

**ENG 420 / AFST 400 / ENG 675: Black Studies and Black Spaces:
Black Critical Frameworks and Communities at JMU and Beyond, 1968 to the Present**

Fall 2019
TTh 2:00-3:15pm
Roop 208

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Course Description

As an academic discipline, Black Studies has its roots in the 1960s, the era that also heightened the modern civil rights movement, African nationalism, and the Black Arts Movement, among others. During the second half of the decade, students at various universities including Howard University, UC Berkeley, Cornell, and San Francisco State University among others demanded the creation of programs addressing Africana/Black experiences. These demands came in the form of uprisings, building takeovers, marches, sit-ins, and the writing of manifestoes. The direct result of increasingly diverse and increasingly radicalized student populations, this wave demanded equal access to public higher education, more faculty of color, and a new more inclusive curriculum, all with the goal of challenging what the movement's champions described as Eurocentric cultures of the higher education and its curricula. Civil rights, they argued, demanded not only the nominal integration of student and faculty bodies, but the radical restructuring of curricular and institutional practices. The protests quickly gained support across the country and more protests arose. The subsequent approval of this movement's demands exerted considerable influence over academic institutions nationwide. Black Studies (later also Africana Studies, or African, African American, and Diaspora Studies) —as an academic field, political commitment, and intellectual community—was born. Now, hundreds of departments and programs exist at universities in the USA, and more globally.

Now celebrating fifty years of Black Studies, this course purposes to locate JMU within this national history, while creating an archive for JMU's special collections. The recent archival exhibit, "Black and White on Bluestone Hill: JMU's Racial History in the Archives" at JMU's Special Collections, as well as the Furious Flower Poetry Center's recently-donated collection, have started a tradition of engaging this topic at JMU that this class continues. This course will fill the gaps between these projects by focusing on a larger range of black-created spaces on campus—from the foundation of Africana Studies at JMU to the formation and building of various black student organizations and programs aimed at diversifying both the curricula and the culture at JMU. This course marshals students to conduct interviews with community members, faculty, former faculty, students, administrators, staff, and alums, and to gather archival material in order to tell the larger story of the creation of Black Studies and black spaces at JMU, to place this story within a larger national narrative, to open up new spaces for further faculty and student research, and teaching, and to look forward to the next fifty years.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you will demonstrate your:

- Appropriate use of Black Studies and decolonial knowledge and methodologies in your oral history/archival collection practice and exhibit design;
- Sensitivity to the political value and ethical considerations related to collecting and preserving archival material, as reflected in your oral history/archival collection practice and exhibit design;
- Ability to work both independently and collaboratively with other students, professors, alumni, and community members in order to discover and preserve new knowledges and perspectives through the effective and ethical collection of oral histories and archival materials;
- Interdisciplinary research skills by effectively reading, understanding, and mobilizing the findings of research and discovery in primary and secondary sources to create compelling, sensitive, and historically situated exhibit topics.

Course Materials

All course readings will be available on Canvas.

Course Activities

As a class, we will be completing a number of assignments that will help you achieve the objectives of this course. Students will have the opportunity both to be involved in every aspect of the course, and to self-select into areas of particular interest as the course proceeds.

- Phase I: Background (reading, weekly guided observations)
- Phase II: Research (reviewing, conducting, and transcribing oral histories, assessing and acquiring new archival material, weekly guided observations)
- Phase III: Production (archival and online exhibit creation, weekly guided observations)

Course Technologies

Students are required to check their **JMU email** regularly, as we will be emailing the class with information, updates, and reminders throughout the semester. We will use Canvas to manage many course assignments such as readings, weekly observations, and Learning Records. We will also use **Google Docs/Google Drive's** collaborative authoring and storage spaces to store and access our collective research and exhibit designs. Please sign up for a gmail address if you don't already have one. Find out more about Google Drive here:

<http://www.google.com/drive/about.html>

Course Policies

This is a very process-oriented class. Turning up on time, participating knowledgeably in discussions about our readings and material, actively pursuing in-class and out-of-class assignments, and completing all projects to the best of your ability is required.

Participation

Put concisely, participation is preparedness, attitude, effort, improvement, and citizenship. This is a discussion- and production-oriented class. Our class conversations are the shared responsibility of everyone in the class (not just the instructors), and a commitment to the classroom community as we learn and grow together is required. Participation involves

positively contributing to all discussions, activities, small group, and project work. You must prepare for each class day by completing assignments and bringing notes and questions to class (as well as the texts we are discussing). Participation also includes listening and being mentally present in the classroom, as well as laboring toward the creation of a classroom environment where everyone feels safe and respected.

