

The Black Middle Class
Fall 2012
AFR 372C/unique number 30275
E 376M/unique number 35663
WGS 340/unique number 47062
Tuesday and Thursday 2-3:30
PAR 203
Professor Thompson

Course Description

During this term we will embark on an interdisciplinary exploration of the African American middle class in the US from 1900 to the present, with a particular emphasis on post-Civil Rights era developments. We will use literature, film, history, theatre, cultural studies, music, television, and sociology to examine how the black middle class has been imagined, defined and represented. By examining the debates within and about the black middle class, we will complicate constructions of race in America. The course is particularly interested in investigating the following: the concept of racial uplift; the construction of the “race man” and “race woman;” the idea of class privilege for a racially marginalized group; conflicts between the black middle class and the working class; the role of the black middle class in policing black sexuality; the notion of middle class rage; the rise of the black nerd; assertions of racial authenticity; the new black aesthetic; and the politics of affirmative action.

Required Texts

Charles Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901)
ISBN: 0393934144
Ellis Cose, *Rage of a Privileged Class* (1994)
ISBN: 0060925949
Nella Larsen, *Quicksand and Passing* (1929)
IBSN 0813511704
Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959)
ISBN: 0679755314
Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones, *The Dutchman and The Slave* (1964)
ISBN: 978-0688210847
Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (1977)
ISBN: 9780786508075
Andrea Lee, *Sarah Phillips* (1984)
ISBN: 155553158X
Stew, *Passing Strange* (2008)
ISBN: 155783752X
Course Packet

All course materials are available at the Co-op. Texts designated with an * can be found in the course packet.

Course Requirements

Attendance & Participation

Students are expected to complete all reading before class and participate fully in discussions and activities (presentations, quizzes, in-class writing and group projects). Remember to bring texts to class because we will be reading excerpts and doing close readings of passages. Also please be advised that prompt and regular attendance is expected. Tardiness is disrespectful to me and to your classmates. Missing two classes and/or excessive tardiness will result in your grade being lowered by 10%.

Essays

During the semester you will write two critical essays. The first essay will engage with a text or texts from the syllabus. Topics will be distributed in class in advance. The final essay will be a research project of your own choosing (in consultation with me) that considers texts and/or topics not discussed in class. You will write a proposal that includes a tentative bibliography that includes primary and secondary sources. Additional guidelines for the proposal and research paper will be distributed in class in advance. I encourage you to consult with me at any stage in your writing process. Make sure you argue a strong thesis and carefully proofread your papers for clarity and grammatical errors. I expect your essays to adhere to either the *MLA Style Manual* or the *Chicago Manual of Style* for formatting and documentation. All work must be typed in a 12-point academic font (Times, Palatino, Times New Roman), stapled, and doubled-spaced with one-inch margins. Submit essays in paper (NOT electronic) format by the deadline unless instructed by me to do otherwise. It is incumbent upon you to keep a personal copy of all submitted work. Please note: no incompletes or extensions will be granted without my prior written permission.

Research Presentation

Each participant will give a brief (3 minute) presentation based on her/his final research project. Students are strongly encouraged to use PowerPoint and/or another presentation tool. The point of this exercise is to teach your classmates about an aspect of the black middle class NOT covered in class. Use this as an opportunity to refine your oral presentation skills and showcase your expertise.

Documented Disability Statement

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at (512) 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone) or reference SSD's website for more disability-related information: http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/for_cstudents.php

Final grades will be calculated as follows (note that plus and minus grades will be used):

Participation	15%
Research Presentation (3 min)	20%
Essay 1 (3-5 pages)	25%
Proposal (2-3 pages)	10%
Essay 2 (7-10 pages)	30%

Important Dates

Thursday, October 4
Due: Essay 1

Tuesday, November 27
Research Presentations

Thursday, November 29
Research Presentations

Tuesday, December 4
Research Presentations

Thursday, December 6
Research Presentations

Monday, December 10
Due: Essay #2