HI 4363: African American History & Culture, Section I
Spring 2016, T/TH 9:30-10:45

Instructor
Dr. Brandon Byrd
bbyrd@history.msstate.edu
(662) 325-3604
Center for Historical Studies

Office Hours
T/TH from 2:00-3:30 or by appointment

Course Description:
African-Americans from their African origins to the present, emphasizing black-white relations in the making of America.

Class Schedule and Due Dates *(Readings must be completed by the first class meeting of the week on which they are assigned. Hard copies of the RRQs and research proposals are due at the beginning of the last class meeting of the week. Essays are due on MyCourses by the assigned date.)*

Week 1: Introduction
Read Syllabus.

Unit 1: Religion

Week 2: The Question of African Survivals
Read Harvey, Introduction-Chapter 2.

Week 3: Black Religion and Resistance
Read Harvey, Chapters 3-4. RRQ #1 and Meeting with research librarian.

Week 4: African American Churches & Social Advocacy
Read Harvey, Chapter 5-Epilogue. First essay due by February 5 at midnight.

Unit 2: Food

Week 5: From African Origins to African American Cuisine
Read Opie, Introduction-Chapter 5. RRQ #2

Week 6: From Southern Cuisine to Soul Food
Read Opie, Chapters 6-Epilogue. Second essay due by February 19 at midnight.

Unit 3: Music

Week 7: A Soundtrack for Revolution
Read Neal, Introduction-Chapter 2. RRQ #3
Week 8: The Commodification of Black Sound  
Read Neal Chapters 3-4. Research proposal.

Week 9: Commercialization and Appropriation: From Rock & Roll to Rap  
Read Neal Chapters 5-6. Third essay due by March 11 at midnight.

Week 10: SPRING BREAK

Unit 4: Film

Week 11: The African American Image in Early Film  
Read Bogle, Chapters 1-3. RRQ #4

Week 12: The Birth of African American Cinema  
Read Bogle, Chapters 4-7. Revised research proposal.

Week 13: The Evolution of African American Cinema  
Read Bogle, Chapters 8-10. Fourth essay due by April 8 at midnight.

Unit 5: Sport

Week 14: The Early Black Athlete  
Read Rhoden, Chapters 1-4. RRQ #5

Week 15: From Segregation to Integration  
Read Rhoden, Chapters 5-7. RRQ #6

Week 16: Race, Sport, and Black Culture Today  
Read Rhoden, Chapters 8-Epilogue. Fifth essay due by April 29 at midnight.

****Final Research Paper Due: May 6 at Midnight.****

Learning Objectives:
This course is designed to help students:

- Increase their knowledge of people, places, events, ideas, and practices significant to African American cultural history.
- Better conceptualize relationships among those people, places, events, ideas, and practices.
- Use their understanding of interrelated people, places, events, ideas, and practices to explain broader trends in the African American experience over time.
- Offer their unique interpretations and assessments of the African American experience and, especially, African American cultural history.
- Improve their research and writing skills through the development and execution of an independent research project about African American cultural history.
In turn, attaining increased historical knowledge, improving their ability to synthesize that knowledge, and enhancing their capacity for analysis, explication, and evaluation will help students engage critically with current manifestations of and ideas about African American culture.

**Course Materials:**
Students are advised to purchase the following required texts at the very start of the semester. They are listed in the order that you will read them. Because I do not consider the lack of required books a legitimate excuse for incomplete or subpar work, any student who has trouble locating the material should notify me as soon as possible.


**Class Assignments (Further details on each assignment are posted on MyCourses):**

- **Reading Response Questions:** Students will respond critically to a question posed about the assigned readings on six of our weeks. Your lowest score will be dropped. The questions will be posted on MyCourses on the Sunday leading into the week on which the RRQ is due.
- **Research Proposal:** Students will write a 2-3 page proposal clarifying the proposed topic of their research paper, the question(s) it seeks to answer, and the primary and secondary sources used to complete the paper.
- **Revised Research Proposal:** Students will have the chance to revise their initial proposal and hone their ideas about their proposed topic, question(s), and sources.
- **Essays:** These 4-5 page papers require students to respond critically to questions posed about our assigned books. The questions will be posted to MyCourses at least one week before the essay deadline. Students are only required to complete four of these essays thus giving them the opportunity to give special attention to the topics that prove most interesting to them.
- **Final Research Paper:** Students will have the opportunity to write a 10-12 page paper demonstrating their original research and analysis of any aspect of black cultural history.

**Methods of Evaluation and Standards of Achievement**
Students will receive a rubric and/or guidelines for each of the assignments listed above. The maximum points that can be gained for each are as follows:

- **Reading Response Questions:** 50 points (10 points each with lowest score dropped)
- **Research Proposal:** 10 points
- **Revised Research Proposal:** 20 points
- **Essays:** 200 points (50 points each with students opting out of one book of their choosing)
- **Final Research Paper:** 100 points
In addition to those assignments, students will also be evaluated on their attendance, students will receive 70 points for having three or less unexcused absences. Each absence beyond that will result in a deduction of 5 points from that category.

Cumulatively, then, students can earn 450 points this semester. Here is how those points will translate to a grade category:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Points earned</th>
<th>Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>450-405</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>404-360</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>359-315</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>314-270</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>269-</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The grading scale used for this course reflects the standard A through F scale: 100-90=A; 89-80=B; 79-70=C; 69-60=D; 59 and below=F. To calculate your final grade I will add the total number of points scored on all assignments and divide that number by the total number of points possible. There will be no rounding of grades at the end of the course.