Weekly Observations, Weekly HW, and Midterm:

As preparation for the final Learning Records (described below), all students are expected to complete one to two observations per week—one in response to a weekly prompt, and one weekly write-up and reflection on your weekly homework. All observations are due on the relevant Canvas discussion board no later than 8:00am the following Monday, as outlined in the syllabus. Weekly homework is also roughly outlined below, organized around the goals of training in oral history collection, transcription, and other necessary skills; conducting oral histories; locating archival materials; and designing an archival exhibit based on those materials. However, since this is a project-based class, you must understand that more specific tasks and deadlines will take clearer shape as the project develops, and that they will be responsible for completing those tasks and meeting those deadlines. Students will also write a midterm Learning Record as a form of practice and preparation for the final Learning Record.

Evaluation of the Learning Record

Grades in this course are determined by use of the Learning Record, a system that requires you to compile a portfolio of work at the midterm and at the end of the semester. The Learning Record is an evidence-based method of assessment that takes into account the diverse ways that you learn. Using Google Drive, you will build a portfolio of your work accessible to only you and the instructors, that will include both formal and informal, ongoing self-observations about your learning, and an analysis of your development across six dimensions of learning and defined course criteria. The grading criteria for the Learning Record are:

- Represents outstanding participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with very high quality in all work produced for the course. Evidence of significant development across the five dimensions of learning. The Learning Record at this level demonstrates activity that goes significantly beyond the required course work in one or more course strands.
- A
- Represents excellent participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with consistently high quality in course work. Evidence of marked development across the six dimensions of learning.
- B
- Represents good participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with generally good quality overall in course work. Evidence of some development across the six dimensions of learning.
- C
- Represents uneven participation in course activities; some gaps in assigned work completed, with inconsistent quality in course work. Evidence of development across the five dimensions of learning is partial or unclear.
- D

- F Represents minimal participation in course activities; serious gaps in assigned work completed, or very low quality in course work. Evidence of development is not available.

The Learning Record methodology will be explained clearly during class. Plus/minus grades are earned where the evidence provided in the Learning Record clearly falls between the criteria for two letter grades. Grades **will not** be awarded to individual assignments. You will, however, receive detailed feedback on all your work, and you can check in with your professors during their office hours if you want to talk about your progress in this course. Assessment through the Learning Record is not optional. If you have concerns about it, you must talk to us within the first week so you have enough time to enroll in another class.

Graduate Assignments

Graduate students enrolled in this class will each, in consultation with the instructors, design and complete an independent research project related to and informed by the subject and explorations of the course. In preparation for these final assignments, graduate students will meet with Drs. Godfrey and Muhonja outside of regular class time to develop and review their work. Graduate students will also be encouraged to collaborate with one another as they develop these independent assignments, and to use their findings to inform the undergraduate classroom experiences.

During class sessions, the graduate students, who each have significant knowledge of JMU's institutional history related to diversity and black spaces at JMU, and are trained in interdisciplinary, critical and decolonial research methods, will also have the following obligations:

- Each graduate student will serve as an in-class mentor for six undergraduate students on the latter's individual research areas;
- Graduate students will model, for their mentees, critical and decolonial interviewing, research analysis, organizing and recording, when necessary;
- Graduate students will moderate the panels and Q&A sessions with guest speakers;
- Graduate students will advise (in class) undergraduate mentees on setting weekly research goals.

Excused Absences and Emergencies

Absences may be excused, with documentation only, for the following reasons: emergency situations, an illness serious enough to require a visit to a physician, University obligations approved in advance, or observance of a religious holiday approved in advance. Excused or unexcused, students are responsible for all missed material, handouts, and assignments, and should check in with the instructor immediately upon missing a class, if not before.

You are required to notify us immediately if an emergency occurs and you have to miss class. We cannot help you if you fail to notify us. You must notify us within 48 hours of the emergency if you are not able to contact us before class. You will not be excused automatically; we review each case individually.

Behavior Resulting in a Late or an Absence

Emailing, texting, Facebooking, Tweeting, surfing the Web, working on assignments for other classes, or pursuing other activities not related to the class will result in a late for that day; however, doing the same when another student is giving an oral presentation or when we are lecturing will count as an absence. We will not disturb the rest of the class by “calling you out”; you know if you are doing behaviors in class that you shouldn’t be doing.

