

## The African American Experience Psychology 494

Instructor's Name: Prof. C. Lockridge, PhD  
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332-3620

Office Hours: Tu / Th 1:30 – 2:30  
& by appointment

### **Required Texts:**

Guthrie, R.V. (2004). Even the Rat was White: A historical view of psychology (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon Publishers.

Tatum, B.D. (1997). Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? and Other Conversations About Race. New York: Basic Books.

(a number of handouts will be distributed throughout the semester)

### **Course Description:**

This course will examine a broad spectrum of theory, research, and practice that focuses on the study of the psychosocial experience of African Americans. Some of the themes we will address are:

- Historical and Philosophical Foundations of African/Black Psychology
- Psychosocial Legacies of Enslavement
- African/Black Personality and Identity
- Education and Intelligence
- Psychosocial Implications of Black Popular Culture
- Research Paradigms of African/Black Psychology

### **Course Goals and Objectives:**

A primary objective of the course is for students to use and refine the skills necessary to critique theories and research in psychology as it pertains to the experiences of African Americans. Students will note the strengths and weaknesses of "traditional" psychology and draw comparisons between "Western" and "African" approaches to the study of human behavior. An additional objective is to facilitate original thinking about psychological topics and suggest appropriate applications that may identify and/or resolve contradictions in both psychological approaches. Students will demonstrate these skills through class discussions, several "reaction" papers, and an annotated bibliography.

### **Course Policies:**

**1. Class Conduct:** Appropriate classroom behavior is expected, which means students are to arrive on time, properly prepared and ready to participate. Pagers and cell phones are to be turned off upon entering the classroom.

**2. Attendance:** Attendance is required. Some of the lecture material will not be from the text, and attending class is the only means of obtaining that information. Should you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain class notes from other classmates. You can miss up to **FOUR** class periods without penalty. Any unexcused absences after that will result in a reduction of your grade by 5% for each class missed.

**3. Class Participation:** Please note that a significant portion of your grade is determined by your regular attendance and your contribution to class discussions. You will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- A for class participation is awarded when students regularly initiate discussion. This means coming to class thoroughly familiar with the assigned readings and prepared to raise questions, open discussion, and actively engage other students in discussion. This does not mean monopolizing a discussion, shutting other comments or ideas out or talking for its own sake rather than making a

point on the topic. Students who are self-starters and do not rely on the instructors' questions to set the agenda for discussion will be awarded a grade of A for participation as opposed to a B.

- B for class participation is awarded to students who participate regularly and productively in class discussion, who are prepared, and who are willing to engage.
- C for class participation is awarded to those who participate on a regular but less frequent basis than the B student. "C" discussants will be prepared for class, but their contributions will indicate that less thought has been given to the assigned materials.
- D for class participation is given to those who contribute infrequently to the discussion and whose contributions do not appear to arise from thoughtful consideration of the assignments.
- F for non-participation. Of course, this grade should need no explanation.

**Refusal to willingly participate in class will result in an appropriate grade.**

**4. Reading Assignments:** This is an upper division course and as such an aggressive reading schedule will be followed. In order to receive a competitive grade in this course you must keep up with the reading assignments as laid out in the syllabus. While the readings might be unfamiliar and may feel somewhat confusing, your ability to participate in class discussion will enhance your understanding. Please understand however, that this phenomena works only when material is read *before* class.

**5. Critical Essays:** As indicated on the syllabus, after each section, students will identify a "critical issue" relevant to the class topic or readings and write a 2- 3 page essay discussing it. For example, the issue might highlight a discrepancy in the reading, an important point not covered, or some research that might resolve a question raised by one of the readings. Alternatively, a student might relate the week's topic to issues raised in previous class sessions. Students should see this as an opportunity to identify any relevant topic that is of interest to them. Essays are to be double-spaced and typed in a 12 point Arial or Times New Roman font with one-inch margins. **Failure to conform to these specifications will result in an automatic reduction of their grade for the paper by one letter. Late papers will not be accepted. Your lowest grade of these assignments will be dropped during final grade tally.**

**6. Annotated Bibliography:** The final project for this course will be an annotated bibliography. The bibliography will center on the subject matter of this course. Beyond this, you must define the specifics of your bibliography, that is, you must select your own theme and construct a one page rationale which supports it. The bibliography will consist of five entries as follows: 1 film, 1 episode from a television program, 1 journal article, and 1 book. All work must be ascertained through your own research. This project will take some time and all students are encouraged to begin as soon as possible.

