ANTH 499: Special Topics - African American Anthropology

Section 10690D Fall 2012 W 2-4:50PM KAP 150

Professor: Lanita Jacobs

Office: Grace Ford Salvatori Hall (GFS) 128 [Note: To get to my office, you must first enter the Anthropology Department at GFS 120]

Email: jacobshu@usc.edu

Office Hours: T/W 1-2PM; 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/

Required Texts:

6. 499 Reader. [This text is abbreviated RDR in the Reading & Exam Schedule.]

Highly Recommended Texts:


NOTE: Required and Optional Texts, along with the Course Reader (RDR) are on reserve in Leavey Library.

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 inaugural offering of the 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. As such, you are strongly encouraged to be punctual, maintain regular attendance, and stay abreast of assigned readings so that you are adequately prepared to participate in class discussions. The remaining 20% of your grade will be determined by 5-7 page essay (excluding bibliography of 5-7 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, November 2nd by 5PM in Jacobs’ mailbox in GFS 120 (no electronic copies; hard copies only). Late papers will be docked 2 points and 1 additional point for every day late [NO exceptions]. 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 essay should span 5-7 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 5-7 sources [citations must adhere to APA/MLA format]. Your bibliography can include assigned course readings. However, at least three of these sources must include an article or book that is *not* in the course bibliography; note that 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.) The grading scale is as follows:

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<th>GRADE BASIS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm: 30%</td>
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<td>Authenticity Essay: 20%</td>
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<td>Final: 40%</td>
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<td>Participation: 10%</td>
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94-100 = A 87-89 = B+ 77-79 = C+ 67-69 = D+ > 59 = F
90-93 = A- 84-86 = B 74-76 = C 64-66 = D
80-83 = B- 70-73 = C- 60-63 = D-

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the unacknowledged or inappropriate use of the ideas or wording of another individual. Plagiarism will result in an “F” grade for the course and possible suspension or expulsion from the University. Do take care to review the University Student Conduct Code and Sanctions concerning the nature and consequences of academic theft [http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/nonacademicreview.html].
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. Also, late essays will only be accepted in exceptional cases and will be deducted a minimum of 2 points.

Attendance: A grading percentage will not be given for class attendance. However, consistent and punctual attendance in seminar is strongly encouraged to increase your understanding of course materials and enhance your participation score. Your record of attendance may also be considered in the case of borderline grades. It is ultimately your responsibility to be aware of class lectures and assignments. Should sickness, family emergencies, or other events necessitate your absence from class, I recommend that you consult your peers and/or Blackboard for lecture notes.

Academic Accommodations: Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability should register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP 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. DSP is open Monday-Friday, 8:30AM-5PM. The office is in Student Union 301 and their phone number is 213-740-0776.

Class Structure: Class meetings will consist of lecture and discussion, with a clear emphasis on the latter. As such, it is essential that you keep up with the weekly readings and that you submit assignments on time. At times, film clips will be shown in class.

Class Resources: Resources for this course are available through Blackboard. Consult Blackboard for access to the course syllabus, grades, essay guidelines, announcements, mock essay and short answer questions, exam study guides, and other helpful information.

**READING & EXAM SCHEDULE**

| Week 1: 8/29 | **COURSE INTRODUCTION** |
| Week 2: 9/5 | **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? |
| | • Baker: Excerpts - From Savage to Negro [in RDR] |
| | • Sanday: Skeletons in the Anthropological Closet: The Life and Work of William S. Willis Jr. [Optional; in RDR] |
| | • Trouillot: Anthropology and the Savage Slot [in RDR] |
| | • Willis Jr.: Skeletons in the Anthropological Closet [in RDR] |
| | • Film(s): The Life and Times of Sara Baartman, Select Pop Culture Clips, A Bootyful World |
| Week 3: 9/12 | **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] |
| | • Boas: Race and Progress [in RDR] |
| | • Harrison: DuBoisian Legacy in Anthropology [in RDR] |
| | • Szwed: An American Anthropological Dilemma [in RDR] |
| | • Film: Franz Boas: The Shackles of Tradition, Part II |
**Week 4: 9/19**  
**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: Excerpts from Race: Science and Politics [in RDR]
- Gordon: The Quest for the Authentic [in RDR]
- Herskovits: Excerpts from The Myth of the Negro Past [in RDR]
- Hurston: Court Order Can’t Make the Races Mix [Optional; in RDR]
- Mead & Baldwin: Excerpts from A Rap on Race [in RDR]
- Powdermaker: Mississippi in Stranger and Friend [Optional; in RDR]
- Price & Price: The Root of Roots [in RDR]
- Film: Herskovits At the Heart of Blackness, The Brotherhood of Man (1946)

**Anthropological Transitions in the Study of Race and African American Culture**

**Week 5: 9/26**  
**Anthropological Transitions – The Natives are Gazing and Talking Back:** Anthropology’s “experimental moment” compelled scholars of various backgrounds to acknowledge their power as researchers and their accountability to the communities they studied. Anthropologists also continually reckon with the fact that the “natives are gazing and talking back,” posing productive challenges for the way we represent ourselves, our work, and our research participants. How do African American 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?

