

AFRICAN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGY PSYCHOLOGY 503

Course Description and Overview:

This course examines the psychology of the African American experience. We begin the course with an overview of Black/African American psychology as an evolving field of study and consider the Black/African American Psychology paradigm as one of the key conceptual frameworks for understanding the psychological experiences of African Americans. In the second part of the course, we explore a range of topics that pertain to the psychological experiences of African Americans such as racism and discrimination, achievement and schooling, kinship and family, racial identity, religion and spirituality, and African American mental health. A focus of the course is the range of theoretical and methodological approaches that scholars have developed to conceptualize the thoughts, styles, and behaviors of African Americans. Finally, we conclude the course with discussions of current topics, controversies, and recent advances in African American psychology. Throughout the course, a primary objective will be to consider how our knowledge of African American psychological experiences can be used to promote African American psychological health and wellness.

Student Learning Objectives:

Your primary mission is to become a student expert in African American psychology. By the end of the course you should be able to:

- Describe the historical foundations and core tenets of the Black/African American psychology research paradigm
- Demonstrate knowledge of several core theories, perspectives, and methodological approaches that have been used to understand the psychological experiences of African Americans
- Identify central issues, tensions, or controversies in African American psychology
- Critically evaluate explanations of African American behavior
- Discuss how African American psychology as a field of inquiry can be used to advance African American health and well-being

Course Format and Procedures:

We will meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays for 75 minutes. The course format will range from lecture to more interactive formats such as small group exercises, discussions, and classroom debates.

Course Readings:

The readings for the course include a required text, as well as a selection of empirical articles, reviews, and book chapters. These readings have been selected to help facilitate achievement of the learning objectives outlined above. After the first week of class, all readings should be available for download on Sakai (<http://sakai.unc.edu/>) under 'Resources'. If you are having difficulty accessing the readings electronically, please let me know as soon as possible.

Required Text

Belgrave, F.Z., & Allison, K.W. (Eds.). (2014). *African American Psychology: From Africa to America* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

Evaluation will be based on attendance and participation, one in-class exam, a classroom debate, three reflection/reaction papers and a final paper (400 total points). Although care has been taken to schedule course requirements around religious observances, please let me know as soon as possible if you anticipate any conflicts.

Attendance and Participation (10%)

Attend class on Tuesday and never ever miss a Thursday! It is my expectation that you will attend every class and be an active contributor to discussion, when appropriate to do so. While I recognize that there are individual differences in talkativeness and learning styles, I expect that you will make a concerted effort to convey enthusiasm and engagement with the course material when possible. As a reminder, your participation will be evaluated on the *quality* and not the *quantity* of your contribution. In the event that you are unable to attend class, please let me know in advance. Attendance and participation in class discussion will account for 40 points.

In Class Exam (20%)

There will be one in-class exam covering material from the first third of the class. The exam will be closed book – no notes or texts allowed – and will consist of multiple-choice questions and several short essay questions. The exam will cover the assigned readings, as well as lecture material. The exam will be worth 80 points.

Debate (20%)

You will be required to participate in one of three scheduled group debates on a controversial issue in African American psychology. The first debate entitled “Should IQ and achievement testing be used for admissions and purposes of educational placement?” will take place on March 1st. The second debate entitled “Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?” (Tatum, 1999) will take place on March 29. The third debate entitled “The Great N-Word Debate: Is the N-Word Going Mainstream?” will take place on April 19. I will ask for your preferences early on in the semester; however, you will have less say regarding which side of the debate you will argue. Additional details about the debates will be announced early on in the semester. The debate is worth 80 points.

Reflection/Reaction Papers (15%)

During the course of the semester, you will be asked to write three reflection/reaction papers in response to an assigned topic related to the psychological experience of African Americans. The expected length for these papers is approximately two double-spaced pages. Papers are to be submitted at the start of the class period and may not be submitted electronically. Papers will be worth 20 points each (60 points total).

Reaction Paper 1 – “Toward a Black Psychology” **(Due: Tuesday, January 26, 2016)**

Assignment: Joseph White’s *Toward a Black Psychology* is recognized by some as a seminal essay regarding the psychology of Black people. However, the essay is not without its critics. For this assignment, your task will be to identify White’s central arguments, to identify the extent to which you agree with White’s arguments, and to discuss why. Regardless of your position, can you identify some possible contributions of White’s ideas to the field of psychology?

Reaction Paper 2 – “A Raisin In the Sun” **(Due: Tuesday, March 22, 2016)**

Assignment: At some point during the course of the semester, we will view a television or film-adapted version of Lorraine Hansberry’s Broadway play *A Raisin In the Sun*. For this assignment, you will be asked to apply contemporary theories of African American racial identity to describe the main characters in the play. How well do the theories of racial identity covered in class capture the significance and meaning that the characters ascribe to being African American? What elements of racial identity, if any, are NOT captured by available theories of racial identity?

