

AMST 660: Interdisciplinary Research Seminar in Race and Ethnicity

Spring 2012

Lecture 10487D

M 2-4:50PM

GFS 216

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: M/W1-2PM; also by appointment. You can also contact me Monday-Friday via email.

Course Website: AMST 660 course materials are accessible through Blackboard; to access, click on: <https://blackboard.usc.edu/>

Required Texts:

1. AMST 660 Reader. (*Abbreviated as **RDR** in Reading Schedule*; (Available in Blackboard under Course Resources)
2. Halberstam, Judith. 2011. *The Queer Art of Failure*. London: Duke University Press.
3. Keeling, Kara. 2007. *The Witch's Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Commonsense*. London: Duke University Press.
4. Stewart, Kathleen. 2007. *Ordinary Affects*. London: Duke University Press.
5. Thomas, Francis-Noël and Mark Turner. 1994. *Clear and Simple as the Truth: Writing Classic Prose*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
6. Zinsser, William. 1993. *Writing to Learn*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

NOTE: All texts are on reserve in Leavey Library.

Course Description: This graduate seminar builds upon the work established in AMST 560: Readings in Race and Ethnicity. Last semester, we grappled with articulations of the “the real” as it relates to African Americans. That course privileged our shared appreciation for race as a social construction and authenticity as a historically wrought and politically fraught notion. Thus, we did not rehearse these chords at length. Instead, we pursued a new song concerned with *when* and *why* Black folks make room for the potential of “a real.” It’s a new day and we’re better equipped to launch into the second leg of this journey. We will begin by presuming the “real” is a worthwhile intellectual endeavor and means of inquiry. As such, our imperative will be to ingest lessons and queries from particular works that will enable us to say something about “*a/the real*” as it pertains to our research. This work requires imagination and rigor, patience and virtue, collegiality and constructive criticism. It necessitates reading assigned texts critically and pursuing additional leads (on your own time) that will improve your work and enhance your understanding of disciplinary canons; it also requires us to approach the seminar table ready to contribute only our best (if even vulnerable) verses so that we might become better scholars and get closer to the truths of our work. Prepare to sit with your/our work, figure out where the joy-fear-and butterflies circulate, and then force its resonance on the page. Yes; on the page. We are *writing* in this course in full appreciation of the important theoretical caveats leveled against (racial, gendered, etc.) authenticity; still, we will dare to say something real about “*a/the real*.” We will investigate registers, discourses, and other iterations of “a real” across multiple disciplines with the ultimate goal of producing a publishable work (e.g., book review, scholarly article). As in AMST 560, this seminar seeks to cultivate skills in a) reading and analyzing scholarly research and b) translating our own findings in new, accessible, and potentially interventionist ways. Accordingly, you will have ample opportunity to critically

engage various texts via critical readings, in-class presentations, and critical dialogue. Consider this course an imperative to better understand not just *how* racial authenticity gets constructed on various stages, but also *when* and *why* these constructions (and the stakes they bespeak and provoke) remain persistent in the present-day.

Class Expectations & Evaluation: Class meetings will consist of article/data presentations, occasional films, and discussion, with a strong emphasis on the latter. Accordingly, it is essential that you keep up with weekly readings and submit written assignments on time. Course grades will be determined by your performance in the following arenas:

Class Evaluation	
Participation/Attendance:	25%
Reading Presentations:	25%
Final Paper Presentation:	25%
Final Paper:	25%

Class Participation (25 points – 25%): Regular attendance is expected as it will enable you to contribute a unique, informed, and collegial verse during class discussions. If you are unable to attend a class, please let me know in advance.

Reading Presentations (25 points – 25%): In order to facilitate class discussion, you will be required to present, individually or in pairs, readings comprising the seminar’s weekly themes. (This may require students to present more than twice.) On the day your article, book, etc. is assigned, you should prepare and distribute a 1-2 page typed handout that summarizes the author’s argument, methods, and/or findings. Feel free to indicate the relevance/significance of the work as it relates to your own research. For example, you may critique the author’s methods or conclusions, present thoughtful questions to the class that encourage a critical examination of the reading. Be artful with it. If you are conducting research, feel free to incorporate not just theoretical, but also visual, and/or aural examples from your data or discipline that might extend class discussion. Also feel free to look back, forward, and beyond texts we’ve discussed either last semester and/or in the weeks preceding your presentation. (We will be reading scholars who deftly push up against the boundaries of their disciplines in order to speak alternative and palpably felt “truths.” Let us honor their gifts by reading, speaking, and writing in ways that seek to make our own and others’ unconventional thoughts tangible.) Key questions you might consider to help facilitate (and participate) in discussion include:

- What is the analytical imperative of this work?
- How is this piece informed by the author’s prior work?
- What kind of a “real” is actualized in this work?
- Can you “feel” this author? Why/why not?; What scholar(s) is this author(s) feeling?
- How does this set of articles speak to one another? To your work?
- How can this author help you shore up your arguments? Give you something else to think about that you haven’t already considered?

