

Viewing: **CLCV 224 : American Race and Ethnicity in the Classical Tradition**

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Programs referencing
this course

[5891: Classical Civilizations Minor, UG](#)

[5893: Classics: Classical Civilizations, BALAS](#)

History

1. Feb 15, 2018 by Antony Augoustakis (aagoust)
2. Mar 2, 2018 by Amy Elli (amyelli)
3. Dec 12, 2018 by Deb Forgacs (dforgacs)

General Information

Effective Term:

College: Liberal Arts & Sciences

Department/Unit Name (ORG Code): Classics (1514)

Course Subject: Classical Civilization (CLCV)

Course Number: 224

Course Title: American Race and Ethnicity in the Classical Tradition

Abbreviated Title: Amer Race&Ethnicity ClasicTrad

Course

Description:

Survey of American minority cultures and the reception of Greco-Roman culture in literature, film, and politics, with brief units of historical concentration on ancient slavery and proto-racism, Harvard's Indian College, early African-American poets, novelists, educators, and classicists, the Greco-Roman heritage of the Ku Klu Klan, and Civil Rights Movement leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., Huey P. Newton, and Eldridge Cleaver. Other highlights include Derek Walcott's Caribbean/Homeric Omeros, Erin Gruwell's mixed-race Freedom Writers, and Spike Lee's Chi-Raq.

Justification

Justification for change:

Please Note: a syllabus is
required for General
Education review:

Course Information

Course Credit

Course credit:

Undergraduate: 3

Graduate:

Professional:

Registrar Use

Only:

Banner Credit: 0 OR 3

Billable Hours: 0 OR 3

Grading Type

Grading type: Letter Grade

Alternate Grading
Type (optional):

Available for DFR: No

Repeatability

May this course be repeated? No

Credit Restrictions

Credit
Restrictions:

Advisory Statements

Prerequisites:

Concurrent
Enrollment
Statement:

Restricted
Audience
Statement:

Cross-listing

Cross Listed
Courses:

Class Schedule Information

Class Schedule
Information:

Fees

Is a fee requested No
for this course?

Course Description in the Catalog Entry

This is how the above information will be represented in the Catalog:

Survey of American minority cultures and the reception of Greco-Roman culture in literature, film, and politics, with brief units of historical concentration on ancient slavery and proto-racism, Harvard's Indian College, early African-American poets, novelists, educators, and classicists, the Greco-Roman heritage of the Ku Klu Klan, and Civil Rights Movement leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., Huey P. Newton, and Eldridge Cleaver. Other highlights include Derek Walcott's Caribbean/Homeric Omeros, Erin Gruwell's mixed-race Freedom Writers, and Spike Lee's Chi-Raq.

Additional Course Notes

Enter any other
course
information
details to be
included in the
catalog:

Course Detail

Frequency of
course:
Other

Describe other
frequency:
Fall term, even years

Duration of the
course Full

Anticipated
Enrollment: 30

Expected distribution of student registration:	Freshman: 30 %	Sophomore: 30 %	Junior: 20 %	Senior: 20 %
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General Education

General Education Category Literature and the Arts
US Minority Culture(s)

General Information

Is the course required for a
major concentration? No

Is the course part of a
sequence? No

What is the frequency with which the course will be offered?:
(For Example: every semester, once a year)

At least once per two years. If enrollments and staffing are sufficient, it could be offered every year.

Briefly describe how the course fulfills the General Education objectives:

This course has been designed ob ovo specifically to address objectives of general education. Studies of the classical tradition introduces students to a diachronic approach to the 2700 years of Western culture from Homer to the present, and this is usually achieved by surveying a cross section of artistic genres and intellectual disciplines. This course begins with a comparison of ancient and modern slavery and an examination of the ancient origins of racial prejudice. Recent publications have

addressed the controversies surrounding these two topics. The third week addresses the Latin education of both Caleb Cheeshahteamauk and other members of the Wampanoag and Phillis Wheatley, the first published African-American poet. In the fourth week the students will learn about the debate between Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois about whether to provide a classical education or industrial training to the new class of "freedmen." In the sixth week they will learn about the relationship between the KKK and classical antiquity. The next week they will read about classical influences on Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and other leaders of the Civil Rights movement. Subsequently they will study the classical fusion in the novels of Toni Morrison and Derek Walcott's Caribbean Homeric epic *Omeros*, as well as the controversies introduced by Mertin Bernal's *Black Athena*, especially the claim that Socrates and Cleopatra were black and Afrocentric. The final component of the semester will introduce the students to such mid-century films as *Spartacus* and *Demetrius and the Gladiators*, which incorporated black slaves as gladiators, and more recent films by black directors that depend on the Oedipus myth (John Singleton's *Baby Boy*; Ernest R. Dickerson's *Never Die Alone*) or Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (Spike Lee's *Chi-Raq*).