**General Class Information**

Students must contact the professor immediately if they know of any dates for which they will have an excused absence (i.e university sanctioned event, major illness, etc) from class. If there is an assignment that day, we will work together to come up with an alternative date to complete it.

If unforeseen circumstances (i.e. debilitating injury) cause you to miss an assignment you must notify me and provide me with the appropriate documentation as soon as possible. In this instance, we will also work together to come up with an alternative date to complete the missed assignment.

All assignments must be submitted on their assigned date unless other arrangements have been made between the student and myself. Late work will be subject to penalty unless alternative arrangements have been made between the student and me.

I welcome discussion with any student who wants further explanation of the grade that they received on an assignment. I do, however, require that students wait 24 hours before meeting with me to discuss said assignment. This period will allow you to reflect on my feedback as well as your performance.

In addition, I expect the following from all students:

**Attendance:** I expect students to attend each class period. This is for two reasons. First, I cannot help you learn if you are absent. The information you receive in class augments the work you do outside of class. In other words, you will have an incomplete experience in the course if you complete the readings but miss class (or, vice versa, if you attend class but do not complete the readings). This leads me to the second reason that I expect attendance at all class meetings. Successful completion of your assignments—including the final research paper—will require an understanding of information presented in class. It is improbable that a student could miss multiple classes and demonstrate a sound ability to conduct independent research in African American cultural history.
Collegiality: Besides being present, I expect students to behave according to the highest standards of civility. This means treating classmates and myself with consideration and respect, listening carefully to others, and avoiding being a distraction. In order to make this last expectation easier, I have two main requirements. First, I require that students turn their cell phones off upon entering the classroom. If it is an emergency and a student needs to take a call then the student should leave the room and use as much time as needed to take care of the pressing concern. In all other cases, students will be counted absent for that class meeting if they are observed on their phone. Second, I require responsible use of laptops in the classroom. Study after study shows that students struggle to retain information when multi-tasking (i.e. reading espn.com while in lecture), and distract others around them when engaged in extra-curricular activities on the internet. Consequently, students observed on non-academic sites will be counted absent for that class period.

Punctuality: Assignments must be completed or submitted at the assigned date. Failure to do so not only disrupts your learning process but it is also unfair to your classmates who have adhered to deadlines. For this reason, late assignments will be penalized 10 points for every day they are late.

Communication: The unexpected will invariably happen to you during your college career. It is critical that, when it does, you communicate with me and provide me with any necessary information. For instance, if an illness arises, it is essential that we work together to make the accommodations necessary for you to still have a positive experience in the course. In a similar vein, students with disabilities verified through the department of Student Support services (http://www.sss.msstate.edu) should notify me immediately.

In turn, students can expect the following from me:

Consideration: I look forward to helping you understand and enjoy history. I will do my best to answer your questions in class or afterwards. Please do not hesitate to ask anything that comes to mind. If you are curious or confused, at least one of your classmates is as well. Your inquiry will thus benefit not only yourself but also others.

Punctuality: I will provide constructive feedback on all your work in an effort to help you best convey your thoughts verbally as well as on your assignments. This feedback and, of course, a grade will be given within one week of the assignment’s submission.

Availability: Students can come to me for help outside of the classroom. I encourage students to come by my office during the hours listed at the top of this syllabus or schedule an appointment at an alternative time. I am also available via email. I will try to answer all emails within 24 hours but students should be aware that it might not be possible to answer all emails on the same day that they are sent.

Support: I will be attentive to your needs. Along with supporting your efforts to succeed in this course, I will also do my best to accommodate any students with health issues, disabilities, or other circumstances that might affect your learning experience. Please make me aware of any such concerns at the beginning of the course so that we can work together and with the proper campus resources to make my classroom as conducive to your learning as possible.

Sensitivity: Throughout this course, we will encounter humans doing and saying very inhumane things. Some lectures and discussion will pertain to racial and sexual violence and students will encounter vile language including racial slurs. I will do my best to handle this subject matter with the
sensitivity and respect it requires and I welcome an individual meeting with any student finding the subject matter particularly difficult.

**Student Honor Code**
Mississippi State University has an approved Honor Code that applies to all students. The code is as follows: “As a Mississippi State University student I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.” Upon accepting admission to Mississippi State University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor Code. Students will be required to state their commitment on examinations, research papers, and other academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the MSU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor Code. For additional information, please visit: [http://www.students.msstate.edu/honorcode/](http://www.students.msstate.edu/honorcode/)

**Title IX**
MSU is committed to complying with Title IX, a federal law that prohibits discrimination, including violence and harassment, based on sex. This means that MSU’s educational programs and activities must be free from sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and other forms of sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know has experienced sex discrimination, sexual violence and/or harassment by any member of the University community, you are encouraged to report the conduct to MSU’s Director of Title IX/EEO Programs at 325-8124 or by e-mail to titleix@msstate.edu. Additional resources are available at [http://www.msstate.edu/web/security/title9-12.pdf](http://www.msstate.edu/web/security/title9-12.pdf), or at [http://students.msstate.edu/sexualmisconduct/](http://students.msstate.edu/sexualmisconduct/).

**Support Services**
Students who need academic accommodations based on a disability should visit the Office of Student Support Services, 01 Montgomery Hall, call 662-325-3335, or visit the website at [www.sss.msstate.edu](http://www.sss.msstate.edu).