AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA
HIST 4953: Spring 2014
Marquette University

Instructor: Brandon Byrd
Meetings: T/TH, 11:00-12:15
Classroom: Lalumiere 310

Instructor Contact Information
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In 2008, Barack Obama became the 44th President of the United States. The son of a Kenyan father and white American mother was immediately characterized as the first African American President. Many black voters who supported Obama in overwhelming numbers in 2008 and during his successful re-election bid in 2012 have since identified Obama as a symbol of their collective progress.

This affinity between African Americans and Obama raises several questions. First, how have African Americans defined themselves? Has this definition of black identity acknowledged a relationship to a larger African Diaspora? Finally, how have African Americans attempted to use the African Diaspora as a resource in the black freedom struggle? Through a careful consideration of scholarly interpretations of the black experience from the era of the Transatlantic Slave Trade to the age of Obama, we will posit answers to these questions and reach broader conclusions about the transnational foundations of modern-day African American identity and political culture.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*
Robert Vinson, *The Americans are Coming! Dreams of African American Liberation in Segregationist South Africa.*

COURSE FORMAT
This course is broken up by theme into seven units. Each two-week unit consists of four classes. I will lecture during the first two classes of a given unit. For the third class period, I will facilitate discussion based on an assigned article. During the last session of each unit we will discuss an assigned monograph. Students will be paired and tasked with leading discussion during two of our “capstone” meetings during the semester. In the units where students are not tasked with leading the “capstone” discussion, they will submit three discussion questions via the course site by 5:00 p.m. on the day listed. Discussion facilitators will therefore have access to these questions prior to the class meeting. Students should also feel free to meet with me in advance of assuming leadership of the class. (Students should note that our unit on Civil Rights and Black Power in a Diasporic Context follows this same format even though it will stretch across three weeks)

ASSIGNMENTS

Students are required to read all seven of the assigned books. Of these, students will write 1-2 page book reviews of five. Reviews are due at the beginning of class on the date listed. These readings and reviews, along with lectures and discussions, will prepare students for a final 8-10 page historiographical essay due in my office by noon on May 10. Students will have the opportunity to develop their topic for this final assignment throughout the semester.

Writing coherent and convincing book reviews and essays is not an easy skill. I will offer help before and after each assignment and am available for additional consultation for students wishing to receive further help. You should also consider consulting the Writing Center (http://www.marquette.edu/english/writingcenter/). Students who confer with trained advisers at the Center often find that their writing improves significantly.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Discussion Facilitation, Question Submission, and Participation: 10%
Five Book Reviews: 50%
Topic Proposals: 10%
Final Historiographical Essay: 30%

I will explain each category in class. I have also posted guidelines on how each category will be assessed onto the course website.
Addendum: I reserve the right to give reading quizzes at any point in the semester. These would be factored into the participation category. Opportunities for extra credit may present themselves as well and will be explained as they arise.

EXPECTATIONS

I look forward to helping you understand and enjoy history. I will try to answer your questions and clear up any confusion in class or afterwards. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions that come to mind. The only “dumb question” is the one that goes unasked.
I will provide constructive feedback on all your written work and will help you best convey your thoughts verbally as well as on your assignments. If you are dissatisfied with your performance on a given assignment or would like clarification on how it was assessed, then I am more than willing to discuss that with students. As a rule, students should wait 24 hours before asking for a reevaluation of a given grade. After that period, I am open to reevaluation in order to assure fairness in all assessments.

I will be available for help outside of the classroom. Students are encouraged to come to my office hours with any questions. Appointments outside of office hours may also be scheduled. I am available by email as well. I will try to answer all emails within 24 hours but students should be aware that it might not be possible to answer all email queries the same day that they are sent.

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 conducive to your learning needs.

Accordingly, I expect the following from you:

ATTENDANCE: I cannot help you learn, if you are not there to learn. Reading a friend’s notes of a discussion, movie, or slide presentation cannot replicate your direct experience. Moreover, this course is meant to facilitate discussion and strengthen students’ ability to debate facts. I therefore expect you to attend all class meetings. If you are unable to attend a class, please let me know ahead of schedule.

COLLEGIALITY: Please treat classmates and myself considerately and respectfully. Listen to the comments of others and avoid being a distraction. In order to make the latter easier, I do not permit the use of cell phones, laptops, or other electronic devices in class.

PUNCTUALITY: All writings must be turned in as a hardcopy at the beginning of the designated class period. If you turn in a paper late, you are disrupting your learning, for the assignments are synchronized with other parts of the course. What’s more, you are being unfair to your fellow students. Late assignments will be penalized 5 points for every day they are late, beginning with the class period in which they were due. I understand that unavoidable problems can occur. If they do, please come talk to me and, if possible, provide a convincing explanation before the assignment is due.

INTEGRITY: Obey the honor code discussed below.

HONOR CODE

You are bound by Marquette’s longstanding policy on academic dishonesty, which can be found here:  
http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/#academichonestypolicy
We will discuss this policy but it behooves you to also familiarize yourself with it during your own time. In general, some basic rules to follow are:

- Quote and cite any words that are not your own.
- If you paraphrase the words of another, you must still give proper citation.
- Cite sources for distinctive perspectives or opinions.

Avoiding plagiarism requires that you acknowledge the ideas of another by citing the works you reference. Many different citation formats exist. In this course, we will be using Chicago Manual of Style, the format commonly used by historians. Please, speak to me if you have any questions about how or whether to cite a source. I have posted some guidelines on using the Chicago format on the course website.

CLASS SCHEDULE
(Readings marked with an asterisk can be found on the course website)

**Week 1-2: The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Advent of Diaspora**
January 21: Read Julius S. Scott, “Afro-American Sailors and the International Communication Network.”*
January 22: Submit discussion questions for Smallwood by 5:00 p.m.
January 23: Review of Smallwood due in class.

**Week 3-4: Black Nationalism and Black Identity in Early America**
February 4: Read Sara C. Fanning’s “The Roots of Early Black Nationalism.”*
February 5: Submit discussion questions for Sidbury by 5:00 p.m.
February 6: Review of Sidbury and historiography paper proposal with list of additional sources due in class.

**Weeks 5-6: Emigration in the Antebellum Era**
February 18: Read Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, “The Serpentine Trail.”*
February 19: Submit discussion questions for Tyler-Mcgraw by 5:00 p.m.
February 20: Review of Tyler-Mcgraw due in class.

**Weeks 7-8: African Americans, Africa, and Imperialism**
March 4: Read Michele Mitchell, “The Black Man’s Burden.”*
March 5: Submit discussion questions for Adeleke by 5:00 p.m.
March 6: Review of Adeleke due in class.

**SPRING BREAK: MARCH 9-MARCH 16**

**Week 9-10: Black Internationalism**
March 25: Read Lara Putnam, “Nothing Matters But Color.”*
March 26: Submit discussion questions for Vinson by 5:00 p.m.
March 27: Review of Vinson and revised historiography paper proposal with annotated bibliography due in class.

Weeks 11-13: Civil Rights and Black Power in a Diasporic Perspective
April 8 and 10: We will watch Malcolm X on these dates.
April 14: Submit discussion questions for Marable by 5:00 p.m.
April 15: Review of Marable due in class.

EASTER BREAK: NO CLASS ON APRIL 17

Week 14-15: Contemporary Reflections on Diaspora
April 29: Read James T. Campbell, “Counting the Bodies” and “The Language We Cry In.”*
April 30: Submit discussion questions for Hartman by 5:00 p.m.
May 1: Review of Hartman due in class.

FINAL HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ESSAYS DUE IN MY OFFICE BY MAY 8 AT NOON