AFRICAN AMERICAN IDENTITY
COURSE SYLLABUS
Fall 2009

COURSE INFORMATION
a. Course Number: AAS 372, Sec. 01
b. Course Request Number (CRN): (Not yet assigned)
c. Room# and time: LA 202, 11:10-12:00, MWF
d. Prerequisites: none
e. Credits: 3

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION
a. Instructor: Dr. George R. Price
b. Office Hours and Location: MWF, 10:10-10:45, 3:30-4:30, no appointment necessary; other times (possibly between 12-12:30, or after 4:30) by appointment only, in LA (Liberal Arts), room 259
c. E-mail: george.price@mso.umt.edu
d. Office Phone: 243-2302

REQUIRED TEXTS
Graves, Joseph L., Jr., The Emperor's New Clothes: Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium, Piscataway, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 2001


COURSE DESCRIPTION
Combining the disciplines of history, biology, sociology, anthropology, and psychology, this course is designed to explore and illuminate the multifaceted nature and development of African American group and individual identity. Using a variety of methods and materials, we will seek answers to such questions as, "What is 'African' about African Americans?," “What is the difference between race and culture?,” “How much of present day African American (and American) culture can legitimately be traced back to specific African cultural forms?,” "How much cultural variation is there today among Americans of African descent?,” "Is African American 'self-segregation' a misnomer?,” "Is there only one African American culture?,” “Is it necessary for an
American to accept the status quo racial identification system in order to maintain his or her psychological health?,” “Is racism against African Americans today a larger obstacle to their success in American society than self-defeating attitudes and self-destructive behavior?,” “What effect has ‘hip-hop culture’ had on American society and around the world?,” and many other vital questions. We will also discuss the origin and validity of classifying humans into racial groups, and the societal consequences of such thinking in America.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES and Learning Outcomes**

a. To familiarize students with the historical facts and circumstances that formed and directed the course of racialized thinking and identity formation in the United States.
b. To assist students in forming their own assessments and analyses regarding the logic, validity, and usefulness of popularly-held ideas about the nature of humanity.
c. To help students to think independently and move beyond the limitations of customary popular concepts.
d. To increase student awareness of the significant African-American influences upon, and contributions to, the development of American society.
e. To provide a context for understanding many of America’s current social problems.
f. To familiarize students with some of the bibliographical and other sources of knowledge that are available for further study of the various topics that we will cover.
g. To improve students’ research and writing skills. Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:
   - Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
   - Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
   - Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
   - Revise written work based on constructive feedback
   - Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
   - Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions
   - Demonstrate appropriate English language usage
h. To provide students with opportunities for discussion and inquiry related to our topics.

**GRADING CRITERIA**

I use a precise, numerical, percentage point grading system. No letter grades are assigned until after the final exam and all of the points are added up. Student grades will be based on the combined scores of the writing assignments, in-class participation, and the three exams. The grading will be weighted as follows:

- 32% for the research paper
- 20% total for the essays
- 10% for the first exam
- 10% for the second exam
- 20% for the final exam
- 8% for attendance and in-class participation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>92-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-91.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88-89.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82-87.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-81.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>78-79.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>72-77.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-71.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>68-69.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>62-67.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-61.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 60</td>
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(The details for the writing assignments will be given separately from this syllabus.)

**Extra credit opportunity:** Two extra points for making a five minute presentation to the class regarding your research and/or writing experiences related to our topics.

Special arrangements for taking the exams at other than the designated times must be made in advance and approved by the instructor. Only very dire, unavoidable circumstances will be considered. Students with University-recognized disabilities who are enrolled with Disability Services for Students (DSS) will be accommodated according to University regulations. Such students should communicate with the instructor as early in the semester as possible about their special needs.

**ATTENDANCE**

All students are individually responsible for acquiring information made available through lectures, reading assignments, and materials handed out in class. The instructor does not copy or publish his lecture notes. Attendance and in-class participation make up 8% of your grade (see "Grading Criteria" section above). **Disrespectful behavior, such as talking during a lecture or while another student is addressing the class, or playing with electronic devices, will result in loss of attendance and participation credit for the day.**

**ACADEMIC HONESTY**

Plagiarism is the misrepresentation of another person’s writing as one’s own. Plagiarism is a violation of the University of Montana Code of Student Conduct, and the professor can give a student who plagiarizes an assigned paper a failing grade for the course. The UM leaves it up to each professor to decide if such action is appropriate. I choose to give a failing grade (no credit) for the particular assignment that was plagiarized, and no opportunity to re-do the assignment. That could lead to failing grade for the course, but not necessarily, depending on how the student does with the rest of the graded items for the course. We professors are aware that there are a growing number of internet websites that sell “research papers” to students who are susceptible to this kind of scam. There are several websites that we can use to detect such papers and find their point of origin. Using such internet aids, I have caught several students over the years who turned in plagiarized works, and it is never a pleasant situation for either of us. Consider yourselves to be kindly forewarned.

