AFR Senior Seminar: The Black Intellectual
AFR 376 (29570)
GWB 1.130: T/TH 12:30-2:00pm

Dr. Minkah Makalani
Office Hours: GWB 3.114, Tuesday 11-noon, Thursday 11-noon, and by appointment
Email: makalani@austin.utexas.edu
Phone: 512-471-4745

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The AFR376 Senior Seminar is a required course for all AFR majors. It is the senior capstone course, and as such, it is expected that students have completed most of their AFR required coursework. Students should, therefore, have some foundational knowledge of African and/or African diasporic societies, cultures and histories, and theories of race, gender, class and/or sexuality. The seminar topics change with the instructors, and reflect the instructor’s research and teaching interests.

This seminar explores how black intellectuals have used the memoir (broadly conceived) to engage in a practice of theorizing black life, racial oppression, empire, and modernity. While the vocation of the intellectual has been assumed by far more than writers alone, our concern is with how writers have thought about and responded to the major problems confronting black people, structuring black life globally, and informing black social movements. How have black writers thought about freedom, democracy, empire, and race? Why have so many chosen to write in the memoir form? Is there a productive relationship between political thought and personal experience? Do such narratives provide insights into the modern world that are not as easily attained through other genres?

No seminar is comprehensive, neither historically nor thematically. As such, this seminar focuses on two broad periods: slavery, and the twentieth century. These two periods raise important questions about freedom, democracy, equality, and social change that continue to animate black thinking. While the readings are largely focused on the United States, we will read supplementary texts from elsewhere in the African diaspora.

The Seminar
The success of any seminar depends on the sustained and earnest participation of all its participants. Because our sessions will revolve around the weekly readings, there are no formal lectures — though I will occasionally provide “mini-lectures” designed to provide you with the necessary historical background for discussion. As such, each student bears responsibility for a productive discussion, and should come to class having completed the assigned readings, prepared to discuss the key themes in the text, raise thoughtful questions, and defend your ideas.

Each week, a pair of students will work together to supply the professor with a set of questions that will help guide seminar discussion. In addition, each paring of students will co-lead a class meeting/discussion once during the semester, where they will summarize that week’s readings, identify its most important points, and assess its value.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. After your third absence, your final course grade will be lowered one full letter grade (e.g., from A- to B-). Each additional absence will lower the final grade one-half measure (e.g., from B- to C+). Seven absences will result in an automatic “F” for
the course. Arriving late to class will count as a half-absence; if you are late six time, your final grade will be lowered one full letter grade.

Technology: The use laptops, tablets, and cell/smart phones is strictly prohibited. If you are seen using your phone in class, you will be asked to leave, and you will be marked absent for that day.

Journal
Each student will keep a journal of your reactions to each text we will read in this class. Your entry will analyze that week’s readings, identifying its main themes, what concerns drive the author, and your thoughts about the work. I am the only person who will read your journal. Each journal entry should be, at a minimum, 300 words; there is no limit on how long each entry may be. Journal entries are due the Tuesday before we discuss a book.

Personal Narrative
For your final project, you will either write your own personal narrative, or a review of two personal narratives that are not assigned for this class. For the first option, rather than a biographical paper, you will explore a major political, cultural, or social issue through the lens of your own life experiences. For the second option, you are to write a formal academic paper on two works that you have cleared with the professor. Guidelines for each assignment are forthcoming.

Grades
Your course grade will be based on the following:
  Journal: 30%
  Seminar Discussion/Participation: 30%
  Personal Narrative Essay: 40%

Grading Scale

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<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fail</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<td>Percent Range</td>
<td>100-97</td>
<td>96-94</td>
<td>93-90</td>
<td>89-87</td>
<td>86-84</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Value</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>85</td>
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Your grade will be determined based on this scale. For example, if you receive a “B” on the Journal assignment, the corresponding numerical score would be 85. As 30% of your grade, this will translate into (85 x .30=) 25.5. When adding all your grades together, the final score is grouped with the appropriate letter grade. An “F” grade will range between 35-0. Failure to submit or complete an assignment will result in “0” points.

Documented Disability Statement: Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice), 232-2937 (video phone) or http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd).
Academic Integrity
Students are advised to familiarize themselves with the University of Texas’ policies on academic integrity, and the penalty for plagiarism and other forms of cheating. Please note, any instance of plagiarism in this course will result in an automatic “F” for the assignment; the final disposition of a penalty will follow the University’s guidelines. Please follow the links below for more information:
http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/for_students.php
http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acadint_whatis.php

Required Book
• James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time.
• Staceyann Chin, The Other Side of Paradise: A Memoir.
• Ta-Nehisi Coates, Between the World and Me.
• Quobna Ottobah Cugoano, Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery.
• Angela Y. Davis, Angela Davis: An Autobiography.
• Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass.
• Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.
• C.L.R. James, Beyond a Boundary.
* Readings not taken from these books will be available on Blackboard.

SYLLABUS
Week 1
Jan 19 Introduction: The Danger of a Single Story


Week 2
Jan 26, 28 Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass.

Week 3
Feb 2 & 4 Quobna Ottobah Cugoano, Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery.

Week 4
Feb 9, 11 Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.

Week 5
Feb 16 Ida B. Wells, “Standing Face to Face with Twenty-Fives Years of Life,” 109-159.


Week 6

Week 7
March 1, 3 C. L. R. James, Beyond a Boundary, 1-97; George Lamming, “Politics and Culture,” 473-477.
Week 8  
March 8, 10 C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 101-261.

Week 9  
**SPRING BREAK**
Begin Reading Angela Y. Davis, *Angela Davis: An Autobiography*

Week 10  

Week 11  

Week 12  
April 5, 7 Staceyann Chin, *The Other Side of Paradise*, 1-139.

Week 13  
April 12, 14 Staceyann Chin, *The Other Side of Paradise*, 141-276.

Week 14  
April 19, 21 Begin Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*.

Week 15  
April 26, 28 Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*,  
“Philosophers on Coates’s *Between the World and Me*,  
http://dailynous.com/2015/08/18/philosophers-on-coates-between-world-me/"

Week 16  
May 3, 5 Conference/Office Hours

May 11 Final Papers Due 1 pm.