By surveying the chronological development of racial prejudice, Latin pedagogy, political philosophy, and cinematic renditions of classical antiquity from their origins to the modern era, CLCV 224 examines cross-cultural examples in a variety of intellectual disciplines and artistic genres, with geographical breadth. Because as Classicists we study and teach not a specific discipline but area studies that include many different methodologies—language pedagogy, historical linguistics, literary studies, archaeology, and philosophy, just to name a few—this course implements the general education desideratum that we introduce students to our disciplinary methodology.

The level of the coursework is aimed at undergraduate non-majors, who are provided with English translations of all relevant passages from ancient literature and intermediate sources. The topics under consideration are all introduced with the assumption that the students are unfamiliar with the work and its exemplars, so the course remains a general survey in that sense.

Both lectures and the writing assignments are designed to introduce students to not only materials and concepts but also the analysis thereof. The Pre-Quizzes as well as the two formal paper assignments introduce the students to methods and areas of online and print journal research, while others encourage the students to articulate their own ideas and various layers of understanding and demand frequent analysis. Ethnic minorities are the focus of each unit in the course, including young indigenous males, first generation freed slaves, black leaders of the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and then more contemporary black artists in the cinematic units, whether they are behind the camera or the subject of the films under consideration. The course also includes several units on black women, particularly the poet Phillis Wheatley, the novelists Pauline E. Hopkins and Toni Morrison, and post-emancipation women either admitted or excluded from a classical education at schools like Wilberforce and Oberlin, even though they admitted black women students.

Describe the instructional format and provide special justification, if necessary:

This course will be taught in the “interactive lecture format” featured at an annual meeting of the AAHE, published in the Cooperative Learning and College Teaching newsletter, and adapted and classroom tested by the professor for the past two decades.

The interactive lecture format addresses criticisms of the traditional passive lecture format and encourages active learning by employing a number of pedagogical strategies recommended in educational literature beginning in the 1980s. Interactive lectures are by nature variegated, but the strategies and procedures include the following:

- “pre-quizzes” to encourage the students to familiarize themselves with the readings and subject matter before the lecture and articulate in writing preliminary reactions which the lecturer then molds, leading to better learning acquisition;
- “web-searches” to introduce the students to reliable, informative websites, alternative methodologies, analyses, and opinions, and a network of educational resources accessible at any time, particularly in the future when the course has been completed;
- “pause procedures” such as “quick-thinks” to divide the lecture time into two or three mini-lectures and allow a few minutes for the students to consolidate their notes, ask questions, discuss a problem or idea with their neighbor, and/or write a brief essay;
- “exit slips” to encourage the students to summarize what they have learned during the lecture period and articulate some of these items in writing;
- “interactive pop-quizzes” to encourage the students to assimilate factual information such as names, dates, and titles and transfer this information to their active memories by a combination of strategies, including momentary test stress, instructor hints, notebook reviews, humor, and repetition.
- “scaffolding” to build into the lecture format support “structures” that anticipate student errors, points of confusion, and gaps in knowledge, provide assignment guidelines and skill instructions, pause for comprehension checks, and offer insight into the professor’s own experience with specific material. Scaffolding allows the professor to guide the students through the material rather than impose it upon them.

Integral to the process is the course “Study Guide,” which will be available in a Compass2g folder. It will contain not only charts, chronological tables, and maps but also pre-quiz forms, questions for thought and discussion, and keyword and Names-To-Know lists. By attending class and completing their pre-, mid-, and post-lecture assignments the students are almost always engaged and produce self-generated written material more than once per week. In addition, the students are encouraged at the top of the first page of the syllabus (and website) to come to office hours to discuss the course and their education with the professor.

