ANTH 445: African American Anthropology

Section 10744D  Spring 2024  Monday 2:00-4:50PM  KAP 159

**Professor:**  Lanita Jacobs

**Office:**  Kaprielian Hall (KAP) 356

**Phone:**  213-740-1909

**Email:**  jacobshu@usc.edu

**Office Hours:**  M/W 1PM-1:50PM; also by appt. You can also contact me Monday-Friday via email.

**Course Website:**  Course materials are accessible through Blackboard; to access, click on: https://blackboard.usc.edu/webapps/login/

**Required Texts** (I’ve requested e-copies of all books from the USC Library; if available, these texts will be freely accessible in Ares Reserves):

1. ANTH 445 Reader. [NOTE: This text is abbreviated RDR in the Reading & Exam Schedule.]

**Highly Recommended Texts:**


**Course Description:** Anthropology has undergone dramatic changes in recent decades. Historically, anthropologists resembled what Renato Rosaldo (1989) characterized as the “Lone Ethnographer” riding off into the sunset in search of the “native.” Today, those so-called natives are vigorously gazing and talking back as students, professors, and attentive audiences, with palpable implications for how anthropology is practiced. Anthropologists also conduct fieldwork in unprecedented places, including their own communities. This course’s focus on African American Anthropology is, in many ways, an outgrowth of these transitions. In this course, we will map out the parameters of “African American Anthropology,” beginning with early constructions of race and pioneering ethnographic studies of African Americans in the U.S. Later, we will explore how ongoing research on race and African American culture, as well as contributions by African American/feminist scholars, helped to both shape and shift the scope of anthropological inquiry over time. Finally, we will review new directions in the study of race and African American culture in anthropology. In pursuit of these goals, we will mine scholarship within and beyond the field of anthropology. We will also review relevant films, sounds, and images that further illuminate the place of race and African Americans in the ever-evolving field of anthropology. Our scholarly quest will traverse multiple texts, authors, places, and times, and home in on key offerings by Black ethnographers, to ultimately reveal how anthropological research concerning race and African Americans inform the discipline’s quest to understand what it means to be human.
Learning Objectives: Accordingly, seminar participants will gain essential anthropological knowledge and skills, including:

- A nuanced appreciation for “race” as a social construction with enduring implications for peoples’ worldviews and everyday experiences in the world
- Skills in describing and understanding individuals, societies, cultures, and cultural expressions throughout time and around the world
- Skills in interpreting the cultural meanings embedded in everyday behavior, language, performances, artifacts, images, and text
- Skills in critical thinking and expository writing based on logic, evidence, scholarly discernment, and inter- and cross-cultural understanding
- Insights that will help you successfully operate and negotiate within and across cultural differences in our increasingly interconnected world

Grading: There will be a midterm and final exam covering assigned readings, films, and guest speakers. The midterm is worth 30% (30 points) and the final exam is worth 40% (40 points) of your overall grade. Each of the exams will include short-answer and essay questions and will be non-cumulative. In addition, 10% (10 points) of your grade will be determined by your class participation, specifically your collegial and substantive engagement in online lectures. The remaining 20% of your grade will be determined by 3-5-page essay (excluding bibliography of 3-5 sources) that address issues of racial authenticity from an anthropological perspective. This essay is worth up to 20 points and will be due on Friday, April 5, 2024, by midnight in Blackboard. Late papers will be docked 2 points and 1 additional point for every day late. Finally, a total of 4 extra-credit points can be earned on the midterm and final exam via a two-point Bonus Question. Bonus questions will be based on “optional” readings and/or additional materials presented in class.

