

African American Studies 399/English 487 (CRN: 49579)
Special Topics: *The Gullah-Geechee Experience, Interdisciplinary Approaches*
MOREHOUSE COLLEGE
Spring 2018

Meeting Time: T & Th, 3:50-5:05 pm

Meeting Place: Brawley Hall 203

Professors:

Samuel T. Livingston, Ph.D. (Africana)
Corrie Claiborne, Ph.D. (English)
Frederick Knight, Ph.D. (History)

Consuella Bennett, Ph.D. (English)
Cynthia L. Hewitt, Ph.D. (Sociology)
Natasha Walker, M.A. (English)

Lead Faculty:

samuel.livingston@morehouse.edu

Office: Brawley Hall, room 202P

Office Hours: T, W, R, 11:00 - 12:30 pm

Telephone: (404) 215-2750

Twitter: @samoryba

corrie.claiborne@morehouse.edu

Brawley Hall, room 103J

M-R 1:00-2:00pm

(404) 215-6197

@profclaiborne

Course Description

Students enrolled in the *Gullah-Geechee Experience, Interdisciplinary Approaches* special topics course will read, analyze, and interpret major works about and by people from the 180 square mile area that stretches, roughly, from Wilmington, North Carolina to the Florida coast and comprises the Gullah homeland. This area, particularly around the Georgia and South Carolina Sea Islands serves as a rich repository of African Diasporic Culture and offers an opportunity to study permutations of certain African traditions, language, and aesthetic practices throughout the American cultural landscape. Representative historical, cultural, sociological, linguistic, and literary works from the antebellum period until the present will be read and discussed. Attention will be paid to cultural backgrounds and history relevant to the works under study. The class will also offer a cultural tour, during which we will travel to Savannah and Sapelo Island in Georgia and Beaufort, St. Helena's Island, Sullivan's Island, Charleston, and Georgetown in South Carolina. This course will feature lectures from faculty in English, History, Sociology and African American Studies. To enroll in this course, students must have received a "C" or above in English 101 and 102, OR in English 103. It is also recommended, *but not required*, to have earned a "C" or better in AAS 100, *Introduction to African American Studies* and/or History 112.

Course Objectives

The course provides opportunities to practice effective thinking, talking, and writing about Gullah Culture, as well as the chance to gain fuller knowledge of American, Caribbean, and African history. At the center of this study is Trans-Atlantic slavery. Through some comparative study of texts from the larger African-American and African traditions, we will attempt to bring to light something of the variety of the connections among these literary, historical, and cultural traditions. Moreover, course requirements will also encourage students to develop their research and critical writing skills.

Course Design

Students are expected to read critically and carefully. Regular attendance is required of all students. Having done the necessary reading assigned each day, each student is expected to write 2 position papers dealing with themes, issues, or observations prevalent in the works under consideration. These

are analytical papers that should give evidence of critical reflection and engagement with the texts and class discussions. The papers are to be 3-4 typed pages and handed in on the date specified. No late papers will be accepted without a formal excuse. Students are also expected to complete tests from the different units, as well as take a midterm and complete a final project. In addition:

- Students are also expected to come to class with one critical question. This question (no more than 2 sentences) should be sparked by something in the reading that the student thinks requires more investigation. These short questions, which should be written out on the discussion board on Blackboard will comprise a significant part of the class participation grade.
- During the travel experience to the South Carolina and Georgia Coasts, each student is required to keep a travel journal, reflecting on the elements of the trip that resonate with them and reinforce the reading. All student journals will be posted to a public webpage that will document the trip.
- Finally for the final exam, you are required to complete a digital project. This project is expected to display thoughtfulness and evidence of further reading. It is a good idea to arrange a conference with the professors to outline this project right after we return from Spring Break.
- Each student, as part of their ongoing research is expected to give a presentation related to their final digital project. The individual presentation will be a brief presentation of primary source documents used, the time mapping project, and integration of the student's travel journal.

COURSE OUTCOMES AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. In essays, demonstrate understanding of the global and historical roots of Gullah Cultural identity
2. In a timeline, chart the reciprocal relationship between Gullah-Geechee cultural identity and resistance to slavery and other forms of oppression;
3. Chart the impact of history and culture on the language;
4. State the linguistic features of Gullah language relative to other dialects, i.e. Bahamian and Jamaican Creoles;
5. Develop a broader understanding of slavery's effect on diasporic religions
6. Practice critical and synthesis-oriented reading of literary texts pertaining to Gullah and Geechee culture;
7. Students must demonstrate their ability to conduct research through field research and other salient methods;
8. Synthesize into research projects their knowledge of Gullah culture and current intellectual, social, political and economic contexts;
9. Trace the influences of African and Western influences on Gullah Geechee spirituality
10. Analyze how location (and access to nature) affect the retention of healing practices
11. Understand sociological examinations of Gullah social identity through readings of the archeology of place and environment and genealogical research;