Reaction Paper 3 – “Course Reflections” **(Due: Tuesday, April 26, 2016)**

Assignment: For this final reaction paper, I will ask you to reflect on what you have learned from taking this course. How has your conceptualization of the psychology of African Americans changed or stayed the same since the beginning of the semester? What was surprising or challenging about the course material? Were there any elements of the psychological experiences of Black Americans that you thought were missing from the course or that might have provided additional texture to how we understand African American psychology?

Final Paper (35%) **(Due: Tuesday, May 3, 2016 by 12 PM)**

For the final paper, I will ask you to identify a specific issue of interest to you and write a brief paper (**totaling no more than 4 double-spaced pages, 12-point, Times New Roman, one-inch margins**) highlighting a specific question or set of questions that remains unanswered with regard to the topic, outlining how you might investigate the question(s) further, and concluding with a discussion of the significance and implications of the topic and research questions for the study of the psychological experiences of African Americans. You should seek approval of your topic by Fall Break. I will provide further details regarding this assignment early in the semester. The final paper will be worth 140 points.

Please submit your paper at the final exam class on May 3rd at noon. Papers received after that time or submitted electronically will not be accepted and will result in a grade of zero for the assignment.

Final Grades

A percentage score out of 100% will be calculated for your final score and grades will be assigned as follows:

A	93-100%
A-	90-92%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	73-76%
C-	70-72%
D+	67-69%
D	65-67%
F	Below 65%

Other Important Course Information and Policies:

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to fully comply with the Honor Code (see <http://instrument.unc.edu/>). Consistent with the Honor Code, it is expected that any work you submit in this course will be *your own* work. In the event that plagiarism, cheating, or any other form of academic misconduct is suspected, possible penalties include failure of the course and referral for appropriate university disciplinary action.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: In compliance with UNC policy and federal law, qualified students with disabilities are eligible to receive “reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to education opportunities, programs, and activities” (<http://www.unc.edu/depts/lds/faculty-policies.html>). If you anticipate such accommodations, please notify me as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Additionally, you may seek out student support services at the Department of Disability Services (DDS) (<http://disabilityservices.unc.edu/>).

Late/Missing Assignments and Exams: Late work will **NOT** be accepted so you should make every effort to turn in your work on time. I will allow you to take one extension during the term if you discuss doing so with me at least one week in advance of the due date. Assignments not turned in by the agreed upon due date will receive a grade of zero. Finally, with regard to exams, make-up exams will be permitted, but only when appropriate justification and reasonable documentation is provided. Make-up exams will be considerably more difficult and consist solely of essay questions. If you miss an exam or group activity without a legitimate excuse and appropriate documentation, you will receive a zero for the assignment.

Graduate Research Consultation: In this research-exposure course, you will be working with a Graduate Research Consultant, (Mr. Henry Willis), who will assist you with the research for the classroom debate assignment. The GRC Program is sponsored by the Office for Undergraduate Research (www.unc.edu/depts/our), and you may be able to use this research-exposure course to meet a requirement of the Carolina Research Scholars Program (http://www.unc.edu/depts/our/students/students_crsp.html). I encourage you to visit the OUR website to learn about how you might engage in research, scholarship and creative performance while you are at Carolina.

Classroom Environment: Talking about race and race-related topics can be difficult. Our classroom will be a safe place in which you can ask potentially awkward or embarrassing questions about race as well as discuss your experiences, knowledge, questions, and fears about race in relation to your own lives and the lives of others. I ask that you treat each other with respect, and engage in honest and respectful dialogue with one another by: honoring the confidentiality of the group, refraining from making personal attributions about other students when discussing the course content, and not putting other students down. When possible, speak from your own experience rather than generalizing your experience to others. Finally, I strongly encourage you to direct comments and questions to each other rather than always focusing on me as the instructor and to learn each other's names.

Overview of Tentative Course Schedule

CLASS DATE	TOPIC
1/12	NO CLASS
1/14	Introduction and Overview, Background, Foundations, and Theory
1/19	Background, Foundations, and Theory
1/21	Background, Foundation, and Theory
1/26	Background, Foundation, and Theory
1/28	Africentric Psychology
2/2	Africentric Psychology
2/4	EXAM #1
2/9	Theories of Race and Racism
2/11	Theories of Race and Racism
2/16	Kinship and Family
2/18	Kinship and Family
2/23	Educational Systems and Achievement
2/25	Educational Systems and Achievement
3/1	Debate #1
3/3	Racial Identity (Theory)
3/8	Racial Identity: A Raisin In the Sun
3/10	Racial Identity: A Raisin In the Sun
3/15	NO CLASS: Spring Break
3/17	NO CLASS: Spring Break
3/22	Racial Identity (Research)
3/24	Racial Socialization
3/29	Debate #2
3/31	Dark Girls Documentary
4/5	African American Mental Health
4/7	African American Mental Health
4/12	Religion and Spirituality
4/14	Language
4/19	Debate #3
4/21	Correcting Unequal Justice
4/26	Course Wrap-Up