Essay Guidelines: Essays must adhere to the following format: double-spaced, 12 point-font, 1” top, bottom, right, and left margins, pages numbered consecutively in upper right-hand corner. Each short essay should span 3-5 typed pages. Your essays should address how notions or representations of racial, gendered, class, etc. authenticity manifest in the present, either in film or everyday contexts; in either case, you will need to approach your analysis anthropologically. You will also be responsible for substantiating your claims by citing 3-5 sources [citations must adhere to APA/MLA format]. Your bibliography can include assigned course readings. However, at least one of these sources must include an article or book that is *not* in the course bibliography; note that any webpage citations must include substantial commentaries (e.g., articles, book chapters) versus blurbs, advertisements, Wikipedia, or other web-based sources. (Additional guidelines for essays will be posted in Blackboard.) Late papers will be docked points. The grading scale is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Basis</th>
<th>Midterm: 30%</th>
<th>Authenticity Essay: 20%</th>
<th>Final: 40%</th>
<th>Participation: 10%</th>
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<tr>
<td>94-100 = A</td>
<td>87-89 = B+</td>
<td>77-79 = C+</td>
<td>67-69 = D+</td>
<td>&gt; 59 = F</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-93 = A-</td>
<td>84-86 = B</td>
<td>74-76 = C</td>
<td>64-66 = D</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-83 = B-</td>
<td>70-73 = C-</td>
<td>60-63 = D-</td>
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An Official Note on Examinations: Make-up exams will only be given under extraordinary circumstances and will require documentation from a physician. The content and form of any make-up exam will be at my discretion. In any case, you should inform me via email or phone prior to missing an exam. If you feel you must reschedule an exam on account of having (a) two additional exams scheduled at the same time or (b) three exams in a 24-hour period, inform me at least two weeks prior to our scheduled mid-term. The final exam must be taken at the time noted below per university policy. (USC Student Health does not provide routine written medical excuses for short-term absences or missed deadlines due to illness or injury.)
Course Design and Resources: USC will launch Brightspace for use by all faculty during the second week of classes as an alternative to its previous learning management system, Blackboard. Once ANTH 445 is established on this new platform, lecture notes (in PowerPoint) will be posted (as PDFs) on a weekly basis to help students calibrate their curricular investments. Brightspace will also afford access to the course syllabus, reader, grades, essay guidelines, announcements, exam study guides, and other resources. All students will need access to a computer and the internet to vet lecture notes and fully participate in this course.

Statement for Students with Special Needs: Students requesting academic accommodations based on special needs should register with the Office for Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from OSAS when necessary documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible, preferably by or before fifth week. OSAS contact information is as follows: 213-740-0776 (Phone), 213-740-6948 (TDD Only), 213-740-8216 (Fax); Email: osasfrontdesk@usc.edu; Webpage: https://osas.usc.edu/about/contact-location-hours/

Statement on Academic Integrity: The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct undermines the university’s mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form). Accordingly, this seminar will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the USC Student Handbook. All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage. The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university; if found responsible for an academic violation, students may be assigned university outcomes, such as suspension or expulsion from the university, and grade penalties, such as an “F” grade on the assignment, exam, and/or in the course. For more information about academic integrity see the student handbook or the Office of Academic Integrity’s website, and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct. Also, if ever you’re unsure about what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution, please consult me. Relatedly:

University Policy Regarding the Sharing of Course Materials outside of the Learning Environment

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment. Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. (Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook, page 13). Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. (Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook, page 13).
**USC Support Systems:** In this season of swirling pandemics and wars, please know that there are various support systems in place at USC and beyond, including:

**USC Technology Rental Program**
USC realizes that attending classes and completing coursework (whether in-person or remotely) requires access to technology that not all students possess. If you are facing food, housing, and/or financial insecurity that hinder your capacity to successfully participate in your classes, you may be eligible for support via USC’s [Student Basic Needs Department](#) (additional info below). Here, too, are several **USC Technology Support Links:**

- Software available to USC Campus
- USC Computing Center Loaner Laptop Program

**USC Campus Support and Intervention** - (213) 821-4710; campussupport.usc.edu  
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student. Specific covid-19-related support systems are noted below:

  The [Student Basic Needs](#) fund can (again) assist with housing expenses, food insecurity, emergency travel, income loss related to closed workplaces, technology upgrades required for remote instruction, and other unforeseen needs. Students interested in applying for the Student Basic Needs Emergency Grant are encouraged to email the Basic Needs Team at basicneeds@usc.edu. The team will evaluate the request and, if needed, schedule a one-on-one consultation to learn more about the student’s situation.

