

**HISTORY 512:381: SPECIAL TOPICS: THE POLITICS OF JAMES BALDWIN
SPRING 2015**

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M, W 2:50-4:10 PM

CLASS ORIGINALLY ASSIGNED TO ARMITAGE HALL, ROOM 224

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OFFICE HOURS: M,W 12:15-1:15 PM and 4:15-4:45 PM

NOTICE: This is NOT a contract. It is my syllabus. I made it. I can change it.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine the life and writings of James Baldwin, with emphasis on his role in the so-called civil rights movement and his political writings on the subject of race. Baldwin gained fame as a commentator on race. Baldwin is a controversial figure for several reasons. First, in spring 1963, he was openly and publicly critical of President Kennedy and JFK's failure to provide what Baldwin called "moral leadership" in the struggle against segregation. Late in May 1963, after Bull Connor turned police dogs and fire hoses on black children in Birmingham, Alabama, Baldwin met with Attorney General Robert Kennedy and the meeting "blew up" in everyone's face. As a consequence Baldwin became *persona non grata* with the Kennedy administration and was marginalized at the March on Washington in August 1963. Baldwin was also controversial because he did not hide his "gayness." The queer or homosexual or LGBTQ community embraces Baldwin because of his gayness, while the black community embraces him because of his role as a champion against racism but prefers to ignore his "gayness." His criticism of the black church and his writing about "taboo" subjects also made him controversial in the eyes of some black people. Thus we are left with his divided and ambiguous legacy. This course will not shun or ignore Baldwin's sexuality. Those who are uncomfortable discussing same-sex attraction or relations should not take this course.

REQUIRED READINGS

Go Tell It On the Mountain

Notes of a Native Son

The Fire Next Time

Just Above My Head

The Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings

All books are in paperback.

Also useful, but out of print, is the biography by James Leeming.

There are assorted readings on Library eReserves in sakai. To log into sakai, simply go to sakai.rutgers.edu and log-in with your username and password.

ASSIGNMENTS

There will be at least one paper for each book. You will respond to directed questions. In some cases the paper may be like a take-home exam. The writing assignments will probably be in the 5-10 page range. And there will be a final assignment.

COMPONENTS OF THE GRADE

Writing Assignments	70%
Final Paper	10%
Class Attendance	10%
Class Participation	10%

ATTENDANCE

Attendance will be taken at every class using a sign-in sheet. If you do not attend regularly you will be penalized for poor attendance. **No more than four absences are expected (that is one per month)**. After the fourth absence you will lose points for each additional absence. If there is a compelling situation that will require you to miss class or leave class early you should discuss that with me in advance (the sooner the better) and I will treat said situation as an excused absence.

If you accumulate 5 unexcused absences your grade for class attendance will be C (average/satisfactory), 7 points out of 10.

If you accumulate 6 unexcused absences your grade for class attendance will be D (below average/not satisfactory), 6 points out of 10.

Seven unexcused absences is equivalent to F, 5 points out of 10.

Eight or more absences (why are you even enrolled?) will be equivalent to zero points out of ten.

PARTICIPATION

Class participation will be ten percent of the grade. This means, at the very least, that when I call on you and ask you a question you have a reply, or you raise your hand to volunteer to give an answer, or to ask an original question of your own or offer an interpretation. **Deporment** will count in the participation grade. This means that you are paying attention and you are taking the course seriously. Poor deporment occurs when you can't answer a question or don't know where we are in a reading or in the lecture because you were busy playing a video game on your cell phone, or busy texting, or busy laughing, joking and/or chatting with a classmate, or otherwise distracted. Disruptive or combative behavior, including "word-for-word," is also poor deporment. This is a 300-level course, and so participation in discussion is very important.

If you are here, you will know exactly when the assignments are due. **If you are absent it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate.**

Every student should have a partner in the class (a teammate) so that you can get notes.

You should check your email before class for announcements in Sakai. The reserve readings can be accessed through sakai; click on Library e-Reserves in the left hand column in sakai.