Assigned Readings

I. Foundations in African American Psychology

January 14 - 26

Course Overview and Introduction

Fairchild, H.H. (2000). African American Psychology. In A.E. Kazdin (Ed.). *Encyclopedia of psychology* (pp. 92-99). Washington: American Psychological Association

Background, Foundational Themes, and Theoretical Perspectives

Textbook, Chapter 1

Harrell, C.J.P. (1999). "Methods of Study" in *Manichean Psychology*.

White, J.L. (2004). *Toward a Black Psychology*.

January 28 – February 2

Africentric Psychology

Textbook, Chapter 2

Grills, C. (2004). *African Psychology*.

Kambon, K.K.K. (2004). The worldviews paradigm as the conceptual framework for African/Black psychology.

February 9 – 11

Theories of Race and Racism

Textbook, Chapter 4

Lewis-Trotter, P.B., & Jones, J.M. (2004). *Racism: Psychological Perspectives*. Harrell,

C.J.P. (1999). "The Meaning and Impact of Racism" in *Manichean Psychology* (pp. 1 – 51).

II. Psychology of the African American Experience

February 16 – 18

Kinship and Family

Textbook, Chapter 5

Hymowitz, K. (2008). "An Enduring Crisis for the Black Family" from *Washington Post*

February 23 – 25

Educational Systems and Academic Achievement

Textbook, Chapter 6

Cunningham, R., & Boykin, A.W. Enhancing cognitive performance in African American children: Infusing Afro-cultural perspectives in research.

Kellow, T., & Jones, B. (2008). The effects of stereotypes on the achievement gap: Reexamining the academic performance of African American high school students. *Journal of Black Psychology, 34*(1), 94-120.

March 3

Racial Identity Theory

Textbook, Chapter 3

Marks, B., Settles, I.H., Cooke, D.Y., Morgan, L., & Sellers, R.M. (2004). African American Racial Identity: A Review of Contemporary Models and Measures. Textbook (pp. 383 – 404).

Sellers, R.M., Smith, M.A., Shelton, J.N., Rowley, S.A., & Chavous, T.M. (1998). Multidimensional model of racial identity: A reconceptualization of African American racial identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 2*(1), 18-39.

Brown, K.T., Ward, G.K., Lightbourn, T., & Jackson, J.S. (1999). “Skin Tone and Racial Identity Among African Americans: A Theoretical and Research Framework” in *Advances in African American Psychology* (pp. 191-216).

March 22

Racial Identity Research

Sellers, R.M., Copeland-Linder, N., Martin, P.P. & Lewis, R.L. (2006). Racial identity matters: The relationship between racial discrimination and psychological functioning in African American adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 16*(2), 187-216.

Banks, K.H., & Kohn-Wood, L.P. (2007). The influence of racial identity profiles on the relationship between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms. *Journal of Black Psychology, 33*(3), 331-354.

March 24

Racial Socialization

Hughes, D., Rodriguez, J., Smith, E.P., Johnson, D.J., Stevenson, H.C., & Spicer, P. (2006). Parents’ ethnic-racial socialization practices: A review of research and directions for future study. *Developmental Psychology, 42*, 747-770.

III.Special Topics and Recent Advances in Black Psychology

April 5 – 7

African American Mental Health

Textbook, Chapter 13

Jones, A.C. (2004). Psychological Functioning in African Americans: A conceptual guide for use in Psychotherapy.

Ramseur, H.R. (2004). Psychologically Healthy African American Adults. Textbook (pp. 427 – 455).

April 12

Religion and Spirituality

Textbook, Chapter 10

Mattis, J.S., Eubanks, K., Zapata, A.A., Grayman, N., Belkin, M., Mitchell, N.K., et al. (2004). Factors influencing religious non-attendance among African American Men: A multimethod analysis. *Review of Religious Research*, 45(4), 386-403.

April 14

Language

Textbook, Chapter 9, pp. 254 - 259

Smitherman, G. (2004). Talkin' and Testifyin': Black English and the Black Experience. Textbook (pp. 295-312).

Andrews, V.L., & Majors, R.G. (2004). African American Nonverbal Culture. Textbook (pp. 313 - 351).

April 21

Correcting the System of Unequal Justice

Miller, R.R., Browning, S.L., & Spruance, L.M. (2001). An introduction and brief review of the impacts of incarceration on the African American family.