**USC’s COVID-19 Resource Center** provides information, updates, and support for the USC community. Please consult the website [https://coronavirus.usc.edu/](https://coronavirus.usc.edu/) to learn about Spring 2024 COVID-19 Health and Safety protocols. To notify the university of a case, please call their 24/7 COVID-19 hotline at 213-740-6291 or email covid19@usc.edu.

**Counseling and Mental Health** - (213) 740-9355 (WELL) – 24/7 on call; studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling  
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call; suicidepreventionlifeline.org  
Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)** - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call; studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault  
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

**Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)** - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298; equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu  
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.
USC Support Systems (continued):

**Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment** - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity [Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

**Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101**; diversity.usc.edu
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

**USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call**
dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency precludes travel to campus.

**USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call**
dps.usc.edu
Non-emergency assistance or information.

**Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC); ombuds.usc.edu
A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concerns.

**READING & EXAM SCHEDULE**

| HOW DID EARLY ANTHROPOLOGISTS APPROACH THE STUDY OF RACE AND AFRICAN AMERICANS? |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **Week 1:** | **COURSE INTRODUCTION, EARLY CONSTRUCTIONS OF RACE** |
| 1/8 | - Smedley: A Black Woman’s Ordeal in White Universities [in RDR] |
| | - Trouillot: Anthropology and the Savage Slot [in RDR] |
| | - Willis Jr.: Skeletons in the Anthropological Closet [in RDR] |

| **Week 2:** | **REVVEREND DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. HOLIDAY (NO CLASS)*** |
| 1/15 | **NO CLASS** |

| **Week 3:** | **EARLY ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF RACE: How did early physical anthropologists approach the study of race? To what extent did these early examinations of race mark anthropology’s engagement in scientific racism?** |
| 1/22 | - Baker: The Ascension of Anthropology as Social Darwinism [in RDR] |
| | - Baker: Anthropology in American Popular Culture [in RDR] |
| | - Film(s): The Life and Times of Sara Baartman (1998; 53 mins.) – access on Alexander Street via Ares Reserves; Select Pop Culture Clips; Bootyful World (2006; 24 mins.; a class-only link to stream this short film will be provided) |
# Anthrological Shifts in the Study of Race & African American Culture

## Week 4: 1/29
### Franz Boas: Theoretical Interventions in the Study of Race
In what ways did the work of Franz Boas intervene in early anthropological framings of race? To what extent was Boas’s work in critical dialogue with other African American scholars (e.g., W.E.B. Du Bois)?

- Baker: The Location of Franz Boas within the African-American Struggle [in RDR]
  - Drake: Anthropology and the Black Experience [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Boas: Race and Progress [in RDR]
  - Frank: Jews, Multiculturalism, and Boasian ANTH [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Harrison: Du Boisian Legacy in Anthropology [in RDR]
- Lewis: The Passion of Franz Boas [in RDR]
- Film: *Franz Boas: The Shackles of Tradition, Part III* (1986[1975]; 54 mins. [can access via YouTube or Alexander Street via Ares Reserves]

## Week 5: 2/5
### Boas’s Legacy: Theoretical Interventions in the Study of Race
How did the work of Boas’s students inform disciplinary and everyday understandings of race and the world’s understanding of African Americans? What models do early and contemporary anthropologists and Harlem Renaissance scholars pose for academics seeking to intervene in popular discussions of race, racism, and inter-ethnic relations?