New material is often introduced via dynamic Keynote/PowerPoint lectures, specifically rendered for each lecture, which provide static and cinematic visual support as well as textual highlights, which are then available online for further study and review.

Describe the means by which the Communication Skills goal will be achieved:

The course promotes students’ communication skills in five ways.

- 1) The students write one 3-5 page paper/presentation and one 7-10 paper. The rationale behind writing the papers is twofold, 1) to give the students practice in writing a concise, structured, informed, and specific essay, and 2) to regularize the process of writing so that, ideally, they lose their fear and reluctance to commit their thoughts to formal writing. The students are given the opportunity to rewrite these papers after digesting the professor's written comments and/or discussing them with the professor, and the process of researching the paper, thinking about the paper, writing the paper, reading and then discussing the comments on the paper, rewriting the paper, and then reading the comments on the revised paper, is designed to be an immersion process. Both papers require extensive sourcing and reporting on their print and online searches. The topics for these papers will change from semester to semester so that plagiarism is avoided. The longer paper is designed for them to synthesize a larger amount of material derived from two distinct genres, literature and film, and to think about the process of adapting a literary work as a cinematic project.
- 2) The students regularly hand in 1-2 page quiz writings, including pre-quizzes in which they summarize and/or analyze daily readings and summarize and evaluate websites and information found in recommended websites, and exit slips in which they describe and/or analyze lecture content. These writing are graded simply on a check/plus/minus scale.
- 3) During a number of lectures the students will experience "pause" and "quick-think" exercises in which they will ask questions of the professor or exchange oral ideas with each other. Also, the students are encouraged at the top of the syllabus and the website to visit the professor's office hours at least once during the semester, and during the rewriting process they may discuss their paper.
- 4) The students will be making an oral presentation summarizing an assigned journal article about Omeros.
- 5) The students will be instructed at the outset of the course that they must email the professor with proper grammar, orthography, and punctuation.

Describe how evaluation and adherence to General Education guidelines will be monitored:

Please indicate the timeline for such evaluations

The Department of the Classics remains committed to undergraduate education and specifically to general education courses at the University of Illinois.

At the end of each semester the course is taught, the students will fill out course evaluations that will ask them to evaluate the whole course, the instruction, the Study Guide, the short written and oral assignments, the two formal papers, the lectures, the grading system, their knowledge of the subject, how much time and effort they put into the course, and their mastery of writing. This material will be shared with the department head and, if requested, the undergraduate curriculum committee. (We are a small department; we share pedagogical issues, questions, and problems on a regular basis.)

Indicate those who will teach the course and describe procedures for training & supervising teaching assistants:

Professor Jon Solomon will teach this course. He has published on the subject of lecture format pedagogy, and won numerous teaching awards, including the American Philological Association's Excellence in the Teaching of the Classics Award. He has designed four general education courses here at UIUC, and he teaches six different general education courses on a rotating basis. No teaching assistants are anticipated for this course.

Literature and the Arts

Describe the reading requirements in this course.

The students will read a variety of selections from works ranging from antiquity to the present primarily uploaded onto Compass2g. The readings usually illustrate a specific idea or concept. The purpose of the pre-quizzes is to encourage (i.e. force) the students to read the passages before lecture, which makes the lecture more interesting and informative for them. There are also optional readings; the students are encouraged to read more than the assigned passages.

The range of genres is broad, including ancient passages from Plato's Republic, Sophocles' Oedipus, Aristophanes' Lysistrata, Catullus' lyric poems, and Ovid's Metamorphoses, and such modern works as Martin Luther King's Letter from [a] Birmingham Jail and his "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech of April 3, 1968, delivered one day before he was assassinated, in which he imagines going to ancient Greece to "see Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Euripides, and Aristophanes assembled around the Parthenon." Other readings include letters, speeches, and published writings by Caleb Cheeshahteaumauk and Benjamin Larnell ("Fable of the Fox and the Weasel"); William Sanders Scarborough, who wrote an important language textbook (First Lessons in Greek) and described Frederick Douglass as "a veritable Pylian Nestor, from whose lips flow words sweeter than honey"; Eldridge Cleaver (Soul on Ice), The Autobiography of Malcolm X (Chapter 15: "Icarus"); Martin Bernal's Black Athena; Lefkowitz & Rogers' Black Athena Revisited; Derek Walcott's The Odyssey; Philip Roth's The Human Stain; selections from Toni Morrison novels; and Erin Gruwell's (et al) The Freedom Writers Diary. The amount of reading varies from day to day, the shortest being a single lyric poem, the longest being the entirety of Walcott's epic-length Omeros. The readings range in difficulty as well, so time is spent in lecture preparing them for the most difficult of these readings (scaffolding) and summarizing them afterwards.

