

**Fall 2019 American  
Studies 270-01  
Professor Duchess  
Harris, JD, PhD**

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Office Hours Thursdays 1PM-  
3PM 109 Neill Hall & by  
appointment

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course will address the tradition of public intellectuals in several Black communities. We will examine Black politics and political history, as seen through theater, literature, and film. We will interrogate the concept of Black leadership, including who becomes one and why. We will address Communism, The American Dream, Incarceration, Feminism, and Ebony Voices in the Ivory Tower.

Most importantly, we will ask:

- Who and what is a Black Public intellectual?
- What has been the place of intellectuals in struggles against injustice?

We will explore these questions and others by examining the lives and the writings of men and women who were leading voices of resistance and social change and who have influenced black public consciousness, social and political action, and intellectual activities, including the formulation of social criticism and theory—both formal (or academic) and vernacular varieties.

The course will conclude with a discussion of “Cyber Intellectualism,” my term for the noticeable shift in the Black public intellectual tradition resulting from the rise of new media and the shifting public sphere.

**TEXTS**

Richard Wright: *Native Son*

James Baldwin: *Fire Next Time*

Imani Perry: *Looking for Lorraine*

Lorraine Hansberry: *A Raisin in the Sun*

*The Autobiography of Angela Davis*

*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*  
 Shirley Chisholm: *Unbought and Unbossed*  
 Thomas Sowell: *A Man of Letters*  
 bell hooks and Cornel West: *Breaking Bread*  
 Mark Anthony Neale: *What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture*  
 Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor: *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*

**CLASSROOM DISCUSSION GUIDELINES**

In order to make the class a safe learning environment for everyone, no student may insult, demean, or disrespect another individual for any reason, including race, sex, religion, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, physical ability, or socioeconomic class. Because many identity characteristics are not always visible, students must take care to avoid insulting any group of people, even if it seems as if no one from that group is in the room. Violation of this policy will result in point deductions commensurate with the offense.

**CLASSROOM NORMS & EXPECTATIONS**

Given the course’s focus, it is likely that differences of knowledge, experience, opinions and beliefs will be a regular part of our meetings. Our challenge, then, is to learn from one another in a way that recognizes these differences and the discomfort they may cause. Therefore, students are expected to:

- (A)ttend class regularly, remain for the full period
- (B)e respectful and an active listener
- (C)ontribute to discussions
- (D)o not be afraid to say, “I don’t know.”

**Accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Contact the Associate Dean of Students at 651-696-6220 to make an appointment.**

**KEY DATES & ASSIGNMENT DETAILS**

All assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the date listed. Late work will not be accepted. This is an interactive, discussion- based seminar that will only be intellectually engaging and generative if all students adhere to the course reading schedule and assignment deadlines. Extra credit opportunities may become available.

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>% of Grade</b>
Paper #1	Class #4	10%
Paper #2	Class #8	10%
Paper #3 DRAFT	Assignment Recommended, Not Required	
Paper #3	Class #12	55%
Assigned Discussions	Classes #9-12	25%

### *Instructions for Paper #1*

The paper will address the following prompt: "James Baldwin denounced Richard Wright's *Native Son* as a protest novel. Do you agree or disagree? Why?" The paper should be 5-7 pages, double-spaced. Scholars have asked this question for the past 5 years; be mindful of plagiarism and be sure to cite sources. Here are a few sources that may prove helpful:

- [New York Times](#)
- [Baldwin's Response](#)

### *Instructions for Paper #2*

Discuss the impact incarceration has had on African-American culture and literature. You are required to use at least 3 sources from outside of class to discuss the similarities and differences between Malcolm X and Angela Davis. Your analysis should address:

- How have Davis and Malcolm X crafted their narratives and why?
- When was each book released and why is the timing of the release of each book important?
- What are the gendered differences in Black activists' leadership and public intellectualism?

### *Instructions for Paper #3*

Use *Breaking Bread* to answer the question, "Where does Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor fit into the genealogy of Black Public Intellectuals in "From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation?" and should be 10-pages, double-spaced. This paper should be 10-pages, double-spaced.

### *Assigned Discussion Instructions*

For the class periods identified (#9-12), students are to come to class with a one-page document that includes two sections. Section (A): 1-2 single spaced paragraph(s) of a summation of the main arguments of the readings or social/political appeals along with a brief notation of the ways that these featured thinkers are "speaking to" or are "in conversation with" the other texts assigned for that day. Section B: 2-3 *well-thought-out* questions to help guide our in-class discussion. You will also be responsible for leading the assigned discussion. If you are having trouble thinking of critical questions, consider your answers and critical responses to the following:

- What is the author(s) saying? What is the central argument or main point? What are the conclusions? What is conveyed/how is it put together?
- What are the premises and the hypothesis of the piece? What are the conclusions?
- Who benefits? Who is left out? Who is included/excluded?
- What is your reaction to this? Do you agree with it? Why or why not? What lens informs your reactions?
- What was the historical, political, social, and cultural situation at the time of writing the piece? (i.e. Industrial Revolution, Enlightenment, Cold War, apartheid, holy war, etc.)
- What is the theoretical orientation or lens of the piece (conservative, Marxist, etc.)?
- Is there a gender component? Class component? Describe the factors and provide an analysis.

## COURSE OUTLINE

Note: Discussion materials should be read/viewed prior to the class number listed, unless noted “in class.”

Class #	Discussion Topic	Discussion Materials	Assignment Due
1	American History from Slavery to Black Power	<a href="#"><i>Insurgent Black Intellectual Life</i></a> <a href="#"><i>Black Intellectuals: The Perennial Question</i></a> <a href="#"><i>What Are the Drums Saying, Booker?</i></a> <a href="#"><i>The Dilemma of the Black Intellectual</i></a>	
2	Who is Richard Wright?	<i>Native Son</i> Book 1: Fear, Book 2: Flight & Book 3: Fate	
3	Who is James Baldwin?	<i>The Fire Next Time</i> (read the entire book) In class: <a href="#"><i>The Price of the Ticket</i></a>	
4	Baldwin, cont'd	In class: <a href="#"><i>I Am Not Your Negro</i></a>	Paper #1
5	Imani Perry	In class: <a href="#"><i>Sighted Eyes, Feeling Heart</i></a>	
6	Who is Lorraine Hansberry?	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> Read: Act 1 (Scene 1-2), Act 2 (Scenes 1-3), Act 3 In class: <a href="#">View</a>	
7	Who is Angela Davis?	<i>The Autobiography of Angela Davis</i> In-class: quiz (open-book), classroom discussion	
8	Who is Malcolm X?	<i>The Autobiography of Malcolm X</i> In class: Spike Lee Movie	Paper #2
9	ASSIGNED DISCUSSIONS	Group 1: Shirley Chisholm	
10	ASSIGNED DISCUSSIONS	Group 2: Thomas Sowell	
11	ASSIGNED DISCUSSIONS	Group 3: <i>Breaking Bread</i>	
12	ASSIGNED DISCUSSIONS	Group 4: Mark Anthony Neale	Paper #3