

EDTE 218 / AFAM 218/ JSTU 218 /: African and Jewish American Convergence and Divergence

BULLETIN DESCRIPTION:

An examination of African American and Jewish American inter-ethnic, historical and contemporary connections and disconnections. Implications for educational, social, and social settings are considered.

CREDIT AWARDED: Three undergraduate credit hours

PREREQUISITES: None

INSTRUCTORS: Dr. Meir Muller and Mr. Devin Randolph

CONTACT INFORMATION: Meir Muller, meir@sc.edu, 803-513-9615, Wardlaw 104

Devin Randolph, devinlamonrandolph@gmail.com

Days, Time., Location: Monday 4:30-7:00, Wardlaw 110

COURSE OVERVIEW

This seminar draws from many disciplines including education, the arts and humanities, history, religion, African American studies, Jewish studies, and popular culture (including film, literature, social media and music). Consideration will be given to the historical antecedents which form the basis of contemporary educational pedagogies derived from Black and Jewish culture. Specific historical and contemporary events where Blacks and Jews worked together or were pitted against each other will be deliberated. By looking at sites of connection and disconnection between these two ethnic groups, students will consider the current state of Blacks and Jews with an emphasis on the role of education. The course will draw from social constructivist, critical race, emancipatory, and decolonizing frameworks.

An understanding of the African American and Jewish interrelated experiences requires a basic understanding of the cultural constructs of race, systemic racism, colonization, assimilation, and activism. By using the interrelated experiences of the African American and Jewish communities, students will gain understanding of how the consciousness of minoritized people can be manipulated in American society at large and specifically in schooling systems. Accordingly, the course will use multiple theories to analyze and deconstruct institutional structures, events, and people based on race, religion, and class. In addition, the course will offer new paradigms for understanding the impact of power and privilege in and out of school systems that affected both groups.

REQUIRED TEXTS/SUGGESTED READINGS/MATERIALS

There is no required textbook for this course. Links to all course readings will be provided on Blackboard (<https://blackboard.sc.edu>).

LEARNING OUTCOMES (from GSS and VSR)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of educational issues of oppression, marginalization, and equity by exploring African American and Jewish relations through historical, political, social, cultural, and educational contexts.

Specific (Carolina Core) Outcomes:

Students will learn to “use the principals of social sciences to explore diverse cultural identities and to analyze political and environmental issues”:

- Apply methodology by exploring how these two communities navigating among cooperating and conflicting interests analyzed against the crossroads of larger narratives about education in relation to race, religion, ethnicity, class, and politics in America.
- Use multiple theories to analyze and deconstruct institutional structures such as school, along with events, and people based on race, religion, and class.
- Use multiple paradigms for understanding the impact of power and privilege.
- Draw on understandings of geographic origins of African (Africa) and Jewish (primarily Europe) Americans, in creating context for understanding how each group relates to the American experience and the American educational experience.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how cultural diversity influences contemporary issues in and beyond education and shapes social behavior.

Students will learn to “examine different kinds of social and personal values, analyzing the ways in which these are manifested in communities as well as individual lives”:

- Examine sources of cultural and moral values in our country which often defines Christian whiteness as the standard to evaluate other groups.
- Demonstrate understanding of ideologies, or shared beliefs about the systems, practices and policies that shape the ‘normative’ culture in America, and be able to identify how African and Jewish Americans have been impacted by (and have impacted) this socio-historical product.
- Examine historical events (colonization, immigration, discrimination, enslavement, segregation) that have shaped hierarchies of value and institutions (e.g., government and media) that enforce these values, with a focus on education that maintain these value systems, and discourses (e.g., activism, daily conversations, the internet and media) that contest them.
- Demonstrate the importance of values, ethics, and social responsibility. Students will learn how structural inequities can be used to justify (i) silencing of groups that are marginalized by making their culture, language, religion and other ways of being, illegitimate, (ii) impose European American values and folkways, and (iii) cause educational, cultural, and psychological harm by devaluing a group’s social identity.
- Reflect on how systemic inequalities shape personal and community ethics and decision-making. Students will look through an antiracist education lens to see that whiteness has harmed those deemed “not white”, produced a set of cultural practices that are unnamed but regarded as universal and normal, often monopolizes material and cultural resources, and is a form of capital which advantages accrue regardless of social standing. Students will use this lens to reflect on how they situate their own ethics and social responsibility vis via this societal norm.
- Strategize how to address the fact that the dominate “American value” system has not and does not seem to apply for all groups of Americans.