Exams will be monitored and students must work individually. Talking to other students during the exam, copying another student’s paper, or other forms of cheating, will result in an “F” grade for that exam.

**COURSE OUTLINE/CLASS CALENDAR (may be subject to minor revisions)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecture Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 25</td>
<td>Introduction to the course</td>
<td>Tatum, ch.10, pp.194-202</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot; 27&amp;29</td>
<td>The myth of “race”; video, “Race: the power of an illusion”</td>
<td>Graves, Intro. (when reading Graves, it’s OK to skip some of the highly technical scientific material)</td>
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<td>Sept. 1</td>
<td>LABOR DAY HOLIDAY: NO CLASS</td>
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<td>&quot; 3</td>
<td>Discussion and comments on first week’s lecture topics; definitions of terms from our course vocabulary list (TBHO); discussion of Graves, pp. 23-43</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Lecture Topic</td>
<td>Reading Assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 5</td>
<td>Some relevant historical points that Graves missed</td>
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<tr>
<td>8-12</td>
<td>The roots of “scientific” racism, pre and post Darwin;</td>
<td>Graves, pp. 43-85</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the myth of the superiority and inferiority of human groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>40th anniversary of AAS at UM celebration- extra credit opportunity, TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>“Eugenics” and the intensification of racial consciousness in America, 1877-1940; video, “Ethnic Notions”</td>
<td>Graves, 86-139</td>
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<tr>
<td>22&amp;24</td>
<td>finish discussion of previous lecture and video; the dismantling of racist</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Scientific” theories during the mid and late 20th century</td>
<td>Graves, pp. 140-154</td>
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**Review outlines for first exam distributed**

“ 26&29 The various commonly-held racial notions in present-day America; the reasons for the myth of innate Afro-American athletic superiority Closure of unit on race theory and Graves’ book. Graves 155-200

**Review for first exam, Q & A**

Oct. 1  First Exam

“ 3  Africa and African cultures at the time of American colonization

  5  African identities before the “Middle Passage” Gomez, Intro.

  8  First essay due

“ 8-13 Indigenous African beliefs and identity Gomez, ch. 3, 5, 6

Includes slides and music samples of indigenous African cultures

“ 15  Muslim African beliefs and identity; excerpt from video, “Wonders Gomez, ch 4 of the African World”

“ 17&20 the transformation of Africans into African Americans: Gomez, ch 7,8,9, 10

video excerpts on AA religion, spirituality; closing lecture/discussion on Gomez’ book

“ 22  AfAm culture and identity development outside of slavery (articles, TBHO)

“ 24  African American self-definition during the “Harlem Renaissance, ” lecture/discussion (articles to be handed out)

**Review outlines for second exam distributed**

“ 27  Extra credit opportunity for students to share and discuss their essays

**Review, Q & A for second exam**

" 29  Exam Two

" 30  "Day of Dialogue" UM campus event- extra credit possibility (TBA)

" 31  current issues in AA identity; the legacy of the “Civil Rights” movement, including “affirmative action”, other “remedies”, and their impact on African American identity McWhorter, chaps. 1 & 5

Nov. 1  problems with Tatum’s definition of “racism”; Tatum, ch. 1

the realities regarding “white privilege” McIntosh article, TBHO

“ 3  the dynamics of dominant/subordinate group relations; Tatum, ch.2

The extent of racism today (lecture/discussion) McWhorter, chaps. 2&4

“ 5  second essay due

“ 5&7  African American internalized racism and other self-concepts video: “A Question of Color”

“ 7  Submit research paper topics to the professor for approval and/or suggestions (if you have not yet already done so)

“ 10&12 The difference between race and culture; reasons for “self-segregation” (or, “separatism”), pros and cons:
Do we really need racial identities? (moderated discussion)

"  14  third essay due
" 14&17  The hip-hop generation and the crises in African American culture
  Discussion of study guide questions Kitwana, Intro and chap1
"  19  Economic conditions and crime as an alternative economy Kitwana, chaps 2 & 3
  Rough drafts of research papers due.
" 21&24  Hip-hop, misogyny, self-hate, and nihilism Kitwana, chaps 4 & 5
" 26-28  THANKSGIVING VACATION- NO CLASSES
Dec.  1  small and large group discussions on hip-hop and identity issues
  Student extra credit presentations can be made any day this week.
"  3  The “hip-hop generation” and social activism.
  Research Papers and late essays due.
  Review outlines for final exam distributed Kitwana, chaps 6-8
"  5  lecture/discussion: alternatives to racialized identities and possible futures;
    closing discussion, the most important things that you learned in this class
  Review for Final (Q and A)
" 12  Final Exam, Friday, December 12, 8:00-10:00