THE GRADING SCALE

In general, an average of	00-59 = F	Failing
	60-69 = D	Poor
	70-74 = C	Satisfactory (average)
	75-79 = C+	A bit more than Satisfactory
	80-84 = B	Good
	85-89 = B+	Very Good
	90-100 = A	Excellent/Outstanding

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The papers are not collaborative exercises. Each person should do his or her own independent, individual work. The papers will be submitted with BOTH a paper hard copy and you will upload it to sakai, where it will be filtered through TURNITIN, which detects Internet copy-and-paste plagiarism. If you copy and paste someone else's work and do not cite the source this is plagiarism. It might be as small as a sentence or two, but if you do not use quotation marks and cite the source it is still plagiarism. "I didn't know" and "I forgot" are not acceptable excuses.

If two or more people turn in papers that are entirely or substantially identical, this suggests cheating or collusion. The person who shared the file or notes with the person who turned in someone else's work as his or her own is equally guilty of violating the Code of Academic Integrity. The consequences can be severe.*

Obviously students should not cheat on exams or attempt to use notes stored on cellphones or other devices during an exam. The Code of Academic Integrity can be found at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml#I>

NORMS OF BEHAVIOR

CONSPICUOUS, REPEATED CHATTING IS INTOLERABLE

You should not be "chatting" while I am lecturing. If you need to chat during the lecture, please take your conversation outside. Conspicuous, repeated chatting is rude. Your classmates cannot hear the lecture if you are chatting and disturbing them. Chatting marks you as an uncouth, lower class person who has not been adequately socialized. Such behavior might be

tolerated in high school. But all of you should know better by now. If not, be assured that it will not be tolerated here. **People who "chat" repeatedly will be asked to withdraw from the course and referred to the Advising Office.* Chatting will be regarded as negative participation for the purposes of class participation (which is ten percent of the course grade).**

Likewise, as a responsible adult, you are here in class to take notes and **pay attention** to the lecture, not text, sext, play with Facebook, play with your lap top, play with your email, and play with your ipods, smartphones, blackberries and other toys, or watch television on your smart devices. If any of this happens, I will ask you to desist. Beyond that, I will ask you to leave the classroom or drop the course.

DISCUSSION MUST BE CIVIL

The view that I take in this course, in general, is that there is not one view that is the one and only "correct" view. We are not Stalinists. **Rather, there are multiple points of view competing in the marketplace of ideas; and no one has a monopoly on "truth;" and "truth" is in the eye of the beholder.** We can discuss our differing views, but our discussion should be polite and civil. That means that students do not engage in name-calling with one another, personal attacks, shouting, "talking over" people, interrupting, jeering, threats, and other forms of combative speech. We can disagree without being disagreeable. Sometimes we just have to agree to disagree.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

If your paper is more than one class period late there may be a late penalty of ten points. The more late that the paper is, the greater the penalty.

PROLONGED ABSENCE

Sometimes events occur that require prolonged absence from class. If, for example, you are in a car accident and are hospitalized and are going to be absent for weeks at a time, contact the Student Advising Office (856-225-6043). That office will then send a notice to all of your professors, making them aware of your situation. The same procedure should be followed if any type of illness (such as mono or strep throat) or emergency occurs that will cause you to be absent for an extended period of time. In this class, if you are absent for weeks at a time without explanation, you will be referred to the Student Advising Office, and you will not be accepted back into class until the Student Advising Office provides a satisfactory explanation and documentation.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

All of the rights, privileges and immunities of the tenured faculty are reserved.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course students will gain knowledge about the life and contributions of James Baldwin to the black freedom struggle, including the so-called civil rights movement and the black power movement.

Students will gain knowledge about the impact of race, gender, sexual orientation, class and region on the lives of black Americans.

Students will gain knowledge about the role of stereotypes in American society, and the social construction of race and gender and orientation, and identity.

Students will gain knowledge about integration and its relationship to questions of power, culture, assimilation and upward mobility.