COURSE OUTLINE WITH TIMELINE OF TOPICS, READINGS/ ASSIGNMENTS, EXAMS/PROJECTS

ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS

1. **Professionalism/Informed Participation— (15% of grade)**
2. **Critical School Memoir (20% of grade) – A full rubric and description will be provided —**
This assignment asks you to dig into your own schooling experiences based on one salient

aspect of your sociocultural identity selected from the list provided. You will also consider this identity factor in relation to peers whose experiences may have been different from your own. The purpose is to develop your critical eye (who is telling the story? Whose voice is heard? Unheard?) and deepen your understanding about issues of equity, privilege and their impact on opportunities to succeed. The deliverable will be a PP with comprehensive notes and three-page written conclusion. You will not be required to present the PP in class.

3. **Field Study— (group activity) (25% of grade) – A full rubric will be provided** —In groups of three or four, you will engage in a field study to gain firsthand information or information from primary and secondary sources which will give you a deeper understand of Black and Jewish people, both in terms of their respective and overlapping lived experiences. Your entire group will present to the class.
- Identify at least one local school or course on campus to visit which focuses on each population. Try to get a sense of how respective Diaspora history, culture, and languages are being taught. Note how values inform the content and context of the teaching and the school wide environment.
 - Visit at least one place of worship for each group. In your description, be clear on the focus of the place of worship (e.g., for Blacks—Christian [list denomination], Muslim, African-centric **or** for Jewish—Orthodox, Reform, or Conservative). Consider the role faith plays as the source of the participants values and how these values function in modern society.
 - Visit a grocery store or restaurant or places of business that caters to each population.
 - Familiarize yourself with the following museums. Spend at least one 30 minutes on the site. What did you learn about the cultural legacies of the two ethnic groups?
 - <https://www.nypl.org/locations/schomburg>
 - <https://www.ushmm.org/>
 - <http://www.freedomcenter.org/>
 - <https://nmaahc.si.edu/>
 - <https://thejewishmuseum.org>

The presentation needs to be structured using at least one theoretical frame and a clear demonstration of an understanding of the how societal institutions such as education, religion and social environments have shaped the personal and community ethics and decision making of these two groups.

4. **Interview (individual) (40% of grade) – A full rubric will be provided.**
- a. In depth interview and follow-up
 - i. Using a semi-structured interview process, identify Jewish and Black people to interview. You will have to obtain informed consent from each interviewee. You should interview at least six people and at least two from each of the two ethnic groups (we can help provide people if needed). Aim to get a cross-section of people across gender, age, different levels of cultural assimilation, and religious/non-religious affiliation.
 - ii. Develop a set of interview questions that you want to ask (assistance with questions will be provided). These should be approved by the instructors. Be sure to record the interview (either written, audio, or video—with permission from interviewee). You will analyze the interviews for themes and patterns to make sense of what you learned of each groups culture and value system. You should be prepared to follow up interviews with additional question. How does what you learned fit with the knowledge base and with what you already knew?

Or

- b. Using a structured interview process, interview 20 USC students (not in this class) to understand their knowledge of African American and Jewish issues including school/educational related topics. Assistance with questions will be provided along with interview guidelines. You will analyze the interviews for themes and patterns to make sense of what you learned reflecting on student's content knowledge and attitudes (including privilege, biases and values). This is a one time, relatively brief interview, using the exact same set of questions for each student.

ATTENDANCE

It is expected that all students actively engage in all sessions of this class. It is also expected that each student arrives to class on time and stays for the duration of the class. A great deal of what we are *learning* in class will come from our discussions and activities. Students are responsible for contacting classmates to find out what was missed due to absence(s). In this class missing more than ten percent of class sessions will result in the final grade being lowered by a full grade (e.g., from an A to a B or from a B+ to a C+).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

University policy regarding academic responsibility (Student Affairs Policy STAF 6.25) states "It is the responsibility of every student at the University of South Carolina Columbia to adhere steadfastly to truthfulness and to avoid dishonesty, fraud, or deceit of any type in connection with any academic program. Any student who violates this rule or who knowingly assists another to violate this rule shall be subject to discipline." Students who commit an act of academic dishonesty may receive a 0.0 on the assignment or in the course. More information regarding this policy can be found in the Carolina Community: USC Student Handbook and Policy Guide at: <http://www.sa.sc.edu/carolinacommunity/housing.htm#Academic%20Responsibility>

POLICIES RELATING TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor to discuss any accommodations needed to fulfill course requirements. In order to receive reasonable accommodations from the instructor, students must have certified eligibility through the Office of Student Disability Services. Any student with a documented disability should contact the Office of Student Disability Services at 777-6142 to make arrangements for appropriate accommodations.

EVALUATION AND GRADING

93-100 percent=A 89-92 percent =B+ 85-88 percent =B 81-84 percent =C+
77-80 percent =C 74-76 percent =D+ 70-73 percent =D <70 percent =F