Describe the writing requirements in this course.

The students write two formal papers (10-15 pages total), and they hand in ten written 1-2 page pre-quizzes. The students are encouraged to rewrite their papers after consulting with the professor. The idea here is not only to correct their grammatical and mechanical mistakes and raise the level of their thinking and their articulation of that thinking but also to condition them to be writing frequently and to be thinking

about their writing much of the time.

How does the course introduce students to the typical critical approaches and methods of the discipline, and to past accomplishments in the field?

Every period and almost every generation since Constantine's division of the Roman Empire in the fourth century has produced significant and influential adaptations of classical literature and the Greco-Roman visual arts, but, equally, the process of preserving or rediscovering classical exemplars, reevaluating them via an approach characteristic of the period or generation, and producing literature, art, and ideas dependent on them continues into the dissemination in different directions during the nineteenth, twentieth, and early twenty-first centuries. In this course the main concentrations are on the continuance of Latin pedagogy as the gateway to an education, the inherent Eurocentric bias in ancient and early modern sources, the application of Socratic and Platonic political philosophy to modern society, and methods of adaptation of ancient theater to contemporary cinema as well as its demographic distribution.

How does the course foster the goals of humanistic study, including: skill in communication; discriminating judgment and appreciation of ideas; understanding of cultural traditions; appreciation awareness of cultural ethnic and national diversity; and reflection on the human condition?

The students are informed at the outset that one of the goals of the course is to learn to articulate their ideas about the subject matter, and there are many different formats and opportunities in which to do this. These have been detailed in the previous paragraphs, including emphasis on speaking in class. Students will be encouraged to articulate questions, hypotheses, and information with each other during "pause" and "quick-think" exercises.

Because several of the works the students study are considered to be literary monuments or prize-winners (e.g. Plato's Republic and Walcott's Omeros), the students are asked to consider the process through which a particular artwork obtains that lofty status and how and why this estimation can be ephemeral. In lecture, for instance, important ideas are very often re-emphasized by illustrating their influence in their original period or subsequent eras, e.g. the concept of the Platonic Form is traced from its pre-Socratic origins through Plotinus and Augustine to Gothic architecture and the Medici court and, finally, to Huey P. Newton and Martin Luther King, Jr.

The entire substratum of the course depends upon the ancient artistic, political, and cultural traditions and their intersections with and impact upon primarily the indigenous and black populations of the United States and the Caribbean.

If the course contains elements of more than one category within the Humanities and the Arts (literature, the arts, historical perspectives, or philosophical perspectives), explain why this course is more appropriate for the category for which it is proposed.

Is this a course in literature:

Is this a course in the arts: Yes

List or describe the art forms, genres or specific objects to be studied.

This course is interdisciplinary, involving lyric and epic poetry, ancient Greek tragedy and ["Old"] comedy, philosophical prose, mythological poetry, prose compendia, epistolography, rhetoric, novels, and film. Formal aspects will concentrate on modern adaptations of classical prototypes.

How will the course concern itself with the characteristics of the medium and other appropriate issues, such as its social function, its means of conveying meaning, and the evaluation of the art forms?

The objects of art are used to illustrate the acceptance, transformation, and application of the classical tradition in an extended diachronic time frame. Within this context, the various forms of poetry and prose demonstrate the continuation of traditional forms across geographical, cultural, and chronological barriers and their transformation in social and political functionality. In the latter units of the course on film, students will be asked to consider the time-consuming but essential process of selecting a subject, adapting, incorporating, or making a significant allusion to an ancient source, clearing the property through corporate mentality, and then distributing and advertising it in a popular medium. Published critical reviews will be linked on the Compass2g course site.

