

AFR 374D - The Black Male Crisis?
An Experimental Course
Cultural Diversity Flag

Fall 2015

Room: CLA 1.104 **Unique:** AFR 374D 29687, ANT 374D 30516, WGS 46046

Course: T, Th 5:00-6:30 pm **Instructor:** Dr. Edmund T. Gordon

Office Hours: W 2:00 – 4:00 pm **Office:** GWB 3.124

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

For well over a half century, scholars have focused on what has been called the “crisis of black males” as one of the central problems facing the black population in the US. Also referred to as “black male endangerment” and “the gender gap,” the states of black boys and men have gained significant attention from the media, non-profits and foundations. President Obama’s 2014 *My Brother’s Keeper* initiative is one of the most recent and highly visible interventions (initially) made on behalf of black and other male youth of color that have responded to this idea of crisis. Following the critique that this initiative did not include, in particular, black girls and women, this course takes up the notion of the black male crisis to interrogate how it came to be a predominant narrative of black related issues.

Applying the tools of black feminist and critical race and gender theory, we will think through how social structures forces such as racism, patriarchy, and capitalism influence the gendered focus on black men. We will historically unpack the narratives, representations, and conditions of the black population in the US that have been labeled as in “crisis” and investigate the states of black women in relationship to narratives of crisis and the black population in general.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Class Attendance, Participation, and Readings (25 pts).** Students are required to attend class (12 pts), participate in class activities and discussions (5 pts), and post reading questions (8 pts).
 - a. Attendance - will be taken at every class meeting. Students attending 90% or more of classes will receive 12 pts. Those attending between 80% - 90% of classes will receive their percentage of points based on the number of classes they attend minus 1 pt. Those attending between 79% - 67% of classes will receive their percentage of points based on the number of classes they attend minus 2 pts. Those attending between 50% and 66% of classes will receive 0

pts. ANY STUDENT WHO MISSES MORE THAN 50% OF THIS COURSE'S CLASSES WILL AUTOMATICALLY FAIL THE COURSE.

b. Participation - The instructor determines participation points. Class participation will be calculated on the basis of participation in class discussion, discussion with instructor after class, discussion that takes place with instructor during office hours.

c. Each student will post on Canvas one discussion question pertinent to each reading by 11:59 P.M. the night before the reading is covered. These dates will be announced in class.

2. Three Critical Essays (75 pts.) There will be three critical essays, one at the end of each **course section** evaluating materials covered during these sections. Each Critical Essay is worth 25 pts. The first Critical Essay Prompt will be distributed on October 1, 2015 **due posted on Canvas by 4:00 PM October 6, 2015**. The second will be distributed on November 12, 2015 **due posted on Canvas by 4:00 PM November 17, 2015 and the Third** will be distributed on December 3, 2015 **due posted on Canvas by 4:00 PM December 10, 2015**. Late essays will not be accepted.

3. Collective Reflection (5 pts.) on the issues raised by the course. Groups of students will provide oral presentations of their perspectives on the issues covered during the course and their relationship to everyday experiences.

GRADES

I will work to return assignments within two weeks. After receiving each graded assignment, wait at least 24 hours before bringing your concerns to me. Any concerns about grades must be brought to my attention no more than one week after the student receives the grade.

GRADING

Critical Essay I	20 pts.
Critical Essay II	25 pts.
Critical Essay III	25 pts.
Collective Reflection on Patriarchy	5
Attendance, Participation, Reading Questions	25 pts.
TOTAL	100 pts.

Pluses and minuses will be used in calculating the final grades.

A = 94-100 pts.	A- = 90-93 pts.	B+ = 87-89 pts
B = 84-86 pts.	B- = 80-83 pts.	C+ = 77-79 pts.
C = 74-76 pts.	C- = 70-73 pts.	D+ = 67-69 pts.
D = 64-66 pts.	D- = 60-63 pts.	F = 0-59 pts.

COURSE PROTOCOLS

· Rules for respectful discussion will be followed. These rules will be established and agreed upon by everyone early in the semester. If a student violates these rules, that student will be counted as absent for the day.

· Students may not use electronic device for anything other taking notes. Those found using such devices for other purposes will be counted as absent for the day.

- Written assignments are due as indicated on the syllabus unless otherwise specified. Late assignments will not be accepted.
- The University of Texas rules and regulations regarding plagiarism and intellectual honesty will be enforced. For details please see: deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis_plagiarism.php
- Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

ALL READINGS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON CANVAS

SEQUENCE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

August 27

Introduction to the Course

Week 1: Sept. 1 and 3

Section I: Theory

- 1) Key Terms: legibility, spectacle, deviance, crisis, invisibility
- 2) Structural Oppressions

Week 2: Sept. 8 and 10

- 3) Black Feminist theory: Intersectional Approach

Readings: River Collective (1977), Hill Collins (2000), Crenshaw (1993)

Week 3: Sept. 15 and 17

- 3) Patriarchy

Readings: Johnson (2014), Hooks (2004), Baldwin and Lorde (1984)

- 4) Racial inferiority as Gender Abnormality

Readings: Hill Collins (2000)

Week 4: Sept. 22 and 24

Week 5: Sept. 29 and Oct. 1

Section II: Patriarchy and the Historical Construction of Black Subjects

5) **Legibility** - How and why Black subjects emerge to social visibility in the U.S. and are read as different, deviant (threatening and vulnerable), and male.

Statistics and race, U.S. Census, Insurance and probability, Crime and poverty statistics

Readings: Hoffman (1896), Wolf (2006), Alexander (2010),

Week 6: Oct. 6 and 8

Week 7: Oct. 13 and 15

6) **Spectacle** - How the black male subject becomes the universal subject of black threat and suffering and the focus of black political imaginary and mobilization

Lynching Jesse Washington Emmett Till, Civil Rights
Political assassinations Medgar Evers 1963 MLK 1968 Black Power
Police executions Black Lives Matter

Readings: Freeman (1916), Hale (1999), Linda Williams (2002)

Week 8: Oct. 20 and 22

Week 9: Oct 27 and 29

7) **Invisibility**- How patriarchy impedes the emergence of black women as subjects and the legibility of black women's suffering.

Historic violence against Black women, Black women's' statistics

Readings: Feimster (2009), Cohen (2011), Gill (2014)

Week 10: Nov. 3 and 5

Week 11: Nov. 10 and 12

Section III: Black Gendered Subjects Different, Threatening, Deviant, Inferior and Vulnerable = Male Crisis?

8) **Deviance** - The contradictions in the confrontation between deviance and normalcy

Cultural Racism and the gendering of Cultural Pathology

Readings: Moynihan (1965), Moyers video (1986), Collins (2001), Harris (2014)

9) **Crisis** - How patriarchy underpins charges of cultural pathology, matters of male respectability, and the crisis of reputation.

Crisis in Black male respectability, Mentoring as the solution, My Brother's Keeper

Readings: Gordon 1994, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/my-brothers-keeper>

Week 12: Nov. 17 and 19

Week 13: Nov. 24 and (26) no class Thanksgiving holiday

10) **Black Male Crisis?**

Black Male Crisis as patriarchy

Reading: Leggett (1999)

Week 14: Dec. 1 and 3

11) **Student Collective Reflection** on the Issue of Patriarchy and Black Subjectivity