- Benedict & Weltfish: Excerpts from *The Races of Mankind* [in RDR]
- Herskovits: Excerpts from *The Myth of the Negro Past* [in RDR]
  - Gershenhorn: The Attack on Pseudoscientific Racism [*Optional*; in RDR]
  - Gordon: The Quest for the Authentic [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Mead & Baldwin: Excerpts from *A Rap on Race* [in RDR]
  - Rana: ANTH and the Riddle of White Supremacy [*Optional*; in RDR]
  - Adalet: Tensions, Terrors, Tenderness: James Baldwin’s Politics of Comparison [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Price & Price: The Root of Roots [in RDR]
- Film: *The Brotherhood of Man* (1946; 10:35); *Herskovits at the Heart of Blackness* (2009; 57 mins.) – access on Alexander Street via Ares Reserves

## Week 6: 2/12
### Transitions in Anthropology - “The Natives Are Gazing and Talking Back”
How do African American “native” scholars participate in these wider transitions shaping the discipline? How do their critical reflections serve to qualify the nature of ethnographic fieldwork and the challenges of “thickly” representing African American culture? Further, to what extent does their scholarship speak back to early framings of race in anthropology?

- Bunzl: Boas, Foucault, and the “Native Anthropologist” [in RDR]
- Jacobs: The Natives Are Gazing and Talking Back [in RDR]
- Moore: Anthropological Theory at the Turn of the Century [in RDR]
  - Thomas: Becoming Undisciplined [*Optional*; in RDR]
  - Washington: “Disturbing the Peace: What Happens to American Studies If You Put African American Studies at the Center?” [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Film: *Papua New Guinea: Anthropology on Trial* (1983; ~57 mins.)
**Week 7:** President’s Day (No Class)  
2/19 No Class

**Week 8:** Midterm (In Blackboard)  
2/26 Midterm

## AnthroPological Shifts in the Study of Race & African American Culture

### Week 9:  
¾

**Anthropology’s Stance on Race Today:** What is the field of anthropology’s official stance on race today? To what extent do their official statements about race seek to redress earlier stigmatizing framings of race and Blackness? Might this stance be both applauded and critiqued? On what grounds?

- American Anthropological Association (AAA) Official Statement on Race [in RDR]
- AAA Statement on "Race" and Intelligence [in RDR]
- Harrison: Expanding the Discourse of Race
  - Obbo: But We知 It All!: African Perspectives on Anthropological Knowledge [Optional; in RDR]
- Lieberman: Gender and the Deconstruction of the Race Concept [in RDR]
- Shanklin: The Profession of the Color Blind [in RDR]
  - Cartmill: The Status of the Race Concept in Physical ANTH [Optional; in RDR]

**Spring Recess**  
3/11

**Spring Recess: No Class This Week (3/11-3/15)**

### Week 10:  
3/18

**Race Into Culture?:** Does anthropology’s embrace of the concept of “culture” displace the concept of “race” in productive (e.g., illuminative) ways? What is potentially gained or loss by the discipline’s embrace of the concept of culture? Further, what does the concept of “culture” afford that the concept “race” does not?

- Baker: Fabricating the Authentic and the Politics of the Real [in RDR]
- Hartigan Jr.: Culture against Race [in RDR]
  - Brumann: Writing for Culture [Optional; in RDR]
- Michaels: Race into Culture [in RDR]
- Visweswaran: Race and the Culture of Anthropology [in RDR]

### Week 11:  
3/25

**Black Feminist Anthropology:** How do scholars engage notions of race, gender, and culture in anthropology? What does/would a Black Feminist Anthropology look like? Further, how do Black feminist sensibilities inform anthropology today?