Will the students participate in the creation of art? If so, please elaborate.

N/A

U.S. Minority Cultures

Show how the course treats topics and issues that promote a deeper understanding of the culture(s) discussed.

Throughout the course the students are conscious of the impact of Greco-Roman culture in Western civilization in general, in the Americas specifically, and among indigenous, African-American, and Caribbean minorities in particular. Among other concepts, the students learn that it was for the most part from the mid-eighteenth to the late nineteenth century that the modern perception of antiquity was formulated,

wherein the ancient Greek artists and mythological heroes (but not their modern descendants) were lionized as the founders of civilization and their artists as the first and greatest in history, while the Romans descended to the status of gladiatorial and imperial butchers, Christ-killers, and debauchees. The students then learn how in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries these exaggerated misperceptions are being corrected or expanded. During this process the students acquire a considerable understanding of both Greco-Roman antiquity and some of its most notable artistic and cultural products as well as their subsequent impact in the United States, in addition to the latter's broad and variegated attitudes and adaptations of the former. Along the way the students are also frequently reminded of how these artistic and cultural products and institutions that have developed since the time of Homer impact their daily lives as members of an institution of higher education in a Western democracy.

Show how the course provides at least one of the following: (i) a broad description and analysis of the interaction of intellectual, artistic, political, economic, social, and other aspects of a society's cultural life; (ii) an intensive investigation of the cultural life of a society or group in a particular time and place; (iii) a focused investigation of particular aspects of the culture of a society or group (e.g., its art and architecture); or (iv) a comparative investigation of cultural systems and the development of constructs for cross-cultural sensitivity and analysis.

i) The study of the classical tradition, which begins already in late antiquity, was traditionally a study of the interaction of the intellectual and artistic aspects of Greco-Roman culture in subsequent periods, but in the last generation American scholars have spear-headed the expansion of the study of the classical tradition to include all aspects of a society's cultural life. The professor proposing this course has spent much of his career championing and furthering this movement. iv) Ancient authors like Plato and Catullus could hardly have imagined that two millennia later their works would inspire minority socio-political leaders spending their terms of incarceration reading their works, and Cicero did not expect his Latin prose to be read by indigenous students at Harvard 1700 years later. How these kinds of cultural intersections and impacts originate and continue is the essence of this course.

If the course contains elements of both the Western, Non-Western, and/or U.S. Minority Cultures categories, show how the emphasis of the course makes it more appropriate for the category for the U.S. Minority Cultures category for which it is being proposed.

Show how the course provides understanding and awareness of significant aspects of one or more U.S. racial minority cultures. Courses that focus on other socially significant U.S. minority identities (for example, relating to sexuality, gender, religion, or disability) or on theories of diversity, inequality, or discrimination are also appropriate for this requirement if the experiences, conditions, and perspectives of one or more U.S. racial minority populations are significantly and appropriately integrated into the course.

This course examines the impact of the Greco-Roman cultural tradition on United

States (and Caribbean) minorities. The chronological scope and artistic breadth have been explained throughout this proposal, but here there should be an emphasis on the days studying Martin Bernal's *Black Athena*. Before publication of his three volumes, there was already a strain of cultural tradition maintaining the African origins of Cleopatra, and *Dreamgirls* realizes that on film two decades after publication. I would also add here that cultural bias, dominance, and appropriation will be discussed frequently. One of the topics for discussion that will frequently find relevance is the sliding scale that evaluates modern culture, especially minority culture, through its majority origins, e.g. how much attention we should pay to Huey P. Newton's Platonic inspiration versus his own inspiration. By the end of the semester, the students will have (ideally) learned the importance of the classical tradition and its widespread and continuing influence as well as the vitality of the American minority artistic and socio-political products that it helped inspire and create artworks of fusion.

Additional Course Information

Does this course
replace an
existing course? No

Does this course
impact other
courses? No

Does the addition
of this course
impact the
departmental
curriculum? No

Has this course
been offered as a
special topics or
other type of
experimental
course? No

Will this course be
offered on-line?
Face-to-Face

Faculty members
who will teach
this course:
Professor Jon Solomon

Course ID: 1011380

Comments to

Reviewers:

Approved by LAS General Education Committee 2-1-18

Course Edits

Proposed by:

Key: 10815