

PHI 397 African American Philosophy  
Dr. Johnny Washington  
Spring 2013

Office: Strong Hall Rm., 337  
Office Hrs: MWF: 10:30—11:30  
TR:1:45—2:45  
& by appointments

The philosophic landscape may be regarded as a series of mountain ranges, where a given range represents a certain philosophic tradition: e.g., Eastern, Western, African or African American tradition. Moreover, philosophers or thinkers within the respective traditions may be regarded as mountain climbers seeking to reach the highest peaks, by which to gain a panoramic view of the human condition and existence generally. For example, within the Western tradition those who approximated the highest mountain peaks included thinkers such as: Thales, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Hobbes, Hume, Peirce, Heidegger, Dewey, Quine and Rawls, et. al. Intermittently the paths of mountain range A converge or synergistically connect with the paths of mountain range B.

**Objective:** In this course, the focus is on the **African American philosophic tradition**. The African American philosophers-mountain climbers included such thinkers as: Martin Delaney, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Booker T Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Alain Locke, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X, among others. Furthermore, in this course we will examine the views or visions that these thinkers entertained, resulting from their exploring the philosophic landscape with the intention of addressing some practical problems that African Americans suffered. Self-determination, racial oppression, freedom, liberation, violence, self-esteem, ethnic or racial identity,—these are some of the themes or problems that will be explored in this course. We will do so by drawing on contemporary and traditional sources, most of which are included in the required textbook indicated below.

**Required Textbook:** *Reflections: An Anthology of African American Philosophy*, (2000); editors, James A. Montmarquet and William H. Hardy.

**Recommended Textbook:** *Evolution, History and Destiny: Letters to Alain Locke (1886-1954) and Others*, (2003), by Johnny Washington.

**Examinations:** There will be a mid-term examination and a final examination. Each will be of the essay form. The final examination will be comprehensive. Brief quizzes or other assignments might also be given.

**Make-ups:** If you miss an examination or quiz, you will be allowed to take it at another time. You may do so only if your reason for missing it is based on circumstances largely beyond your control, such as death in the immediate family; or, you (or someone in your immediate family) were hospitalized on the basis of an emergency some hours prior to the examination.

**Paper:** A paper between six (6) and seven and one-half pages (7.5) in length, typed-written is required. Suggested topics will be provided later in the course.

**Participation:** This will be assessed through (unannounced) quizzes, writing assignments, and quality and quantity of comments in class.

**Attendance:**

If you miss six (6) days, your final grade will be reduced by one letter grade. If you miss more than eight (8) days, your final grade could be reduced further.

**Grades:** The mid-term examination will constitute 25% of your total grade; and the final examination will constitute 30% of your total grade. The paper will be the basis of 35% of your total grade. Class participation will constitute 10% of your total grade. All works will be graded on the following scale: A: 90%; B: 80%; C: 70% and D: 60%.

**Reading Assignments:**

- Week 1**                    The “Prologue” to Dr. Washington’s book, *Evolution, History and Destiny*, as well as the essay, “What is Black Philosophy?” found in Dr. Washington’s book, *Alain Locke and Philosophy: A Quest for Cultural Pluralism* (1986). Both articles will be provided in pdf format electronically.
- Week 2**                    **Nationalism, Separation, and Assimilation**  
Martin Delaney: “The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States” 73  
Frederick Douglass: “The Future of the Negro, The Future of the Colored Race, The Nation’s Problem, and On Colonization” 81
- Week 3**                    **Nationalism, Separation, and Assimilation, cont.**
- Week 4**                    **Video or YouTube** on the life of Frederick Douglass and W.E.B DuBois
- Week 5**                    W.E.B. DuBois: “From The Soul of Black Folk” 9  
**Video or YouTube** on the life of W.E.B. DuBois  
Marcus Garvey: From “Philosophy and Opinion of Marcus Garvey” 92  
**Video or YouTube** on the life of Marcus Garvey  
**YouTube** Malcolm X: “Message to the Grass Roots” 203
- Week 6**                    **Issues in Afrocentricity and Ebonics**  
Molefi K. Asante: “The Afrocentric Idea in Education” 105  
Geneva Smitherman: “Black English/Ebonics: What It Be Like?” 125  
Milton Baxter: “Educating Teachers about Educating the Oppressed” 130
- Week 7**                    **Feminism, Womanism, and Gender Relations**  
Sojourner Truth: “A’n’t I a Woman?” 137

Patricia Hill Collins: “The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought” 136, bell hooks: “Reflections on Race and Sex” 152

