

# African American Studies

## Course Offerings

### Fall 2022

**AAS 200: Introduction to African American Studies / MWF – 9:00-9:50 / HUM 302 / Fall 2022 / Mahaffey / 3 credit hours**

This course is an introduction to the unique cultural practices of people of African descent in the United States and a study of the oppressed position they occupy in mainstream American culture and society. The major form of analysis for the class will be through an historical perspective as well as through an examination of the arts and humanities. We will examine changes over time and employ sociological, economic, cultural, and political tools to understand the historical and contemporary positioning of African-Americans. We will be centrally concerned with how domination, race, gender, class, and sexual politics shape Black life in America and how resistance and change have occurred. We will also consider the intersectionality of systematic racism and the historic resistance to this particular form of racism. Critical race theory is an important framework for the class as well as the significance of the cultural creativity of African Americans and both will serve as foundations to our understanding of what it means to be “Black.” The central concern is how Black people see and define themselves today and how social change based on this perception and definition is imagined in the 21st century. A major assumption is that African-Americans have maintained a cultural integrity that is distinctive and deeply reflective of life in the United States and is present in a service tradition, a commitment to community, a struggle for democracy, and an emphasis on freedom. These values are the foundation of African-American Studies and its mission to promote a more democratic reality in the United States intimately connected to the demands and activism for full citizenship and democratic participation by Black people.

#### **Required Texts:**

*Race After Technology* (Ruha Benjamin)  
*Democracy in Black* (Eddie S. Glaude Jr.)  
*The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Carter G. Woodson)  
*The Underground Railroad* (Colson Whitehead)  
*A Mercy* (Toni Morrison)  
*How to Be an Antiracist* (Ibram X. Kendi)

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**AAS 302: Black Popular Culture / African American Humor: Laughing to Keep from Dying / MWF – 10:00-10:50 / HUM 302 / Fall 2022 / Mahaffey / 3 credit hours**

The never-ending racial tension in America has made one thing perfectly clear, Blacks and Whites have yet to, and maybe never will, see the humor in the ultimate joke being played on them known as “race.” It is something so ingrained in daily American life until it is a reality demanding constant seriousness and appears, at times, immune to ridicule of any sort. It is an ideological pantheon of human definition and interaction and a literal metaphor of existence. However, in this class, we will “slip the yoke” of the somberness race often commands and laugh at the joke that it is, especially when it comes to the history and 21<sup>st</sup> century circumstances of Black people. This ridicule is accomplished through an analyzation of how African American humor targets, with the goal of critically commenting upon, contemporary social, economic, and political issues engendered by race. Through the works of Black stand-up comedians and sitcom and movie stars, we will discuss and formulate answers to relevant questions concerning African American humor such as what constitutes this type of humor, how has it operated as a coping and survival mechanism for Black people and how has it creatively addressed, besides race itself, the cultural concept of “Blackness”?

**Required Texts:**

*African American Humor: The Best Comedy from Slavery to Today* (Mel Watkins, ed.)

*Hokum: An Anthology of African-American Humor* (Paul Beatty, ed.)

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