**7. Final Grade:** Your grade will be assessed using the following coursework:

Reaction Essays	40%
Annotated Bibliography	35%
Class Participation	25%

**Under no circumstances will academic dishonesty be tolerated in this class. Any suspected act of academic dishonesty will be taken to the Honor committee and students will receive a failing grade.**

\*\*Please Note: "The Americans with Disabilities Act" (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodations of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Learning Commons at 332-2898.

## Tentative Reading Schedule (subject to change)

Date      Topic & Reading

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Th      8/30: Intro to the Course

### Section 1: Introduction to African/Black Psychology: Historical Foundations

Tu      9/4: Guthrie, Chapter 1

Th      9/6: Guthrie, Chapter 2

Tu      9/11: Guthrie, Chapter 4

Th      9/13: Azibo (1996) [handout]; Nobles (1972) [handout]

### Section 2: The Maafa

Tu      9/18: *Sankofa* – film

**Reaction Paper 1 due (Over section 1).**

Th      9/20: *Sankofa* – film / discussion

Tu      9/25: Washington (1901) [handout]

Th      9/27: Stuckey (1996) [handout]

### Section 3: Personality and Identity

Tu      10/2: Tatum, Chapters 2 & 3

**Reaction Paper 2 due (Over section 2).**

Th      10/4: Tatum, Chapters 4 & 5

Tu      10/9: Tatum Chapter 9

Th      10/11: Media viewing / discussion

### Section 4: Education and Intelligence

**Tu      10/16: No Class – Fall Break**

Th      10/18: Guthrie Chapters 3 and 5 (113 – 120)      **Reaction Paper 3 due (Over section 3).**

Tu      10/23: Wright (1984); Carruthers (1991); Madhubuti (1979) [handout]

Th      10/25: Wright (1984); Carruthers (1991); Madhubuti (1979) [handout]

### Section 5: Popular Culture

Tu      10/30: *Beyond Beats and Rhymes* – Film

**Reaction Paper 4 due (Over section 4).**

Th      11/1: Film discussion

Tu      11/6: Oliver (2000) [handout]

Th      11/8: Viewing and Discussion - Videos

## Section 6: African-Americans and Mental Health

- Tu 11/13: Akbar & Phillips [handout]                      **Reaction Paper 5 due (Over section 5).**  
 Th 11/15: Akbar & Phillips [handout]
- Tu 11/20: Akbar & Phillips [handout]  
**Th 11/22: No Class – Thanksgiving Break**

## Section 7: Social Class

- Tu 11/27: Section of *When the Levees Broke* (film)                      **Reaction Paper 6 due (over section 6).**  
 Th 11/29: Dyson article [handout]

## Section 8: African Psychology: Past, Present and Future

- Tu 12/4: Parham (1999) 131 – 138 [handout]  
 Th 12/6: Guthrie, Chapter 7

**Tu 12/11: Annotated bibliography due**

## Study Tips

- 1) Come to class: sounds simple and obvious, but various rationalizations (“I can read the text/get the notes later”) and distractions (“My homie is here” or “The weather is terrible and I don't feel like walking to Carnegie”) will crop up. Classes are designed to supplement and enhance the text, providing further clarification of material and highlighting particularly important concepts. Getting notes is your best option if you have to miss a class, but it doesn't substitute for being there.
- 2) When you study, study actively: passive studying is common, but not very beneficial. Highlighting (or underlining), at best, indicates where you should look for information when you study later. It is passive and in itself could barely be considered studying. Flashcards are useful for establishing some basic conceptual relations (definitions, perhaps), but are also passive and involve very superficial processing, so they don't help much in learning to apply material in novel ways. Much better studying strategies are active and involve deeper processing. Try to link the information together in novel ways, different than examples in class and the text. Exchanging the results of such study strategies with others is an excellent extension of active studying and leads into the next point.....
- 3) Form study groups. Studying with others (when productive) can enhance your learning of the material by being exposed to the material in novel ways that you might not receive in class (Perhaps the best assessment of how well you understand something is how well you can explain it to others).
- 4) Finally, visit me in my office! At the top of the syllabus, I have provided the hours that I have set aside solely for discussions with you. If these hours do not fit your schedule, e-mail me to set-up a meeting time that does. Also, office visits need not, and should not, only occur when you are having trouble! I'd be happy to provide further readings for topics you find interesting, to try to incorporate your questions into future lectures, and to review your progress in the course. In short, office hours really are for you—please use them.

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 I reserve the right to make changes to any portion of this syllabus as is necessary.  
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