Final Presentation (25 points – 25%): During the final weeks of the semester, each student will present a brief, polished, 10 to 15-minute presentation outlining their final paper (i.e., series of book reviews or research paper/essay). If you complete a series of book reviews, be prepared to critically discuss the general findings, debates, and issues raised in the works you reviewed. If you are writing a paper/essay, prepare an engaging presentation (e.g., written or Powerpoint) that conveys its tenets.

Final Paper (25 points – 25%): For your final paper, you have the option of completing a research paper/essay OR multi-book review on a topic relevant to your research. A half-page summary of your paper focus is due during the 6th week of class.

- Research papers should be no more than 20-25 double-spaced pages (excluding a bibliography). Feel free to present data gleaned from your own research, and risk translating the seeming “intangible” in this paper. Let this be a paper in which you “write to learn” or adopt “classic prose” to say that one thing about race, gender, sexuality, authenticity, and/or truth, etc. you’ve always wanted to say but didn’t quite know how. Most importantly, let it be a polished, hyper-proofread, and submission-ready document.

- Book reviews should be no more than 10-15 single-spaced pages. Feel free to put a set of books (minimally three) in conversation with one another. Aim for high-quality assessments of books you have not yet read that might push your work even further. Book reviews are assigned in this course and exemplify the kind of analysis (and formatting) encouraged in this assignment. Additionally, several useful guides for writing book reviews are available online:
 - www.chicano.ucla.edu/press/siteart/jli_bookreviewguidelines.pdf
 - http://www.americanquarterly.org/submit/book_reviews.html
 - <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/historyandclassics/BookReviewWritingGuide.cfm>

All final papers must adhere to the following format: 12 point-font, 1" top, bottom, right, and left margins. Staple your paper/review and number your pages (no folders please); also include a title page. Bibliographic entries should be formatted according to either MLA or APA format; sample guidelines are available online. Also, research papers should be double-spaced (please avoid extra spaces between paragraphs) and book reviews should be single-spaced. Final papers are due in my mailbox by **5PM on Monday, May 7th** (Do not email papers; late papers will be docked points).

READING SCHEDULE*

WK 1: 1/9 *Course Introduction*

WK 2: 1/16 **No Class (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)**

Why Authenticity? Why [Racial] Sincerity? : Theoretical Scaffolding

WK 3: 1/23 *Why Authenticity? Why Racial Sincerity?*

- Jackson: Race and the Social Science of Sincerity [in Reader/RDR]
- Jones: Negotiating Authentic Objects and Authentic Selves [in RDR]
- Van de Port: Registers of Incontestability [in RDR]

Optional/Additional Readings:

- Kelley: Looking for a “Real” Nigga: Social Scientists Construct the Ghetto
- Smith: Cutting-Edge Equivocation [revisit; in RDR]

WK 4: 1/30 *Why Authenticity Matters: Understanding Authenticity as Rhetoric*

- Blum: Authenticity Gets a Makeover [in RDR]
- Handler: Authenticity [in RDR]
- Pavesich: Why Authenticity Matters [in RDR]
- Parish: Are We Condemned to Authenticity? [in RDR]

Multi-disciplinary Considerations/Closer Situated Takes

WK 5: 2/6 *Authenticity, Race, Music, and Dance*

- Jones: Race and Revisability [in RDR]
- Kajikawa: Eminem’s “My Name Is”: Signifying Whiteness [in RDR]
- Ram: Listening to the Call of Dance [in RDR]
- Roodenburg: Issues of Embodiment in Anthropology [in RDR]

WK 6: 2/13 *Inscribing Authenticity*

- Hathaway: The Unbearable Weight of Authenticity: ZNH’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and a Theory of “Touristic” Reading [in RDR]
- Jenkins: Decoding Essentialism: Cultural Authenticity and the Black Bourgeoisie in Nella Larsen’s *Passing* [in RDR]

Optional/Additional Readings:

- Larsen: Passing
- Hurston: Their Eyes Were Watching God

NOTE: ½ Pg. Final Paper Description Due in Class Describe: (a) paper focus and targeted journal OR (b) 3+ books to be reviewed, rationale for their selection, and targeted journal)

WK 7: 2/20 **No Class (President's Day)**

WK 8: 2/27 ***Site-ing Authenticity; Reconciling Authenticity and Representation; Authenticity as Jargon***

- Heatherington: In the Rustic Kitchen: Real Talk and Reciprocity [in RDR]
- Livingstone: Reproduction, Representation, and Authenticity: A Re-Reading [in RDR]
- McCutcheon: The Jargon of Authenticity and the Study of Religion [in RDR]

Optional/Additional Readings:

- Graeber: Consumption [in RDR; read imaginatively]

