

# ANTH 445: African American Anthropology

Section 10637D

Fall 2015

T 2-4:50PM

KAP 164

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Office Hours: T/Th 11AM-12PM; 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:

1. Gwaltney, John Langston. 1993. *Drylongso: A Self Portrait of Black America*. New York: The New Press.
2. Hurston, Zora Neale. 1990 [1935]. *Mules and Men*. New York: HarperCollins.
3. Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2006. *From the Kitchen to the Parlor: Language and Becoming in African American Women's Hair Care*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
4. Jackson Jr., John L. 2005. *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
5. Price, Richard and Sally Price. 2003. *The Root of Roots, or How Afro-American Anthropology Got Its Start*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press. [included in RDR]
6. 499 Reader. [This text is abbreviated RDR in the Reading & Exam Schedule.]

## Highly Recommended Texts:

7. Harrison, Ira E. and Faye V. Harrison, Eds. 1999. *African-American Pioneers in Anthropology*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
8. McClaurin, Irma, Ed. 2001. *Black Feminist Anthropology: Theory, Politics, Praxis, and Poetics*. London: Rutgers University Press.

**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 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, October 30<sup>th</sup> by 5PM** in Jacobs’ mailbox in KAP 352 (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:

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-	

GRADE BASIS
Midterm: 30%
Authenticity Essay: 20%
Final: 40%
Participation: 10%

**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.

**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.

**Academic Conduct:** Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, [Behavior Violating University Standards](#). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* regarding university policies on [scientific misconduct](#).

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the [Office of Equity and Diversity](#) or to the [Department of Public Safety](#). This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. [The Center for Women and Men](#) provides 24/7 confidential support, and the [Sexual Assault Resource Center webpage](#) describes reporting options and other resources.

**Support Systems:** A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the [American Language Institute](#), which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

[The Office of Disability Services and Programs](#) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, [USC Emergency Information](#) will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

## READING & EXAM SCHEDULE\*

### HOW DID EARLY ANTHROPOLOGISTS APPROACH THE STUDY OF RACE AND AFRICAN AMERICANS?

- Week 1:**  
8/25
- COURSE INTRODUCTION; EARLY CONSTRUCTIONS OF RACE**
- Trouillot: Anthropology and the Savage Slot [in RDR]
  - Willis Jr.: Skeletons in the Anthropological Closet [in RDR]
  - Film: *TBA*
- Week 2:**  
9/1
- 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]
  - Film(s): *The Life and Times of Sara Baartman, Select Pop Culture Clips, A Bootyful World*
- Week 3:**  
9/8
- 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]
  - Drake: Anthropology and the Black Experience [*Optional*; in RDR]
  - Harrison: DuBoisian Legacy in Anthropology [in RDR]
  - Film: *Franz Boas: The Shackles of Tradition, Part I*

### ANTHROPOLOGICAL SHIFTS IN THE STUDY OF RACE & AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURE

- Week 4:**  
9/15
- 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]
  - 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)*

**Week 5:**  
9/22

**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?**

- Harrison & Harrison: Anthropology, African Americans, and the Emancipation of a Subjugated Knowledge [in RDR]
- 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 & Cultural Studies [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Film: *Papua New Guinea: Anthropology on Trial*

**Week 6:**  
9/29

**MIDTERM (NO BLUE BOOKS REQUIRED; JUST BRING A PEN)**

**Week 7:**  
10/6

**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 8:**  
10/13

**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]

## AFRICAN AMERICAN ETHNOGRAPHY & ANTHROPOLOGICAL POSSIBILITIES

- Week 9:**  
10/20
- 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?**
- Griffin: Black Feminists and Du Bois: Respectability, Protection, and Beyond [in RDR]
  - McClaurin: Introduction: Forging a Theory, Politics, Praxis and Poetics of Black Feminist Anthropology [in RDR]
  - 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]
  - Visweswaran: Betrayal: An Analysis in Three Acts [in RDR]
- Week 10:**  
10/27  
**Essay due Fri**
- 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: A Self-Portrait of Black America
  - Gwaltney: On Going Home Again [*Optional*; in RDR]
  - Film: *Black Is ... Black Ain't*
  - **Essays Due in Jacobs' mailbox in KAP 352 on Fri 10/30 by 5PM! (do NOT email papers)**
- Week 11:**  
11/3
- 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:**  
11/10
- FOLKTALES, THE “DOZENS, AND WIT-LARGE IN MULES & MEN: Hurston’s work in Mules & Men highlights the work of humor, folktales, and other forms of daring it in the lives of African Americans. What themes, cultural experiences, and political and cultural imperatives inform African American humor today?**
- Gwaltney: More than Mere Survival [revisit in Drylongso]
  - Hughes: Jokes Negroes Tell on Themselves [in RDR]
  - Jacobs-Huey: Introduction, From the Kitchen to the Parlor (FKTP)
  - Jacobs-Huey: Gender, Authenticity, and Hair in African American Stand-up Comedy [in FKTP]
  - Film: *Why We Laugh: Black Comedians on Black Comedy*
- Week 13:**  
11/17
- NO CLASS: REFLECT ON COURSE THEMES**

**Week 14:**  
11/24

**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 (read the rest of the book)
- 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:**  
12/1

**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: Adventures in Racial Sincerity
- 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: Thursday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2-4PM, KAP 164**

## **COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY: African American Anthropology**

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

- American Anthropological Association. 1994. Statement on "Race" and Intelligence. <http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/race.htm>
- American Anthropological Association. 1998. Statement on "Race." <http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm>
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- Bolles, A. Lynn. 2001. Seeking the Ancestors: Forging a Black Feminist Tradition in Anthropology. *In I. McClaurin (Ed.) Black Feminist Anthropology: Theory, Politics, Praxis, and Poetics* (24-48). London: Rutgers University Press.
- Brumann, Christoph. 1999. Writing for Culture: Why a Successful Concept Should Not Be Discarded. *Current Anthropology* 40: 1-27.
- Cartmill, Matt. 1999. The Status of the Race Concept in Physical Anthropology. *American Anthropologist* 100: 651-660.
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- Gordon, Edmond T. 1997 1991. Anthropology and Liberation. *In F. V. Harrison (Ed.) Decolonizing Anthropology: Moving Further Toward an Anthropology for Liberation* (149-67). Washington, D. C.: American Anthropological Association.
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- Griffin, Farah Jasmine. 2000. Black Feminists and Du Bois: Respectability, Protection, and Beyond. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, The Study of African American Problems: W.E.B. Du Bois's Agenda, Then and Now. Vol. 568(March):* 28-40.
- Gwaltney, John L. 1976. On Going Home Again: Some Reflections of a Native Anthropologist. *Phylon* 37(3): 236-242.
- Gwaltney, John Langston. 1993. Drylongso: A Self Portrait of Black America. New York: The New Press.**
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- Harrison, Faye V. 1998. Expanding the Discourse on Race. *American Anthropologist* 100: 609-631.
- Harrison, Faye V. and Ira E. Harrison, Eds. 1999. Introduction: Anthropology, African Americans, and the Emancipation of Subjugated Knowledge. *In African-American Pioneers in Anthropology*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
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- Hartigan Jr., John. 2005. Culture Against Race: Reworking the Basis for Racial Analysis. *South Atlantic Quarterly* 104(3): 543-560.
- Herskovits, Melville J. 1990 [1941]. *The Myth of the Negro Past*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Hughes, Langston. 1973 [1951]. Jokes Negroes Tell on Themselves. In A. Dundes (Ed.) *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore* (637-641). University Press of Mississippi.
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