

Syllabus Black Communication and Identity

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Required Texts

Jackson, R., Johnson, A., Hecht, M., & Ribeau, S. (2019). *African American communication: Examining the complexities of lived experiences*. NY: Routledge.

Hopson, M. C. (2011). *The talking drum: Exploring Black communication and critical memory in intercultural communication contexts*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Additional PDF reading available through Canvas

Course Description

Black Communication and Identity explores the nexus of identity construction and human interaction, and examines the dynamic process of acquiring, managing, and executing the rhetorical qualities which constitute subjective culture. Students analyze the socio-historic and discursive construction of Black/African American identity. Consequently, the course draws from (auto)biographical essays, speeches, verbal/visual art forms, and popular artifacts to illustrate the communication of nonmonolithic identity for Black people.

Course Objectives

1. Students will increase their understanding of the theoretical and philosophical concepts of Black communication.
2. Students will increase their understanding of a) Afrocentricity/African-centeredness, and b) communication as an ontological facet of identity.
3. Students will increase awareness concerning racism and the influence of socio-cultural forces on intercultural/interracial encounters.
4. Students will identify and discuss distinctive factors of Black/African American rhetoric.
5. Students will critically examine methods to explicate Black/African American discourse.
6. Students will learn about the social construction of reality, and be able to articulate ways in which race and culture inform dialectical identity for Black people.

ASSIGNMENTS**Requirements**

| | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------|------------|
| 2 - Abstracts | (25 pts. each) | 50 |
| 2 - Creative Exploration Essays | (50 pts. each) | 100 |
| 5 – Notebook/Quizzes | (10 pts. each) | 50 |
| Final Examination | | 50 |
| Group Project | | 100 |
| Participation & Attendance | | 50 |
| Total Points Possible | | 400 |

Completed assignments receive points. I will add points earned, divide that by total points possible, and assign a final grade based on the scale below. Throughout the semester any questions regarding points should be addressed via email, after which we will set up a time for discussion.

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Grade Scale: | A | 93-100% |
| | A- | 90-92.9% |
| | B+ | 88-89.9% |
| | B | 83-87.9% |
| | B- | 80-82.9% |
| | C+ | 78-79.9% |
| | C | 70-77.9% |
| | D | 65-69.9% |
| | F | Below 65% |

Rules for Writing Assignments

All papers should be written in APA style. Papers should be grammatically correct, typed in Times New Roman, 12 point font, one-inch margins, include a reference page, and be submitted by deadline.

Abstracts. This 2 page paper begins with a APA reference for the reading assignment (type this at the top of the first page), and should include four parts: a summary section, analysis section, evaluation section, and a presentation. Your grade is based on a) your summary and explanation of the assigned reading; b) your analysis of theoretical concepts; c) your thoughtful evaluation; d) and overall use of unique and creative examples.

Creative Exploration Essays. These are 5-7 pages in length and based on an assigned reading or theoretical concept. Do not simply copy an article's existing ideas. The goal is to demonstrate your understanding of the concept by incorporating current events/happenings. You are required to provide your instructor with a copy of your current event. Your grade is based on a) your discussion of the assigned reading and its theoretical concepts; b) your creativity and connection to a current event; c) your thoughtfulness in explaining relevant content; and d) writing requirements. Only eligible readings apply.

Notebooks/Quizzes. You are expected to keep a notebook. These notebooks should contain quotes, questions, and observations of material covered each day. Your entries can be political, social, academic, or general concerns about any topic we cover. I will check notebooks regularly. Incomplete notebooks will result in a point deduction. Pop quizzes are not announced.

Group Projects. This is a 12-14 page paper and a presentation on a topic related to Black/African American communication. Your project must draw extensively from our reading and class projects. We will develop research topics throughout the semester.

Specifically, the group project should exhibit expertise with regard to the topic. The research needs to go beyond merely reporting on a topic, and include academic books and articles. The presentation should include a Q & A period at the end. I must approve the topic beforehand. You will receive an opportunity to evaluate (in confidentiality) each individual in your group. You will receive a group grade. More direction for the project will be distributed in mid-semester.

Examinations. Exams are comprised of multiple choice and short essay questions. If there are any changes in the structure, I will discuss them with you prior to exams.

CLASSROOM POLICY & PROCEDURES

Tardiness/Attendance

Punctuality is essential. Attendance holds an obvious relationship to participation. If you do not attend, you cannot participate. More than two absences may result in a letter grade reduction.

Ethical Standards

All work submitted within this class must be original and your own.

Student Needs

Students who are registered with the Office for Disability Services should notify me in the first week, regarding any arrangements that may impact any given assignment or general success in this class.

Missed Assignments

I do not offer make-up assignments, class lectures, or examinations. I will discuss cases of documented medical or University excused absences only. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to obtain notes and other information.

Emergency Alerts

In the event of an emergency a phone and exit strategy are located in this classroom. In addition, I am registered to receive University emergency alerts. You should do the same.

Harassment

This class adheres to University policies regarding sexual harassment and equal opportunity. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. The goal is to provide a safe, fair, and equitable learning environment. See the undergraduate catalog for more information on classroom disruptions.

Technology in the Classroom

Students may use technology solely for class related purposes. Any other use is rude and prohibited. Students who disrupt the class will lose participation points and may be asked to leave. See the undergraduate catalog for more information on classroom disruptions.

