AFAM 215: INTRODUCTION TO BLACK SOCIAL AND POLITICAL LIFE
Fall 2011
Tuesdays/Thursdays 3:30 – 4:50 pm
University Hall 122

Professor Mary Pattillo
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2-6pm, 5-111 Crowe
Phone: 847-491-3409 or 847-491-2036; E-mail: m-pattillo@northwestern.edu
TA: Bernard Forjwuor, BernardForjwuor2014@u.northwestern.edu

Course Description: This course is a survey of the contours of black life from the perspective of the social sciences. What is the black community, geographically speaking? Is that different from the social or political black community? What is the current condition of the black family and has it changed or stayed the same over time? How much wealth is in the black community, and how does that compare with the wealth of whites, or of Hispanics? Is African American leisure distinct from that of other groups? What are key concerns of black politics, and are they different with Obama as president? What divides and unites the black community? This course answers these questions using insights from sociology, political science, psychology, anthropology, economics, history, and related fields. By studying the social relations, political agency, and economic practices of African Americans and other black folk in the diaspora, we will develop a more complex understanding of the forces, opportunities, and constraints operating within black communities.

Office Hours: My office hours are Wednesdays, 2-6 pm in 5-111 Crowe Hall. Follow the link below and sign up for no more than 3 consecutive 15-minute slots, depending on your estimate of how much time we’ll need. You will need to have, or to sign up for, a Google account to access this tool (sorry for forcing you into Google). If you need to cancel the appointment, you can only do so through cancelling it on your own calendar. No need to send me any confirmation of the appointment you make. I will not be holding office hours on Oct 5 and Nov 2, but will make them up on Friday Oct 7 and Nov 4, respectively. During Reading Week my office hours will be Monday, Nov 28, from 10am – 1pm. https://www.google.com/calendar/selfsched?sstoken=UUxzNEw2UWFqVkJ2fGRIZmF1bHR8MjNINDU1OTA3OWQ2MWM0YWMM2N2VlZWQwOTNI3NTdKZWU

Requirements and Evaluation:

- Three take home exams (25% each = 75% of final grade): On the Thursdays noted in the Class Schedule below you will be given 3 questions about the readings and lectures. You will choose 2 of the 3. Answers to each question should be written as 3-page, double-spaced essays. Exams must be submitted via blackboard by 11:59pm on the Sunday immediately following distribution.

- Class Attendance & Participation (25% of grade): Attendance at each class session is required and will be documented with sign-in sheets. Students are held responsible for signing in to document this course requirement. Signing in for another student or asking another student to sign your name to the class roster will be considered a violation of the academic integrity policy. Students are expected to attend sessions promptly, and be prepared to discuss the materials in an analytical and critical manner. The Teaching Assistant will keep records of class discussion.

- Extra Credit (5% boost, or .2 points on 4pt scale): Write a 1-pg response paper (summary of key points and critique) to the REQUIRED lecture by Randall Kennedy on Nov 1 (place TBA, see syllabus). Due Nov 4 by 11:59 via Blackboard.

- Late assignments will be downgraded one step per day late, e.g., A- to B+. No exceptions.

- Academic Integrity. You are responsible for reading and complying with Northwestern’s policies on Academic Integrity, wcas.northwestern.edu/advising/academic.html. Evidence of dishonesty will result in disciplinary action.
Required Readings:


All books are available at Norris University Bookstore and on reserve in the Main Library.

All articles and book chapters listed below that are NOT part of the required books above are available on Blackboard.

Course Schedule and Assignments:

Week 1 (9/20, 9/22): Course Introduction and Theories


Week 2 (9/27, 9/29): Families


Week 3 (10/4, 10/6): Gender and Sexuality


*Living through the Hoop*, Chapter 5.

*More than Just Race*, Chapter 3.


Week 4 (10/11, 10/13): Class

10/11 *Black on the Block*, Intro, Chapter 2


10/13 Class Cancelled - Time made up in extended class hours on 10/27 and 11/1

**Take-home exam #1 distributed. Due by 11:59pm, 10/16, via Blackboard.**

Week 5 (10/18, 10/20): Work and Wealth


10/20 *The Hidden Cost of Being African American*, Chapters 1, 2, and 6

Week 6 (10/25, 10/27): Place


*Black on the Block*. Chapters 1 and 6
10/27  *PLAN TO STAY UNTIL 5:30.  Class held in conjunction with African American Studies Department Seminar Series. “The Social and Economic Organization of Black Communities” with William Darity (Professor, Public Policy, African and African American Studies and Economics, Duke) and Alford Young (Arthur F. Thurnau Professor, Chair Sociology, University of Michigan).


Week 7 (11/1, 11/3): Politics

11/1  *PLAN TO STAY UNTIL 6:00.
*Class to move at 4:30 to attend Davis Lecture given by Randall Kennedy. – Write Extra Credit due Friday, Nov 4 by 11:59 via Blackboard.

Dark Days, Bright Nights, Chapters 1 and 2

11/3  Dark Days, Bright Nights, Chapters 3 and 4

**Take-home exam #2 distributed. Due by 11:59pm, 11/6, via Blackboard.**

Week 8 (11/8, 11/10): Education and Schools

11/8  The Hidden Cost of Being African American, Chapter 7


Week 9 (11/15, 11/17): Leisure

11/15  Living through the Hoop, Intro, Chapters 1, 4, 7.


Week 10 (11/22): New Directions


**Take-home exam #3 will posted on Blackboard on Thursday, Dec 1. Due by 11:59pm, Monday, December 5, via Blackboard.**

*HAPPY WINTER BREAK!*