

Changing Same: Creating Dialogs on the Unspeakable

Course Description

This course is a 300-level seminar that will revolve around some of the most debatable and controversial issues of modern and contemporary African-American society.

Specifically, we will study and discuss issues surrounding mental health, homophobia, reproductive rights, colorism, the right to protest and free speech, and violent resistance and nonviolence as paths to Black liberation.

The course will focus on developing listening and oral skills, debate skills, and the ability to negotiate contested issues identified above from several points of view.

Course Objectives

- To develop a deep sense of understanding and addressing some of the most controversial, most contested issues among the African-American community between the mid 20th century and the present day.
- To develop a scholarly approach to navigating the public discourse on these issues and a strong sense of personal view on them.
- Create and develop deep listening skills, oral skills, and debate skills.
- Develop skills to solve complicated situations while discussing complex issues.
- Enable the students to conduct research to support various points of view on each issue.
- Reveal the ways in which dialog can be an important educational tool-it can help identify and challenge misinformation and prejudice.

Course Requirements

Debate I, II, III:15, 20, 25% each

Final Project: 25%

Participation and Cognitive Presence: 15%

Final Project Requirements

Format: Powerpoint/Prezi (15-20 slides)

Based on the issues, theories, history and thought learned from the course material, lectures, discussions and debates, design a political student organization at Dickinson that would address an issue of your choice. The organization must have a strong structure, goals, program, and manifesto. It must have a series of ideas on recruitment, events, and fundraising. Finally, it must be able to be sustainable and ensure its longevity and effectiveness.

How will the assignment be evaluated

- functionality: can the organization be effectively created and sustained?
- originality: why is your organization new and important?
- creativity: use of multimedia (images, music, clips)
- effort: how much time, thought and research was put into the presentation
- connection to the texts, and central themes, questions of the course

Debate Requirements

The debate is meant to develop a deeper understanding of the course material and expand critical understanding of the topics at hand. The class will be divided into two groups and debate opposite sides of an argument, assigned randomly. The students will be required to do additional research and each team member will read two additional articles on the assigned topic.

Each participant is required to submit a 2-3 page text of their points before the debate and it will be graded individually.

Each participant will be graded on their performance in the debate individually.

Grading Rubric:

Each team will be assigned between 1-4 points for every argument they make

4 points	excellent argument: an irrefutable, clear, well-grounded argument with a quote attached
3 points	great argument: clear, well-supported by course materials
2 points	good argument: well-made point, supported by course materials
1 point	general argument, not well-supported

In addition to arguments, the team will be evaluated on the following basis

- delivery, tone, composure, clarity of speech
- connection with the audience
- creativity, use of music, images, art, tables, maps, charts

Final Project:

Create an activist organization that would address your issue of choice

Course Calendar

Week One

Section I: Homophobia in Black Community

Talking about It: Homophobia in the Black Community by Jewelle Gomez and Barbara Smith

Contesting Racialized Discourses of Homophobia by: Catherine Connell

Week Two

“Cover Your Eyes as I Describe a Scene so Violent”: Violence, Machismo, Sexism, and Homophobia an interview with Michael Eric Dyson and Byron Hurt

Lesbianism: an Act of Resistance by Cheryl Clarke

Section II: Religion

Week Three

Islamizing the Black Body: Ritual and Power in Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam by Edward Curtis

Nation of Islam Womanhood, 1960–1975 by Ula Yvette Taylor

Week Four

A Gendered Spirit: Race, Class, and Sex in the African American Church by TeResa Green

The Voices of Jacob on the Streets of Brooklyn: Black and Jewish Israelites in and around Crown Heights by Henry Goldschmidt

Week Five

The Role of the Black Church in Contemporary Politics by Melissa V. Harris-Lacewell

Black Churches and Mental Health Professionals: Can This Collaboration Work? By Keith Dempsey, S. Kent Butler and LaTrece Gaither

Week Six

Section III-mental health

Help-Seeking Attitudes, Mental Health Stigma, and Self-Concealment Among African American College Students by Akihiko Masuda, Page L. Anderson and Joshua Edmonds

Black Women and Mental Health: Working Towards Inclusive Mental Health Services by Melba Wilson

Week Seven

Black and dangerous? Rebecca Omonira asks why are black people with mental health problems more likely to be heavily medicated, restrained and detained against their will? By Rebecca Omonira

Critical Race Theory Speaks to the Sociology of Mental Health: Mental Health Problems Produced by Racial Stratification by Tony N. Brown

Week Eight

Section IV-Abortion

The Abortion Attitudes of Black Women: 1972-1991 by John Lynxwiler and David Gay

"The Civil Rights Movement of the 1990s?": The Anti-Abortion Movement and the Struggle for Racial Justice by Richard L. Hughes

Week Nine

Legal Abortion: Are American Black Women Healthier Because of It? By Willard Cates

Section V-Free Speech on Campus

Free Speech on Campus by Sigal Ben-Porath, Introduction, Chapter I

Week Ten

Section VI Colorism

Skin Complexion in the Twenty-First Century: The Impact of Colorism on African American Women by Tayler J. Mathews and Glenn S. Johnson

Revisiting "Color Names and Color Notions": A Contemporary Examination of the Language and Attitudes of Skin Color Among Young Black Women by JeffriAnne Wilder

Week Eleven

Shades of Brown: The Law of Skin Color by Trina Jones

The Electoral Consequences of Skin Color: The "Hidden" Side of Race in Politics by Vesla M. Weaver

Week Twelve

Section VII Violent and Nonviolent Resistance

The Ballot or the Bullet by Malcolm X

Nonviolence: The Only Road to Freedom by Martin Luther King

Week Thirteen

Final Project Presentations