Academic Honesty

Intellectual honesty is fundamental to scholarship. Accordingly, the University views plagiarism or cheating of any kind in academic work as among the most serious offenses that a student can commit. Plagiarism occurs when one presents work—ideas and/or specific language—which is taken from another person who is not given due credit. Students who are uncertain in any specific situation as to whether plagiarism may be involved should discuss the matter with me. **All students are responsible** for reading the University’s statement on plagiarism, found here: <http://people.jmu.edu/kerrdx/OHIST/Plagiarism.htm>

The act of plagiarism is in violation of JMU’s Honor Code, and therefore, anyone caught plagiarizing will be reported to the Honor Council and will be given at minimum a zero for the assignment, which may result in failing the course. For all members of the academic community, citing sources not only protects them and their ideas, but it helps them to know when they do have a new idea, or whether they have achieved a meaningful synthesis of other people’s ideas. It also helps their readers, by providing means whereby he or she can verify their account, seek further knowledge on their topic, and understand how they arrived at your conclusions. To cite sources, please **follow carefully the MLA guidelines**, found in the MLA handbook in Carrier Library or here: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Course Schedule

Week 1: I. Black Studies, Black Spaces, and the Ethics of the Archive

Tues, 8/27: Introduction: Course Policies and Goals; Canvas and Google Drive; Learning Records

Thurs, 8/29: Before class: read Fabio Rojas’s “The Movement that Became an Institution” from *Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement became an Academic Discipline*; and Molefi Kete Asante’s “Africology and the Puzzle of Nomenclature” from *Journal of Black Studies* 40.1 (2009): 12-23.

Week 2:

Tues, 9/3: Before class: read introduction to bell hooks’s *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*; and Jonathan Rosa’s “[When decolonial perspectives ground your research, they completely transform questions, methods, analyses, modes of representation...](#)”

In class: panel on ethical research practices with Taimi Castle and Carrie Tillman

Thurs, 9/5: Before class: explore “Black and White on Bluestone Hill” online exhibit

In class: visit to Special Collections to review archival material, with presentation by Meg Mulrooney: “White and Black and Bluestone: Racing History at the Normal, at Madison, and Beyond”

HW due by 8am on Monday: one observation (weekly prompt)

Week 3:

Tues, 9/10: Before class: read the University of Wisconsin’s “[What are Archives](#),” “[How are Archival Collections Organized](#)” and “[Best Practices for Archival Research](#)”; and Michelle Caswell’s “Identifying and Dismantling White Supremacy in Archives” ([PDF poster](#))

In class: visit to Special Collections with presentations by Kate Morris, Tiffany Cole, Kevin Hegg, and Bodeen Amyot (TBC) on archives and oral history collection

Thurs, 9/12: Before class: read Bergis Jules, et al. “[Documenting The Now White Paper: Ethical Considerations for Archiving Social Media Content Generated by Contemporary Social Movements: Challenges, Opportunities, and Recommendations](#)”

In-class: discussion with visiting scholar and archivist Bergis Jules (Project Director of Documenting the Now)

HW due by 8am on Monday: one observation (weekly prompt)

Thurs, 9/12,
4pm:

Students attend public presentation by visiting scholar Bergis Jules (recommended)

Week 4: II. Black Studies and Black Spaces at JMU: Research

Tues, 9/17: Before class: read Oral History Association’s “[Principle’s and Best Practices](#)”; and Anasuya Sengupta’s “[Learning Patterns: Centering Marginalised Knowledge](#)”

In class: Panel on ethical community engagement with Robin Lyttle and Sharon Barber from the Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Center (TBC); review ethics of oral history projects

Thurs, 9/19: In class: presentation of prior research by Claire Hietanan, Bry Moore, and Lillie Jacob; class members discuss, identify gaps and interests, choose individual projects, and devise personal research plans

HW due by 8am on Monday: Two observations (weekly prompt, weekly write-up) and weekly homework (conduct interviews, original research, etc.)

Week 5:

Tues, 9/24: Before class: read Karen Risch-Mott’s “Blooming in the Noise: The Rise of Black Poetry at James Madison University’s Furious Flower Poetry Center” and explore www.furiousflower.org

In class: visit to Furious Flower four tour and discussion of Furious Flower Poetry Center, with Joanne Gabbin, Karen Risch-Mott, and Lauren Alleyne

Thurs, 9/26: In class: discuss what came out of the panel; share what they accomplished that week; how it might inform others' work; plan for field trip & next week
HW due by 8am on Monday: Two observations (weekly prompt, weekly write-up) and weekly homework (field trip & interviews)

Sat, 9/28,
8am-6pm: Field trip to the Furious Flower 25th Anniversary celebration at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington D.C. to record and conduct short interviews with attendees. Transportation and lunch will be provided.