Recording: Class lectures and interactions may not be posted online or used for any profit-generating activity.

Respect & Privacy

All communication and discussion in this course, whether through technology or face to face, is meant for class-use only and should exhibit respect for other class participants and the instructor.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Read the chapter next to the day it is listed – before class.

JJHR: Jackson, Johnson, Hecht, & Ribeau text

Hopson: Hopson text

PDF: PDF readings are made available to you via Canvas. Per university policy you must have a working student/email account.

| DATE | TOPIC | REQUIRED READING |
|---|--|------------------|
| Section One: Introduction | | |
| | Day 1 – Introductions & syllabus; assign abstracts; discussion | |
| | Day 2 – “What is Black communication?”: Conceptualizing a field of study *Homework: Bring in an example of Black communication | |
| | Day 3 – “Why study Black communication?”: The heuristic value of Black/African American communication *Read PDFs: Baldwin’s (1993) “Notes from a Native Son”; hooks’s (1989) Introduction to <i>Talkin’ Back</i> ; Daniel’s (1973) “Black Communication Research” | |
| Section Two: Language and Identity | | |
| | Day 4 – “Where does Black communication occur?”: Origins of Black/African American communication & culture *Read JJHR, Ch 1 | |

Day 5 – Narratives & observations from within the peculiar institution of slavery

*Read JJHR, Ch. 2; and PDFs 1, 2, & 3

Day 6 – Naming ourselves: How language works in identity

*Read JJHR, Ch. 3; and PDF: Smitherman's (2000) "From African to African American"

*Homework: Creative exploration essay 1 due

Day 7 – Afrocentricity and oral manifestations of Nommo

*Read PDFs: Asante's (1996) "Afrocentricity: The Essential Grounds"; and Laremont's (2002) "Afrocentricity vs. Multiculturalism"

Day 8 – From colored to Negro: Philosophies on Black identity

*Read PDFs: Washington's (1895) "Atlanta Exposition Speech"; Garvey's (1940/1986) "Intelligence, Education, Universal Knowledge and How to Get It"; Du Bois's (1903/2005) "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others"

Section Three: Politics of Location

Day 9 – Birth of the Harlem Renaissance: Artistic explorations of culture, race & gender

*Read PDFs: Hughes's (1959/1987) selected poems; McKay's (1920) selected poems

Day 10 – Reading the artist-intellectual

*Read PDF TBA

Day 11 – Black feminist and Womanist standpoints

*Read PDFs: Hill Collins's (2000) "The politics of Black feminist thought"; Walker's (1967/1983) "Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender"; Sister Soulja's (1996) "Nathan"

Day 12 – (De)constructing and performing identity

*Read PDFs: Asim's (2007) "Should Offensive Expressions be Prohibited? No."; Samad's (2007) "Should the Public Decide When the Line Has Been Crossed? Yes."; and see Paul Scott handout

Section Four: Iterativity of Racism

Day 13 – Emmett Till and the birth of the Civil Rights Movement: Lynching and other representations of terror in the Black imagination

*Read PDFs: Metress's (2003) "The Lynching of Emmett Till"; Hopson's (2003) "For Cynthia, Denise, Carole and Addie Mae"

Day 14 – M.L.K. and Nonviolence

*Read PDF: M. L. King's (1958/1986) "An Experiment in Love"; and Hopson, Foreword, Preface, and Ch. 1

Day 15 – From Negro to Black

*Read PDF: Malcolm X's (1963/1971) "The Old Negro and the New Negro"; Hopson, Ch. 2 & 3

Section Five: Organization

Day 16 – Organizing around identity

*Read JJHR, Ch. 5

*Creative exploration essay #2 due

Day 17 – Racial and cultural relationships

*Read JJHR, Ch. 4

Day 18 – LGBTQ experiences, peer groups, and relational networks

*Read PDF Hughey & Parks's (2011) "Am I not a Brother?"; Hopson, Ch. 4; PDF TBA

Section Six: Socio-Historical Contexts

Day 19 – Blackness in the media

*Read Hopson, Ch. 5

Day 20 – Blackness in the media continued

*Read Hopson, Ch. 6

Day 21 – TBA and group work

Concluding Thoughts

Day 22 – "What's next?": Answering the heuristic call & final thoughts

*Read JJHR, Ch. 6

Day 23 – TBA

Day 24 – All group projects and presentations due (attendance required)

Day 25 – Group presentations continued (attendance required)

Day 26 – Reading day

Day 27 – Final exam

Note: Success in this class is the direct result of reading, studying, and preparation done outside the classroom. The above schedule is a draft lesson plan and may be altered to accommodate guest speakers and progress by the students. However, all the work above will be covered during the semester.

Group Project Outline

Begin with a creative title and names of group members

I Introduction

Identify the specific topic and its significance

Lay out clear thesis statement (What will you examine & why?)

II Literature review

Discuss the current literature regarding the topic

Define and discuss your theoretical perspectives

III Analysis

Use theory to analyze your topic

Identify various rhetorical strategies at work

Is there a timeline for the issue? Can you offer creative examples?

IV Conclusion

What do we learn from your analysis? How has the topic evolved?

What is likely to happen in the future with the topic?

V Reference section

Cite sources for all claims, theories, and ideas within the group paper