Required Readings (* indicates reading on Blackboard)

- *Gomez, Michael. *Exchanging Our Country Marks*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998. Print. (PDF on Blackboard)
- Manigault-Bryant, LeRhonda. *Talking to the Dead: Religion, Music, and Lived Memory among Gullah/Geechee Women*. Duke University Press, 2014.
- Naylor, Gloria. *Mama Day*. New York: Vintage, 1989. Print.
- *Penningroth, Dylan, "Freedom, Slavery and Social Claims to Property Among African Americans in Liberty County, Georgia, 1850-1880," *Journal of American History* 84: 2 (Sept. 1997), 405-35. (PDF on Blackboard)
- *Stuckey, P. Sterling, "Reflections on the Scholarship of African Origins & Influence in American Slavery," *Journal of African American History*, 91:4 (Autumn 2006), 425-443. (PDF on Blackboard)
- *Turner, Lorenzo Dow. *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*. (1949) Columbia: University of South Carolina Press. Print. (PDF of excerpts on Blackboard)

Recommended Texts and Films for Further Study (not required to buy)

- Conrack*. Dir. Martin Ritt. Perf. Jon Voight, Paul Winfield, and Madge Sinclair. Twentieth Century Fox, 1974. Film. (online)
- Conroy, Pat. *The Water is Wide: A Memoir*. New York; Dial Press, 2002. Print.
- Daughters of the Dust*. Dir. Julie Dash. Perf. Cora Lee Day, Alva Rogers, and Barbara O. American Playhouse, 2001. Film. (online)
- Davis, Veronica Gerald and Jesse E. Gantt. *The Ultimate Gullah Cookbook*. Sands Publishing, 2002. (Select recipes- no need to purchase)
- Georgia Writers' Project. *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes*.
- Grosvenor, Vertamae Smart. *Vibration Cooking: or, The Travel Notes of A Geechee Girl*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 2011. Print.
- Heyward, DuBose. *Porgy*. Oxford: UP of Mississippi, 2001. Print
- Hill, Lawrence. *The Book of Negroes*. New York: W.W. Norton, January 12, 2015. (Also published as *Someone Knows My Name*, 2008)
- Opala, Joseph. *The Gullah: Rice, Slavery, and the Sierra-Leone – American Connection*. (online).

Pollitzer, William. *The Gullah People and Their African Heritage*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999.

Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*. New York: Vintage Books, 1984.

Wood, Peter. *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1760 Through the Stono Rebellion*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1974. (excerpts)

Web Resources

http://www.africanaheritage.com/Gullah_and_Sierra_Leone.asp

<http://www.nps.gov/ethnography/aah/aaheritage/sysMeaningC.htm>

* other supplemental works and websites will be provided.

Evaluation of Coursework:

Grades will be determined on the basis of the following percentages:

Three tests	25%
Two position papers:	20%
Class participation (including questions):	10%

Grading Scale

<u>Points</u>	<u>Grade</u>
100-97	A+
96-93	A
92 -90	A-
89-87	B+
86-83	B
82-80	B-
79-77	C+
76-73	C
72-70	C-
69-67	D+
66-60	D
59 and below	F

Mid-term:	15%
Travel Journal:	10%
Presentation of Digital Research Project:	5%
Final Examination (Digital Research Project):	15%
Total	100%

*A Maximum of 2 additional presentations or papers may be chosen for extra credit based on the lectures/ demonstrations of the invited speakers.

*No work will be accepted after the scheduled day and time for the final exam. Students may not take any test or exam if they arrive more than 15 minutes late to class.

POLICIES

Materials: Bring required materials to class every day.

About discussion: This course revolves around discussion. Everyone is expected to participate during each class meeting – come prepared during each class meeting with at least one question or comment. Meaningful participation is crucial to your success in the class. Although reading and writing are primarily the factors that will determine your grade, you will benefit the most educationally and personally from the class discussions.

About Participation and Attendance: Due to the nature of this class and its emphasis on discussion, missing class will prove detrimental to your final grade. Every absence will affect your participation grade, and more than three absences (without an excuse recognized by the University as legitimate, e.g. documented illness) will lower your final grade by one whole letter. Please avoid coming to class late or leaving class early, as these types of behavior will result in being marked absent.

Late Paper Policy: No late papers or assignments will be accepted unless you provide a valid, legitimate excuse (i.e., documented illness). We will check to see if all assignments due are completed and will make a note of it. We will not comment on drafts that are submitted late. Also, extensions are not granted on essays without a discussion with the professor(s) prior to the due date. If you have excused travel and University activities, please notify us before the assignment is due. Papers are due at the scheduled time on Blackboard – no exceptions.