Week 6:

Tues, 10/1: Before class: read Michael George Hanchard's "Black Transnationalism, Africana Studies, and the 21st Century" from *Journal of Black Studies* 35.2 (2004): 139-153.

In class: panel on Africana Studies with David Owusu-Ansah and Steve Reich

Thurs, 10/3: In class: discuss what came out of the panel; share what they accomplished that week; how it might inform others' work; plan for next week
HW due by 8am on Monday: Two observations (weekly prompt, weekly write-up) and weekly homework (conduct interviews, original research, etc.)

Week 7:

Tues, 10/8: Before class: reading TBA

In class: visit to CMSS for panel on CMSS and the Divine Nine with Chervon Moore and Art Dean

Thurs, 10/10: In class: discuss what came out of the panel; share what they accomplished that week; how it might inform others' work; review Learning Records
HW due by 8am on Monday: Midterm Learning Records due

Week 8:

Tues, 10/15: Before class: read Marlene L. Daut's "[Becoming Full Professor While Black](#)"

In class: panel on Black Women in the Academy: Sisters in Session with BJ Bryson, Esther Nizer, Chervon Moore, and Oris Griffin

Thurs, 10/17: In class: discuss what came out of the panel; share what they accomplished that week; how it might inform others' work; plan for next week
HW due by 8am on Monday: Two observations (weekly prompt, weekly write-up) and weekly homework (conduct interviews, original research, etc.)

Week 9:

Tues, 10/22: Before class: read Davarian Baldwin's "[When Universities Swallow Cities](#)"
In class: panel with Harrisonburg Mayor Deanna Reed, community members, and former JMU staff/alumni (TBC); discuss what came out of the panel;

review collected oral histories and archival materials; develop exhibit topics and get into groups; plan next steps

Thurs, 10/24: Before class: read Beth McMurtrie's "[How Do You Create a Diversity Agenda?](#)"
In class: panel on diversity and inclusion policies in higher education with Robert Aguirre, Heather Coltman, Cynthia Bauerle, and Linda Thomas ; discuss what came out of the panel; review collected oral histories and archival materials; develop exhibit topics and get into groups; plan next steps
HW due by 8am on Monday: Two observations (weekly prompt, weekly write-up) and weekly homework (conduct interviews, original research, etc.)

Week 10: Black Studies and Black Spaces at JMU: Telling the Local Story

Tues, 10/29: Before class: read Section A (Overview of Guidelines) from "[Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design](#)"
In class: Presentations by Daniel Robinson, Julia Merkel, and Beth Hinderliter (TBC) on archival exhibit design; teams use class time to present progress, get feedback, and plan next steps

Thurs, 10/31: In class: teams use class time to present progress, get feedback, and plan next steps
HW due by 8am on Monday: one observation (weekly write-up) and weekly homework (develop exhibits)

Week 11:

Tues, 11/5: Before class: First drafts of physical and online exhibit due
In class: Students use class time to present first drafts to each other for feedback

Thurs, 11/7: In class: Develop exhibit topics out of collected oral histories and archival materials; teams use class time to present progress, get feedback, and plan next steps
HW due by 8am on Monday: one observation (weekly write-up) and weekly homework (revise exhibits)

Week 12:

Tues, 11/12: Before class: Second drafts of physical and online exhibit due
In class: Students use class time to present second drafts to participating JMU faculty & students for feedback

Thurs, 11/14: In class: Revise exhibit; teams use class time to present progress, get feedback, and plan next steps
HW due by 8am on Monday: one observation (weekly write-up) and weekly homework (finalize exhibits)

Week 13:

Tues, 11/19: Before class: Final drafts of exhibit due
In class: Finalize exhibit; students use class time to print and hang material

Thurs, 11/21: In class: Finalize exhibit; students use class time to print and hang material
HW due by 8am on Monday: one observation (weekly write-up) and weekly homework (publicize opening)

Week 14: Thanksgiving Week

Week 15:

Tues, 12/3: In class: Exhibit opening at Institute for Visual Studies (IVS)

Thurs, 12/5: In class: Final in-class reflection on course; if possible, collected archival materials, oral histories, and graduate assignments are donated to JMU Special Collections with associated permission documentation

Finals week:

Tues, 12/10: HW due by 11:59pm: Final Learning Records and graduate assignments due