- Griffin: Black Feminists and Du Bois [in RDR]
- McClaurin: Theorizing a Black Feminist Self in Anthropology [in RDR]
- Mikell: Feminism and Black Culture in the Ethnography of ZNH [in RDR]
  - Gwaltney: On Going Home Again [Optional; in RDR]
  - Rodriguez: A Homegirl Goes Home [Optional; in RDR]
- Film: Living Thinkers: An Autobiography of Black Women in Ivory Tower (2013; 75 mins.) – access in Kanopy via Ares Reserves; alternatively, a Google link to stream this film is available in Blackboard under “Week 11”
### AFRICAN AMERICAN ETHNOGRAPHY: CASE STUDIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 12: 4/1</th>
<th><strong>Essays due Fri 4/5</strong></th>
<th><strong>AFRICAN AMERICAN ETHNOGRAPHY AND FOLKLORE: Zora Neale Hurston is a pioneer “native” anthropologist; she is also one of Boas’s students. What does her fieldwork teach us about African American folklore in her all-Black hometown of Eatonville, Florida, the practice of ethnography, and the place of gender and “voice” in anthropology more broadly?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>• Boxwell: “Sis Cat” as Ethnographer: Self-Presentation and Self-Inscription in Zora Neale Hurston’s <em>Mules and Men</em> [in RDR]</td>
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<td>• Hurston: How It Feels to Be Colored Me [in RDR]</td>
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<td>o Hurston: Court Order Can’t Make the Races Mix <em>[Optional; in RDR]</em></td>
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<td>• Hurston: <em>Mules and Men</em>, Part I</td>
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<td>o Bolles: Seeking the Ancestors <em>[Optional; in RDR]</em></td>
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<td>• <strong>Film:</strong> <em>Zora Neale Hurston: Claiming A Space</em> (2023; 112+ mins.)</td>
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<td>• <strong>Essays Due in Brightspace before midnight on Fri 4/5. (Do NOT email paper to me or our seminar’s Teaching Assistant.)</strong></td>
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| Week 13: 4/8 | **FOLKTALES, THE “DOZENS, AND WIT-LARGE IN MULES & MEN:** Hurston’s work in *Mules & Men* highlights the work of humor, folktales, and “mother wit”/culturally-inflected wisdom in the lives of African Americans. What themes, cultural experiences, and political and cultural imperatives inform African American humor today? |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | • Gwaltney: Introduction [in Drylongso] |
|  |  | • Gwaltney: A Nation within A Nation [in *Drylongso*] |
|  |  | • Gwaltney: The Many Shades of Black [in *Drylongso*] |
|  |  | • Jacobs: Gender, Authenticity, and Hair in African American Stand-up Comedy [in RDR] |
|  |  | o Hughes: Jokes Negroes Tell on Themselves *[Optional; in RDR]* |
|  |  | o Jacobs: Into the Breach: Representing the Messy Truths of Black Women’s Hair and Language Politics *[Optional; in RDR]* |
|  |  | • **Film:** *A Question of Color* (1993; 59 mins.) – access on *Kanopy via Ares Reserves* |

| Week 14: 4/15 | **READING & WELLNESS DAY (NO CLASS)** |

| Week 15: 4/22 | **AFRICAN AMERICAN AUTHENTICITY OR, “A” REAL BLACK:** How might an ethnographically-informed appreciation of “a real” as opposed to “the real” – born of fieldwork in comedy clubs – further inform our attempts to interrogate “realness” as a cultural imperative in African American culture? |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | • Jacobs: *To Be Real: Truth and Racial Authenticity in African American Standup Comedy* (read entire book, especially chapters 1, 4, and 5) |
|  |  | • Jackson: A Little Black Magic [in RDR] |
|  |  | o Jackson: Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity *[Optional]* |
|  |  | • Film/Clips: *Black Is ... Black Ain’t* (1995; 1 hr 28 min. – access via *Ares Reserves only*); Excerpts of Kevin Hart’s standup comedy |

**FINAL EXAM:** Monday, May 6, 2024, 2-4PM PST in KAP 159
(NOTE: Articles are alphabetized by last name in Course Reader in Blackboard. Required and optional textbooks are included in boldface below.)


