

Helg, "Race and Black Mobilization". **BL**

Giovenetti, "Identity...Race, Religion and Empire...Cuba." **BL**

Lecture, Presentation, Discussion

Week 5 2/24 French and English-Speaking Caribbean, 1830s-1930s

Reading: Claude McKay, *Banjo* (begin)

E.J. Hawthorne, "Self-Writing...Mary Seacole...Jamaica." **BL**

Michael Largey, "Haitian Cultural Identity." **BL**

Torres-Saillant, "The Tribulations of Blackness." **BL**

Lecture, Presentation, Discussion

Part Three: Identity, Race, Politics and Culture

Week 6 3/3 Competing Ideologies and Conflicting Loyalties: Race and New Identities in the Making 1

Reading: Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin/White Mask* (Begin)

Claude McKay, *Banjo* (continue to end)

DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk* (continue to end)

Lecture, Presentation, Discussion

Week 7 3/17: Competing Ideologies and Conflicting Loyalties: Race and New Identities in the Making 11

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin/White Mask*; (continue to end)

Murdock, "Creolizing the Metropole." **BL**

Video, West Indians in Britain and the War Effort-

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViGwxJl0I70&feature=player_embedded#!

Lecture, Presentation, Discussion

Week 8 3/24: Competing Ideologies and Conflicting Loyalties: Race and New Identities in the Making 111

Reading:

Mangual, *Lydia Cabrera and the Construction of an Afro-Cuban Identity* (pp. 27-57) **BL**

Michael Agier, "Racism, Culture and Black Identity in Brazil" **BL**

Aparicio, "The Blackness of Sugar." **BL**

María de los Reyes Castillo Bueno, *Reyito* (Begin to chapter 2).

Lecture, Presentation, Discussion

Part Four: The Individual and the Making of African-Diasporic Identity

Week 9 3/31: Biography 1

Reading:

Washington-Williams, *Dear Senator* (Begin to middle)

Claude McKay, *Banjo* (Continue to end)

Lecture, Presentation, Discussion

Week 10 4/7 Biography, 11

Reading:

María de los Reyes Castillo Bueno, *Reyito* (Continue to End)

Snaith, “Una Marson: Little Brown Girl.” **BL**

Benedita da Silva, *An Afro-Brazilian Woman’s Story* (excerpts) **BL**

Lecture, Presentation, Discussion

Week 11 4/14 African Diasporic Identity: Biography 111

Reading:

Washington-Williams, *Dear Senator* (Continue to End)

Younge, *No Place Like Home: A Black Briton’s Journey*

Jean Mutebo Rahier, “*Métis/Mulâtre, Mulato, Mulatto, Negro...Black...*

Identities.” **BL**

Lecture, Presentation, Discussion

Part Five: Creating (Re-creating) African Diasporic Identities: The Media

Week 12 4/24 (Thursday):

Reading: Ed Guerrero, “The Black Man on Our Screens.” **BL**

Telles, “Racial Ambiguity...Brazilian Population.” **BL**

Ben Carrington, “Improbable Grounds: Black Intellectuals.” **BL**

Viewing of one of the following videos: *Bamboozled*; *Franz Fanon*;
Black Orpheus; *The Harder They Come*

Lecture, Presentation, Discussion of Readings and Videos

Week 13 4/28: Afro-Diasporic Identities: Music and Art

Reading:

George Lipsitz, “Diasporic Noise, History, Hip Hop...Politics of Sound.”

Fuentes, “Afro-Cuban Movement.” **BL**

Philip Galinsky, “Co-option, Cultural Resistance and Afro-Brazilian
Identity.” **BL**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLB5bUNAesc> (Ladies First)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93fxMbKIHdw>;

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnIHpFxyNR4>

Discussion of Readings, Video clips and Films;