ADDITIONAL HISTORY DEPARTMENT ASPIRATIONAL COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. As in all history courses, students will learn how to use primary sources.
2. Students will learn how to read secondary sources in a critical manner.
3. Students will learn how to cite sources.
4. Students will learn to write to the expectations of the discipline of history.
5. Students will learn how to construct an historical argument (including issues of interpretation and cause and effect)
6. Students will learn how to evaluate the integrity, reliability and usefulness of disparate sources.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

All dates are tentative and subject to change

W Jan 21	Introduction <i>The Cross of Redemption</i> , Introduction
M Jan 26	<i>Go Tell It on the Mountain</i> , Chapter One, entitled “The Seventh Day”
W Jan 28	<i>Go Tell It on the Mountain</i> , Chapter Two, “The Prayers of the Saints,” pp. 67-128
M Feb 2*	<i>Go Tell It on the Mountain</i> , Chapter Two, “The Prayers of the Saints,” pp. 128-176

- W Feb 4 *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, pp. 177-224.
In *The Cross of Redemption*, “To Crush a Serpent” (begins at p. 195)
- M Feb 9 *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, Part Three, “The Threshing Floor,” pp. 225-263.
Expect writing assignment.
- W Feb 11 In Library eReserves, in sakai, read Herbert Blumer, “Race as a Sense of Group Position
Notes of a Native Son, read Preface, Autobiographical Notes, “Everybody’s Protest Novel,” and “Many Thousands Gone” (skip Carmen Jones)
- M Feb 16 *Notes of a Native Son*, read “The Harlem Ghetto,” “Journey to Atlanta,”
“Notes of a Native Son”
In *The Cross of Redemption*, read “The Death of a Prophet,” (begins p. 351)
- W Feb 18 *Notes of a Native Son*, read Part III (all four essays), Expect assignment
- M Feb 23 In *The Cross of Redemption*, read “Mass Culture and the Creative Artist,”
“A Word from Writer Directly to Reader,” “From Nationalism, Colonialism, and the United States,” “Theater; The Negro In and Out,” “Is a Raisin in the Sun a Lemon in the Dark?”
- W Feb 25 In *The Cross of Redemption*, read “As Much Truth as One Can Bear” (1962),
“The Artist’s Struggle for Integrity,” “We Can Change the Country” (1963),
Lorraine Hansberry at the Summit (begins p. 134)
- M Mar 2 In sakai, (it will get there) Kenneth Clark, “The New Negro in the North,”
“The Negro in American Culture,” Nat Hentoff interview with James Baldwin, Lorraine Hansberry, Langston Hughes
- W Mar 4 *The Fire Next Time*, pp. 3-53
There will be a paper on this book
- M Mar 9 *The Fire Next Time*, pp. 54-106.
Kenneth Clark interview with James Baldwin (May 1963), excerpt (class handout)
- W Mar 12 In *The Cross of Redemption*, read “The Uses of the Blues” (1964), “What Price Freedom?” (1964), “The White Problem,” “On Being White,..and Other Lies” (1984) begins p. 166.

M Mar 16 and W Mar 18, Spring break

M Mar 23 On electronic reserve, Norman Podhoretz, “My Negro Problem—And Ours,” Bennett Berger, “Soul-Searching” (class handout)

W Mar 25 Electronic reserve, “Going to Meet the Man” (1965), will compare this with the writing of Winthrop Jordan, other authors

M Mar 30 In *The Cross of Redemption*, read “The Price May Be Too High” (1969), “On Language, Race and the Black Writer” (1979), “Of the Sorrow Songs” (1979), “Black English: A Dishonest Argument” (1980), “This Far and No Further” (1983),

W Apr 1 In *The Cross of Redemption*, “An Open Letter to My Sister Angela Davis” (1970)

F Apr 3, Good Friday

M Apr 6 (Easter Monday) On reserve, Herbert Blumer, “The Future of the Colorline” In Resources in sakai, Baldwin, “Report from Occupied Territory,” (*The Nation*, 1966)

W Apr 8 *Just Above My Head*, pp. 3-59. There will be an assignment on this chapter.

M Apr 13 *Just Above My Head*, Book Two, pp. 61-172 (includes Amy’s death and Joel’s encounter with Julia).

W Apr 15 *Just Above My Head*, Book Three, pp. 173-284

M Apr 20 *Just Above My Head*, Book Four, pp. 285-514

W Apr 22 continue

M Apr 27 *Just Above My Head*, Book Five, pp. 515-584, expect an assignment.

W Apr 29 to be assigned

M May 4 last day of classes