THE AFRICAN DIASPORA: ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

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COURSE DESCRIPTION
African Diaspora Studies is a multidisciplinary field of inquiry and the discipline of anthropology has been essential to the understandings, imaginings, and theorization of the African diaspora. In turn, the African diaspora has contributed to shaping anthropological knowledge and methods. This course explores this synergistic relationship principally through the analysis of ethnographies that not only feature people of African descent, but also engage the multi-dimensional, dynamic concept of Diaspora. We will begin with an examination of the theorization of this concept, focusing on anthropological contributions to such topics as the relationship between continental Africa and the Diaspora, blackness and embodiment, racialized inequality, and contemporary globalization. This will be followed by readings that will familiarize students with anthropological debates around ethnography and its role in knowledge production, specifically knowledge about the “African Other”. Having engaged with these theoretical and methodological concerns, students will embark on a critical analysis of six ethnographies that explore the political, social, and cultural realities of communities in the U.S., England, Nicaragua, Jamaica, Cuba, Haiti, and Brazil. These ethnographies will be paired with ethnographic documentary films that also engage these communities and topics.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
At the end of the class, students will:

(1) Have an in-depth understanding of the major conceptual and methodological approaches adopted by anthropologists in the production of knowledge about the African diaspora.
(2) Have expanded their understanding of the cultural, social and political realities of people of African descent in a range of geographic locations.
(3) Have deepened their understanding of ethnographic research conducted in their own area of interest.
(4) Be able to produce a critical analysis of ethnographic texts.
(5) Be able to effectively communicate anthropological perspectives on the African diaspora in oral and written form.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

ALL READINGS MUST BE DONE IN ADVANCE, ACCORDING TO THE SCHEDULE OF CLASSES. THE BOOKS ARE ON SALE AT THE MMC FIU BOOKSTORE. THE ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS ARE AVAILABLE IN PDF FORMAT ON BLACKBOARD OR ONLINE THROUGH FIU LIBRARY. THE FILMS AND VIDEOS WILL BE VIEWED IN CLASS UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE.

*Ethnographies*


*Ethnographic/Documentary Films*


Moss, Susanne 2004. *Ras Cuba*

Riggs, Marlon 1994. *Black Is…Black Ain’t* (87 minutes)

Rolando, Gloria 1996. *Los Hijos de Baraguá* (53 minutes)

Smith, Llewellyn 2009. *Herkovits at the Heart of Blackness* (57 minutes)
Black, Stephanie 2001. **Life and Debt** (1hr 26m)

**Articles and Book Chapters**
See Schedule of Classes Below

**Recommended Reading**

**REQUIREMENTS**

1. **Blackboard**: All students are required to regularly utilize Blackboard for this course. Through this website, students will be able to access course information and materials, upload the assignments, view course announcements, send and receive messages, and access grades.

2. **Attendance**: Attendance is mandatory and absences will affect your grade. If you know that you will have a conflict, notify the instructor in advance. Timely attendance is also critical, therefore recurrent lateness will affect your participation. We will have one break during class and it is important that you return by the time class resumes.

3. **Class Participation**: This class is a seminar and it is critical that you come to class prepared to discuss the assigned materials. This class requires small group work and critical reflection. Not only will the quality of your participation in class affect your final grade, but also lack of participation will make this a very long two and a half hours.

4. **Class Facilitation**: You will be required to present weekly readings and facilitate class discussion throughout the semester by yourself as well as in collaboration with one of your classmates. At the beginning of each class, students will be divided into groups of two or three and will then interview each other about the week's materials. This involves creating a short list of questions and bringing them to class with the intention of using them for the peer interview exercise. At the end of the exercise, one person from each group will present the responses to the interview questions to the entire class. Amongst the presenters, one person will be responsible for facilitating the discussion and summarizing the main points at the end of class.