Paper Format: All assigned writing must be typed (double-spaced) using Times New Roman (unless otherwise necessary) with 1" margins on all sides, including drafts. Please use either a 10-point or 12-point font. Your name, the professor's name, the course name/number, and the date the assignment is due should appear in the upper left hand corner of the first page followed by the title centered on the next line. The response papers should all be about 3-4 pages in length.

Classroom Etiquette: Please refrain from answering or making calls in the classroom or during class time. Cell phones may only be used to pull up data or participate in quizzes related to classroom activity.

Academic Integrity: Submitting someone else's work as your own is a serious offense with serious consequences in the academic community whether it is intentional or inadvertent. Any phrases, sentences, or ideas that are clearly not your own should be documented and/or cited so that the person who said or wrote them may receive credit. Cheating in class, plagiarizing, lying, and employing other methods of deceit diminish the integrity of the educational experience. The need for honest relations among all members of the academic community is essential.

Note: Arguing and complaining are not substitutes for seeking available help, so please ask questions as they arise.

Disclaimer: We reserve the right to alter this syllabus as it becomes necessary to achieve the goals and objectives of this class. You will be made aware of any necessary changes in a timely manner.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Weeks One and Two

'Day Clean': Introduction, Background and Interdisciplinary Context

Read: Syllabus; Begin Gomez, chs. 1 and 2

The Gullah People (Creating a digital map)

First Day of Class

Weeks Two - Three

'Unnah BEEN Yah': Histories of Gullah-Geechee Culture, Work and Resistance (Dr. Livingston)

Read: Gomez, all chapters except for 7; S. Stuckey, "Reflections..." **Extended Learning:** S. Mufwene, P. Wood, W. Pollitzer, R. F. Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit*

Activity: Create a TimeMapper Digital Map of major points in Gullah-Geechee History (Five Teams: 1526-1680; 1680-1739; 1738 - 1821; 1821-1865; 1865-1971; 1971-2006)

Special Lecture: Dr. Frederick Knight, "New Directions in Slavery Studies"

Read: D. Penningroth's "Freedom, Slavery and Social Claims to Property"

Week Four

'Hear to Me': Linguistic Explorations of the Gullah Experience (Dr. Bennett)

Read: Excerpts of Lorenzo Dow Turner's *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*

Test I

Week Five

Mourning, Ritual, Music, and Congo Cultures

Read: Manigault-Bryant, *Talking to the Dead*, Introduction and Chapters 1, 3, and 4

Week Six

Film: Episode 1&2 of *Book of Negroes*

Test II

Week Seven

Special Lectures & Research Training

Guest Lecturer:

Week Eight: Midterm Examination Week

REVIEW for MIDTERM EXAM

MIDTERM EXAMINATION

Week Nine: Spring Break

Weeks Ten and Eleven

Literary Explorations of Gullah Culture (Dr. Claiborne)

- Zora Neale Hurston, *Folklore, & Porgy and Bess*; Alice Childress' *Gullah*
- Watch *Daughters of the Dust* (film)
- Julie Dash Visit (Needs confirmation)
- Online discussion - *Daughters of the Dust White Perspectives on the Gullah Experience*; Introduce Pat Conroy; *The Water is Wide*; **Film: Conrack** **Paper #1 due**
- Recipes and stories from Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor's *Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl*
Activity: Preparing a Gullah Meal

Weeks Twelve

Spirituality and Healing, Gullah and Geechee Ways (Prof. Walker)

- Joseph Opala, *The Gullah: Rice, Slavery, and the Sierra-Leone – American Connection*. (online).
- Denmark Vesey, "Stono Rebellion, Radical Christianity, and the Ring Shout."
- Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day*

Week Twelve: Gullah Experience Trip

TRAVEL DATES, TBD

Week Thirteen

- Visual Representations of Gullah Cultures
 - Discussion of digital humanities projects/ wikipedia edits
- Paper #2 due**

Week Fourteen

Sociology, Identity and the Archeology of Place in the Gullah Experience (Dr. Hewitt)

Read:

Assessment

Week Fifteen

Bringing it All Together: Final Review

- Final Travel Diary Posted to Blog;
- Presentations
- Digital Project Completed

HONOR CODE

SPEAK MAAT, DO MAAT!

I will strive to honor my ancestors, parents and peers by setting excellence as my mark. I will respect myself, and those around me in my speech and actions. I will not settle for mediocrity. I recognize the challenge before me and readily accept it!

Note: A syllabus is not a contract between instructor and student, but rather a guide to course procedures. The instructor reserves the right to amend the syllabus and the course requirements and/or assignments based on new materials, class discussions, or other legitimate pedagogical objectives or when conflicts, emergencies or circumstances dictate. Students will be duly notified.