**Week 8**

Charles W. Mills: “Do Black Men Have a Moral Duty to Marry Black Women?” 167

E. Frances White: “Africa on My Mind: Gender, Counterdiscourse, and African American Nationalism” 183

Amiri Baraka: “Black Women” 192

**Week 9**

**Spring Break**

**Week 10**

**Video:** *Eyes on the Prize*, Episode #3

**Week 11**

**Issues Concerning Values, Rights, and Education**

Alain Locke: “Values and Imperatives” 245

Booker T. Washington: “Atlanta Exposition Address” 294

W.E.B. DuBois: “The Talented Tenth” 296

**YouTube:** Samples of the original speeches of individuals such as: Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois

**Week 12**

**Philosophy and Legal Theory**

Patricia J. Williams: “Alchemical Notes: Reconstructing Ideals from Deconstructed Rights” 306

Regina Austin: “Sapphire Bound!” 314

Derrick Bell: “Racial Realism—After We’re Gone: Prudent Speculation on America in a Post-Racial Epoch” 325

**Week 13**

**Aesthetics**

James Baldwin: “Everybody’s Protest Novel” 349

Larry Neal: “The Black Arts Movement” 353

Alain Locke: “Value and Imperative” revisited

**Week 14**

Ralph Ellison: “Blues People” 367

Crispin Sartwell: “Rap Music and the Uses of Stereotypes” 372

**Week 15**

Kimberle Crenshaw: “Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew” 384

**YouTube:** Samples of Rap and Hip Hop Music

## Week 16

### Philosophy and Theology

James H. Cone: "God and Black Theology" 405

Victor Anderson: "Ontological Blackness in Theology" 414

Anthony Pinn: "Alternative Perspectives and Critique" 424

## End of Semester

### **Nondiscrimination:**

MSU is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution, and maintains a grievance procedure available to any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against. At all times, it is your right to address inquiries or concerns about possible discrimination to the Equal Opportunity Officer, (417) 836-4252. Other types of concerns (i.e., concerns of an academic nature) should be discussed directly with your instructor and can also be brought to the attention of your instructor's Department Head.

### **Disability accommodation:**

To request academic accommodations for a disability, Director, Disability Services, Plaster Student Union, Suite 405, (417) 836-4192 or (417) 836-6792 (TTY

<http://www.missouristate.edu/disability/> Students are required to provide documentation of disability to Disability Services prior to receiving accommodations. Disability Services refers some types of accommodation requests to the Learning Diagnostic Clinic, which also provides diagnostic testing for learning and psychological disabilities. For information about testing, contact Dr. Steve Capps, Director, Learning Diagnostic Clinic, (417) 836-4787, <http://psychology.missouristate.edu/ldc/>

**Academic Dishonesty:** MSU is a community of scholars committed to developing educated persons who accept the responsibility to practice personal and academic integrity. You are responsible for knowing and following MSU's student honor code, *Student Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures*, available at <http://www.missouristate.edu/academicintegrity/> and also available at the Reserves Desk in Meyer Library. Any student participating in any form of academic dishonesty will be subject to sanctions as described in this policy.

**Attendance Policy.** The University's attendance policy can be found in the 2004-2005 Undergraduate Catalog (p. 62) and at <http://www.missouristate.edu/registrar/attendan.html>

**Dropping a Class:** It is your responsibility to understand the University's procedure for dropping a class. If you stop attending this class but do not follow proper procedure for dropping the class, you will receive a failing grade and will also be financially obligated to pay for the class. To drop a class anytime after the first week of classes, you must complete and turn in a drop slip at an authorized registration center. If you wish to withdraw from the University (i.e., drop all your classes), contact the Registration Center, Carrington 320, 836-5522.

**Policy on Use of Cell Phones in Classes:** As a member of the learning community, each student has a responsibility to other students who are members of the community. When cell phones or pagers ring and students respond in class or leave class to respond, it disrupts the class. Therefore, the Office of Academic Affairs prohibits the use by students of cell phones, pagers, or similar communication devices during scheduled classes. All such devices must be turned off or put in a silent mode and cannot be taken out during class. At the discretion of the instructor, exception to this policy is possible in special circumstances.

Sanctions for violation of this policy are determined by the instructor and may include dismissal from the class – see Class Disruption Police. There are two appeal processes available to students. A sanction for class disruption may be appealed using the appeal process stated in the Class Disruption policy; however, a violation that involves a charge of academic dishonesty must be appealed using the process described in the *Student Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures*. Students have the right to continue attending class while an appeal is in progress.