WK 9: 3/5 ***Racial, Gendered, Queer Authenticity and Essentialism***

- Ford: What's Queer about Race? [in RDR]
- Herring & Martinson: Assessing Gender Authenticity in Computer-Mediated Language Use [in RDR]
- Warnke: Race, Gender, and Antiessentialist Politics [in RDR]

Spring Break – 3/12-3/16

Writing a/the "Real": In Pursuit of Authenticity/Alternative Truths

WK 10: 3/19 ***Writing A "Real", Narrating Truths, Truth as Rhetoric***

- Thomas & Turner: Clear and Simple as the Truth: Writing Classic Prose
- Zinsser: Writing to Learn

WK 11: 3/26 ***Rewriting Failure***

- Halberstam: The Queer Art of Failure

WK 12: 4/2 ***Affective Turns***

- Stewart: Ordinary Affects

WK 13: 4/9 ***Affective Turns***

- Keeling: The Witch's Flight

WK 14: 4/16 **No Class; Critical Reflection/Writing Day**

WK 15: 4/23 **Final Class Presentations**

Final Papers/Book Reviews are due in my box by 5PM on Monday, May 7th

*The Reading Schedule may be subject to modification (e.g., trimming, additions, etc.).

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY (Note: Books and dissertations are in bold)

- Blum, Beth. 2010. Authenticity Gets a Makeover. *Journal of Modern Literature* 33(3): 150-152.
- Ford, Richard Thompson. 2007. What's Queer about Race? *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106(3): 477-484.
- Graeber, David. 2011. Consumption. *Current Anthropology* 52(4): 489-511.
- Halberstam, Judith. 2011. *The Queer Art of Failure*. London: Duke University Press.**
- Handler, Richard. 1986. Authenticity. *Anthropology Today* 2(1): 2-4.
- Hathaway, Rosemary V. 2004. The Unbearable Weight of Authenticity: Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and a Theory of "Touristic Reading." *Journal of American Folklore* 117(464): 168-190.
- Heatherington, Tracey. 2001. In the Rustic Kitchen: Real Talk and Reciprocity. *Ethnology* 40(4): 329-345.
- Herring, Susan C. and Anna Martinson. 2004. Assessing Gender Authenticity in Computer-Mediated Language Use: Evidence From an Identity game. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 23(4): 424-446.
- Jackson Jr., John L. 2005. Race and the Social Science of Sincerity. *Contexts* 4(4): 38-42.
- Jenkins, Candice M. 2005. Decoding Essentialism: Cultural Authenticity and the Black Bourgeoisie in Nella Larsen's *Passing*. *MELUS* 30(3): 129-154.
- Jones, Richard A. 2005. Race and Revisability. *Journal of Black Studies* 35(5): 612-632.
- Jones, Siân. 2010. Negotiating Authentic Objects and Authentic Selves: Beyond the Deconstruction of Authenticity. *Journal of Material Culture* 15: 181-204.
- Kajikawa, Loren. 2009. Eminem's "My Name Is": Signifying Whiteness, Rearticulating Race. *Journal of the Society for American Music* 3(3): 341-363.
- Keeling, Kara. 2007. *The Witch's Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Commonsense*. London: Duke University Press.**
- Kelley, Robin D. G. 1997. Looking for the "Real" Nigga: Social Scientists Construct the Ghetto. In *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional!: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America* (15-42). Boston: Beacon Press.
- Livingstone, David N. 1998. Reproduction, Representation and Authenticity: A Rereading. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 23(1): 13-19.
- McCuthcheon, Russell T. 2001. The Jargon of Authenticity and the Study of Religion. *Religion and Theology* 8(3-4): 229-252.
- Parish, Steven M. 2009. Are We Condemned to Authenticity? *Ethos* 37(1): 139-153.
- Pavesich, Matthew. 2009. *Why Authenticity Matters*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (Accession Order No. AAT 3381050)
- Ram, Kalpana. 2000. Listening to the Call of Dance: Re-thinking Authenticity and 'Essentialism'. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 11(3): 358-364.

- Roodenburg, Herman. 2004. Pierre Bourdieu: Issues of Embodiment and Authenticity. *Etnofoor* 17(1/2): 215-226.
- Smith, Barbara Hernnstein. 2005. Cutting-Edge Equivocation: Conceptual Moves and Rhetorical Strategies in Contemporary Anti-Epistemology. *In Scandalous Knowledge: Science, Truth, and the Human* (85-107). London: Duke University Press.
- Stewart, Kathleen. 2007. *Ordinary Affects*. London: Duke University Press.**
- Thomas, Francis-Noël and Mark Turner. 1994. *Clear and Simple as the Truth: Writing Classic Prose*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.**
- Van de Port, Mattijs. 2004. Registers of Incontestability: The Quest for Authenticity in Academia and Beyond. *Etnofoor* 17(1/2): 7-22.
- Warnke, Georgia. 2005. Race, Gender, and Antiessentialist Politics. *Signs* 31(1): 93-116.
- Zinsser, William. 1993. *Writing to Learn*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.**