- Jacobs-Huey: The Natives are Gazing and Talking Back [in RDR]
- Moore: Anthropological Theory at the Turn of the Century [in RDR]
- Thomas: Becoming Undisciplined: Anthropology and Cultural Studies [Optional; in RDR]
- Film: Papua New Guinea: Anthropology on Trial

**Week 6: 10/3**  
**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, Official Statement on Race [in RDR]
- American Anthropological Association Statement on “Race” and Intelligence [in RDR]
- Harrison: Introduction: Expanding the Discourse of Race
- Cartmill: The Status of the Race Concept in Physical Anthropology [Optional; in RDR]
- Lieberman: Gender and the Deconstruction of the Race Concept [in RDR]
- Shankles: The Profession of the Color Blind [in RDR]
- Film: Understanding Race

**Week 7: 10/10**  
**Midterm (No Blue Books Required)**
Week 8: 10/17  
**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]
- Brumann: Writing for Culture [Optional; in RDR]
- Hartigan Jr.: Culture against Race: Reworking the Basis for Racial Analysis [in RDR]
- Michaels: Race into Culture [in RDR]
- Visweswaran: Race and the Culture of Anthropology [in RDR]

Week 9: 10/24  
**BLACK FEMINIST ANTHROPOLOGY: How do scholars engage notions of race, gender, and culture in anthropology?** More specifically, what would a Black Feminist Anthropology look like? Further, how might Black feminist sensibilities inform anthropological thought and practice today?
- McClaurin: Theorizing a Black Feminist Self in Anthropology [in RDR]
- Mikell: Feminism and Black Culture in the Ethnography of Zora Neale Hurston [in RDR]
- Rodriguez: A Homegirl Goes Home [Optional; in RDR]

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**AFRICAN AMERICAN ETHNOGRAPHY & ANTHROPOLOGICAL POSSIBILITIES**

Week 10: 10/31  
**AFRICAN AMERICAN “DRYLONGSO”/EVERYDAY CULTURE:** John Gwaltney’s classic ethnography, Drylongso, is a radical testament of core cultural values central to many African Americans. The book is also interventionist insofar as it displaces the authoritative/objective voice of the author in favor of the actual words and testimonies of Gwaltney’s research participants. What do Gwaltney’s approach and his respondents teach us about the practice of ethnography and African American culture? Further, how do the testimonies represented in Drylongso allude to enduring importance of notions of racial authenticity in African American culture?
- Gwaltney: Drylongso
- Gwaltney: On Going Home Again [Optional; in RDR]
- Film: Black Is ... Black Ain’t

**Essays Due in Jacobs’ mailbox in GFS 120 on Fri 11/2 by 5PM! (do NOT email papers)**

Week 11: 11/7  
**AFRICAN AMERICAN ETHNOGRAPHY/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?
- Bolles: Seeking the Ancestors [Optional; in RDR]
- Hurston: How It Feels to Be Colored Me [in RDR]
- Hurston: Mules and Men, Part I
- Film: Zora Neale Hurston: A Heart with Room for Every Joy

Week 12: 11/14  
**Reading Day**

Week 13: 11/21  
**Thanksgiving Holiday**
Week 14: 11/28

AFRICAN AMERICAN HAIR, GENDER, AND LANGUAGE: How can multi-sited ethnography and discourse analysis serve to untangle the linguistic and cultural nuances of Black women’s hair care practices? Further, how might the author’s positionality as a “native” anthropologist shape the insights she uncovers over the course of this six year multi-sited study?

- Jacobs-Huey: From the Kitchen to the Parlor
- Jacobs: Into the Breach: Representing the Messy Truths of African American Women’s Hair and Language Practices [Optional; in RDR]
- Film: A Question of Color

Week 15: 12/5

AFRICAN AMERICAN AUTHENTICITY: How does John Jackson’s ethnographic research as a “native” anthropologist broaden our understandings of “real” Blackness – moving us beyond the problematic concept of “racial authenticity” towards a new and potentially more fruitful concept: racial sincerity? How does Jackson’s intervention broaden the way anthropologists understand and study notions of “realness” in African American culture? 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?

- Jackson: Real Black
- Jackson: A Little Black Magic [in RDR]
- Jackson: An Ethnographic FilmFlam [Optional; in RDR]
- Film/Sound Clips: Black Girl (1972); The Mis-Adventures of Awkward Black Girl, The Dave Chappelle Show (Wayne Brady sketch; When Keeping it Real Goes Wrong sketch), Be Real Black For Me (Roberta Flack and Donny Hathaway)

FINAL EXAM: Friday, December 14th, 2-4PM, KAP 150

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY: African American Anthropology

(NOTE: Articles are alphabetized by last name in Course Reader in Blackboard. Required and optional textbooks are included below, in bold.)


Hurston, Zora Neale. 1955. Court Order Can’t Make the Races Mix. Letter to the Editor, Orlando Sentinel, August.


**Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2006. From the Kitchen to the Parlor: Language and Becoming in African American Women’s Hair Care. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 8 of 8**


