

Department: School of Fine Arts, Dramatic Arts

Course No: FINA 1100 [183]/ AFAM 1100[183]

Credits: 3

Title: African-American Experience in the Arts

Contact: Dr. David A. Stern

Content Area: CA1-Arts and Humanities

Diversity: CA4- Diversity and Multiculturalism

Catalog Copy: FINA 1100 [183]: African American Experience in the Arts Either or both semesters. Three credits. Molette Guest lecturers and University faculty discuss their points of view as black creators, with particular reference to social context and creative expression, and discuss historical and cultural perspectives of African and African-American arts with emphasis on the influences and developments affecting African American creators today.

Course Information: . Provide the following information about the course :

a. A brief (2-3 sentences) course description that includes course goals and objectives.

The purpose of this course is to enhance students' awareness of the worth, quality and importance of African American artists and the arts they create with a focus upon the social and aesthetic contexts in which African American art is created, and to recognize, understand, appreciate and think critically about the arts by, for, and about African Americans as a reflection of African American culture through analysis of selected readings, presentations by guest artists, video presentations, and, when feasible, gallery visits and live performances.

b. Course requirements: Specify exam formats, nature and scope of weekly reading assignments, nature and scope of writing assignments, problem sets, etc.

In-class discussion of assigned readings, primarily from the two required textbooks, addressing the various historical and theoretical issues addressed in the textbooks, in-class presentations, and outside assignments such as gallery visits. Four scheduled exams of 50 TO 75 multiple choice items each [this includes the final exam], and occasionally, a short impromptu quiz.

c. List the major themes, issues, topics, etc., to be covered.

Various forms of African American art (music, theatre, visual art, dance) the significant themes and styles; and an analysis and evaluation of the ideas presented in the essays on the reading list.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed: Most of the information students acquire in college will be obsolete less than a decade after they graduate. My goal is NOT to get students to memorize data I learned forty years ago, but to empower them to: (a) sharpen their critical and creative thinking capacities, (b) solve problems, (c) understand complex phenomena, (d) to benefit from the progress others have made in these areas AND TO DEVELOP CONFIDENCE THAT THEY CAN DO THESE THINGS ON THEIR OWN INITIATIVE. Students are expected to understand that their responses to the required course materials involve interpretation, which requires the employment of concepts, assumptions, and inferences. Generally, I find it necessary to also focus some attention on recognizing fallacies in one's own and other's thinking.

Acquire critical judgement;

SAME AS ABOVE

Acquire moral sensitivity;

Since much of the subject matter addressed by African American artists cannot be readily appreciated without having acquired some moral sensitivity, I would say the acquisition of moral sensitivity is a

requirement of the course, and the course will orchestrate experiences designed to encourage the acquisition of moral sensitivity through understanding and appreciating African American arts. Acquire awareness of their era and society; Since much of the subject matter addressed by African American artists cannot be readily appreciated without having acquired some awareness of their era and society, I would say the acquisition of awareness of their era and society is a requirement of the course, and the course will orchestrate experiences designed to encourage the acquisition of awareness of their era and society through understanding and appreciating African American arts.

Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience; and Since the content used to encourage critical thinking is African American culture, African American arts, and the ideas expressed by African American creators of arts, the issues raised by the arts we study and the essays about the arts which constitute the required reading demand an awareness and appreciation of African American culture and experience.

Acquire a working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge.

The reason for focusing the course on critical thinking and using the arts as subject for focusing critical thinking means the principal educational benefit of the course, enhancement of critical thinking skills and intellectual curiosity, can be transferred to any subject and the processes used in the course ought to be able to continue throughout the lifetime of each student. However, I would be less than candid if I did not admit that some students try to avoid the goals of the course, preferring the more comfortable learning style of memorizing fact in order to score well on the examinations.

CA1 Criteria: Investigations and historical/critical analyses of human experience; The content of the assigned works of art, the presentations by actual artists from various disciplines, and the required reading materials address significant issues related to what it means to be an African American in this society. The course will encourage students to think critically and to express their ideas so that their ideas are subject to scrutiny and evaluation by others.

Inquiries into philosophical and/or political theory; Investigations into the modes of symbolic representation; The content of the assigned works of art, the presentations by actual artists from various disciplines, and the required reading materials require students to confront, understand, and appreciate the various modes of symbolic representation used by various African American artists working in a variety of artistic disciplines and styles.

Comprehension and appreciation of written, graphic and/or performance art forms; The content of the assigned works of art, the presentations by actual artists from various disciplines, and the reading materials the students are required to experience cannot be accomplished without comprehension and appreciation of the written, graphic and/or performance art forms that comprise the subject matter of the course. Students are encouraged to think critically and express their ideas so their ideas may be scrutinized and evaluated by their professor and by their fellow students.

CA4 Criteria: The content of the required reading list addresses significant issues related to the nature of African American Art and what it means to be an African American artist in this society. Students are encouraged to examine the perceptions, thoughts, values, and modes of creativity expressed in the required experiences and readings, and to consider the impact of institutional racism upon the values, perceptions, thoughts, and modes of communication that establish the parameters in which art is

created; and what each of us can do to liberate ourselves from the racist values we have acquired by virtue of simply being here.

Emphasize that interpretive systems and/or social structures are cultural creations;

Consider the similarities that may exist among diverse groups;

Develop an understanding of and sensitivity to issues involving human rights and migration;

Develop an awareness of the dynamics of social, political, and/or economic power in the context of any of the above four items.

Role of Grad Students: Graduate students will assist with preparation of examinations, distribution of materials, operation of instructional media equipment, and to the extent feasible [largely a function of the nature of the available classroom space], help occasionally sub-divide the class into small discussion sections and facilitate small group discussions. The graduate student assistants will be supervised by the professor who has been responsible for a similar sequence of courses since 1992, Professor of Dramatic Arts and Senior Fellow, Institute for African American Studies, Carlton W. Molette, Ph. D.