5. **Three (3) Take Home Exams**: These exams will consist of one essay question that will provide you with the opportunity to demonstrate critical engagement with the key ideas and course materials in each module. The first exam will cover the theoretical and methodological material, the second exam will be a comparative essay on assigned ethnographies, and the third will be an essay comparing one film and one ethnography.
6. **Final Research Paper and Presentation**: Each student must write a 20-page paper (excluding a bibliography and endnotes) comparing two ethnographies of her or his choice. These ethnographies must center populations of the African Diaspora and be approved by the instructor. The paper must: (1) engage the theoretical and methodological issues discussed throughout the semester (2) present an overview and critical analysis of each text, (3) adopt a comparative approach, and (4) incorporate other scholars’ critical analysis of the ethnographic subject(s). At the end of the semester, you will be expected to make a 10-15 minute presentation on your final paper.

**EVALUATION**
Your final grade is out of a total of 100 points and will be determined roughly as follows:

1) Class Participation and Facilitation: 30 pts
2) Take home exams (3): 30 pts
3) Final paper and presentation: 40 points

**CLASS MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

January 14th
**Introduction to the Course**

January 21st
**Theorizing the African in Diaspora**


*Film*: “Herskovits at the Heart of Blackness” (BBC GN21.H47 H477—3 hr loan)


January 28th
**Defining Diaspora**


February 4th
**Anthropology and The Field: Representing the African Diaspora**


Marcus and Fischer 1986. “Introduction” In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*

Harrison, Faye, ed 1991. *Decolonizing Anthropology: Towards an Anthropology of Liberation*, selected chapters:

--Blakey, Michael L., “Man and Nature, White and Other” (15-23)
--Harrison, Faye, “Ethnography as Politics” (88-109)
--Bourgois, Philippe, “Confronting the Ethics of Ethnography: Lessons From Fieldwork in Central America” (110-126)


Recommended:


*****TAKE HOME EXAM #1 QUESTION POSTED FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5th *****

February 11th
   1) Ethnography I: Downtown Ladies
   2) Film: Life and Debt

**********TAKE HOME EXAM #1 DUE FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12th **********

February 18th
   1) Downtown Ladies

February 25th
   1) Ethnography II: Rescuing Our Roots
   2) Film: Hijos de Baraguá
   3) Assignment: Submit One Paragraph Description of Potential Topic and Ethnographies for Final Paper

March 3rd
   1) Ethnography III: Rasta and Revolution
   2) Film: Ras Cuba

*****TAKE HOME EXAM #2 QUESTION POSTED BY FRIDAY, MARCH 3rd *****

March 10th  NO CLASS

*****FINALIZE SELECTION OF ETHNOGRAPHIES AND BEGIN FINAL PROJECT*****

*************TAKE HOME EXAM #2 DUE FRIDAY, MARCH 11th *************
March 17th  NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK

March 24th
  1) Ethnography IV: Creating Africa in America: Translocal Identity in an Emerging World City
  2) Film: Black Is...Black Ain’t (87 minutes)

March 31th
  1) Creating Africa in America
  2) Selected Articles from *Transforming Anthropology* 2010 18(1):
      * Clarke, Kamari Maxine “Response by Author” (79).
      * Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe “Reconceptualizing African Diasporas: Notes From a Historian” (74-78).

April 7th
  1) Ethnography V: Dancing Wisdom: Embodied Knowledge in Haitian Vodou, Cuban Yoruba, and Bahian Candomble
  2) Film: Maya Deren’s Divine Horseman (51 minutes)

April 14th
  1) Ethnography VI: Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool
  2) Film: TBA

*******TAKE HOME EXAM #3 QUESTION POSTED FRIDAY, APRIL 15th *******

April 21st
  1) Ethnography VI: Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail

*******TAKE HOME EXAM #3 DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 22nd *******

April 28th    Last day of classes

PRESENTATIONS OF FINAL PAPERS
May 5th - EXAM WEEK

FINAL PAPER DUE THURSDAY, MAY 5th