AAS 112: Introduction to African American Studies

AAS 112
Introduction to African American Studies
(3 credits)
Class Size: 15-24

Faculty: Joan Bryant, Associate Professor, Syracuse University
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Course Catalog Description

Crosslisted with ANT 112. Historical and sociopolitical materials. Approaches to studying the African American experience, antecedents from African past, and special problems.Shared Competencies Civic and Global Responsibility.

Course Overview

AAS/ANT 112: Introduction to African American Studies is offered each semester at Syracuse University. It is a prerequisite for African American Studies majors and fulfills a College of Arts & Sciences critical reflections requirement. The course introduces central themes that comprise the interdisciplinary subject of African American Studies. Also referred to as Africana Studies, African Diaspora Studies, or African and African American Studies, the field places the study of North Americans of African descent in a broader context that considers connections to the African continent and to other people of the African Diaspora.

This framework enables students to explore common and

divergent experiences and identities among varied Black populations. Two critical encounters between Europeans and Africans structure the course. The first section introduces the dynamics of the Atlantic slave trade, which created the diaspora. It then considers how West Africans and enslaved people in North and South America and the Caribbean experienced and confronted this development. The second section introduces the process of colonialism in which European nations claimed ownership of African and Caribbean territories and sovereignty over their inhabitants. It then considers how people of African descent from European colonies and the descendants of American slaves confronted shared experiences of oppression and developed common cultural practices. This approach offers historical grounds on which to explore the implications of the Atlantic slave trade and address the diverse bases of identity among African groups and people of African descent in the United States, the Caribbean, and South America.

Course materials are designed to introduce students to scholarly approaches to experiences and identities of people of African descent. They offer first-hand experience in locating and analyzing the types of primary sources used to conduct research. Essays, exams, and primary source analyses stress the development of analytic skills. A final project offers practice in developing viable research topics, locating and analyzing sources, and making oral and visual research presentations.

Pre- / Co-requisites

N/A

Course Objectives

- Describe major historical developments and their implications

- Assess the validity of scholarly arguments

- Analyze, (i.e. explain and interpret) primary sources

- Formulate, substantiate, and present arguments using concrete evidence

- Locate and cite primary sources

- Conduct and present independent research

Laboratory

N/A

Required Materials

The books listed below are required. Other readings, denoted with (B), are available on Blackboard. An asterisk (*) designates a primary source.

Edward Reynolds, *Stand the Storm: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, NY: Ivan R. Dee, 1993

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, or Gustavus Vassa, *the African, Written by Himself,* (1789) Robert Allison ed., NY: Bedford Books, 1995* (Electronic Edition available, UNC: http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/equiano1/equiano1.html)

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, NY: Anchor Books, 1994 *

Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*, NY: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2000 *

Other text to consider: Octavia Butler, *Kindred*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2004

Instructor Recommendations

Instructor's Resource: Peter H. Wood*, Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion*, NY: W.W. Norton, 1996