

**Project Title:** Making Research “Real”

**Statement of Purpose:** In designing assignments for my course, I wanted to develop projects that would:

1. increase my students’ understanding of race and culture as a social phenomenon
2. encourage students to hone their research skills by
  - a. using scholarly/academic sources of information appropriate to their topic
  - b. using suitable keywords when exploring a topic of which they initially knew very little
3. advance students’ knowledge of sociology as a discipline, and
4. prepare students for future research projects at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

I also had the secondary purpose of creating assignments that were fun for students to do and straightforward for me to assess.

**Background:** The purpose of any course assignment should be to assess student learning of the material at various stages during the semester. Some professors design assignments that merely serve as a percentage of a course grade with no connection to the learning that is expected. In the spirit of assigning projects that are interesting for both the student and the professor I developed assignments that would help students build on their knowledge of specific topical segments of the course while connecting them to different ways of researching information and using different kinds of aptitudes (reading, visual, aural).

**Accomplishments:** The project met its objectives by first providing students with assignments that helped them to focus on particular research databases. The intention here was to keep students from utilizing non-academic websites or sources such as Wikipedia for their supporting information. For example, in the students’ second assignment they were asked to explore historical events from the course readings that were covered by the news media. This was intended to give students an opportunity to contextualize the coverage of historical information provided in the course material. The students also gained insight into the kinds of information that they could obtain using two different ProQuest databases – *CSA Newspaper* and *CSA Sociological Abstracts*. In another example, an assignment was based on the ability of students to see how recent articles on a particular historical topic have been covered in recent years using *CSA Sociological Abstracts* as their only source of information.

The aforementioned assignments are examples of individualized projects. However, *CSA Sociological Abstracts* can also be utilized in group assignments such as the one I gave my students at the end of the semester. In this assignment, in groups of three or four, students selected a topic that they were interested exploring that ended where the course readings left off. In this case, they could only discuss events and use works that were published after 2000. An additional caveat was that they could only use information obtained from *CSA Sociological Abstracts*. Students provided a copy of their bibliography to me (and some to their peers) and discussed how the information they found related to earlier themes covered in the course. The purpose of this assignment was to link the past with the present in terms of how the past is still relevant today.

**Future Goals:** In the future, I would like to develop a similar project that is carried out in stages for a final research paper in addition to the shorter assignments previously assigned. I believe this would be most fitting for upper division or mid-level courses, but can also see its usefulness and applicability in a graduate level seminar. I would also continue to use the two databases, *ProQuest CSA Newspaper Abstracts* and *CSA ProQuest Sociological Abstracts*.

The course in which I most look forward to using this project is *SOC 310: Racial and Ethnic Minorities*. The ability to have students conduct research on different immigrant groups and racial and ethnic groups would be quite informative and interesting. As an instructor, I would be eager to see how they could apply their knowledge of the New Haven community, perhaps using it as a research focal point given the city's diverse history of racial/ethnic and immigrant group settlement patterns. Also, Southern Connecticut State University has an Ethnic Heritage Center which might be able to house the findings of the students as well as support a fair of the students' final research projects.

**Contact:**

Dr. Shirley A. Jackson, Associate Professor  
Department of Sociology  
Southern Connecticut State University  
501 Crescent Street  
New Haven, CT 06515  
Phone: 203-392-5676  
FAX: 203-392-7087  
[Jacksons1@southernct.edu](mailto:Jacksons1@southernct.edu)

**References:** Course assignments following

## Courting The News?

Discuss the role of newspapers and the courts during the period between 1800 and 1954. You do not need to use each decade, but should try to explore the content of older newspapers (1800s) to see what was said about African Americans and those of the 1900s. This content can be broadly based which means that it can cover a variety of issues but one area of focus should be on the courts. In your response, discuss specific court cases, the neutrality/lack of neutrality of the judges, the basis for each case, and the decision(s) of the courts. How might these elements have been influenced by the social conditions of the time? How did this help your understanding of the event, the time period, and the people involved?

For your analysis, you are required to use 1) *Proquest CSA Newspaper Abstracts* and *Times Digital Archive* to draw upon the way in which newspapers presented information on African Americans, 2) the *CSA Sociological Abstracts* to see how scholars have described what happened during these periods, and 3) the course material.

### **Paper Writing Guidelines**

Your paper should be double-spaced and your pages numbered. Your margins should not be excessively wide. You do not need a title page. You will, however, need to cite your sources in the body of your paper and in a bibliography which must be in ASA Style format. If you are making direct quotes in the body of your paper, keep in mind that they should not be extremely lengthy. Quotes longer than two lines should be indented two inches from the left and right margins. If you are paraphrasing, the author and publication date must STILL be cited at the end of the statement or paragraph (whichever is applicable). Always include the source (author's name, year, and page number) of each and every direct quote made. The *ASA Style Guide* is on reserve at Miller Library under my name. Do not hesitate to see me if you have questions.

**Approximate paper length:** Four to five pages. To maximize your inclusion and depth of content, the paper can be longer, but should not be shorter. Your last page, which is not counted toward the minimum, should include your bibliography.

### **How your paper will be graded:**

Content/thoroughness (50%): This category constitutes half of your grade for the assignment. Did you present a paper that covered complex issues or was your analysis simplistic? Did you use a variety of articles, concepts or issues? How much effort does it appear you put into your paper?

Organization and clarity (25%): This category constitutes one-fourth of your assignment grade. Did you say what you meant to say? Were your ideas clear so that the casual reader knows the point of your paper? How clearly do your ideas come through? How well organized were your thoughts?

Style/professionalism (25%): This category constitutes one-fourth of your assignment grade. Were you objective (as a sociologist should be)? Did you employ the "sociological imagination" during your analysis? When taking a position, did you support your position with "facts" or "feelings"? Did you cite your sources in your paper? Did you cite your sources appropriately in the body of your paper and in your bibliography?

### **Post-2000 Group Teach-In**

You and your group will select a topic related to a course theme. You will teach the class about your topic in a 20-minute discussion. Choose a topic that you believe you can cover in a reasonable amount of time with all members of the group participating equally. Your topic must be explored in terms of its historical impact or relevance today. This is an assignment that provides you with the opportunity to show your understanding of the course material by explaining how your topic links to the course.

Address the following elements in your discussion:

- 1) The main purpose of our discussion is to...
- 2) The most important information that the literature review shows is...
- 3) The key concept(s) that you need to understand is (are)...
- 4) The main assumption(s) underlying the existing literature is (are)...
- 5) Our conclusion(s) is (are)...

Feel free to expand on these and/or use other questions.

Provide the professor with a list of the readings that you will be using to base your discussion by using only those that were published post-2000 from *ProQuest CSA Illumina* sites that include the *CSA Sociological Abstracts Database* and the *ProQuest Newspaper Abstracts*. To make the project interesting, you can also consider developing a website, research paper, or other type of pedagogical (teaching) tool that would be useful to others interested in your topic.

The purpose of this is to keep you focused in terms of how to utilize a particular **type** of database, but also to keep you focused on utilizing non-internet based sources that are not considered to be scholarly sources. As you will be leading the discussion of the topic, you will be taking “front stage” that day, thus, be prepared to lead discussion, ask questions, use a PowerPoint presentation, or any other materials that you may find helpful.

**Because this assignment is a group assignment, it is important that you come together to choose, develop, and discuss your subject matter as a joint effort. Who will do what? Will this work be done individually, in pairs, or the entire group? Consider what works best for you and the people in your group given your group dynamics.**

Colby College  
Department of Sociology – African American Studies Program

Spring 2008  
Dr. Shirley A. Jackson  
Class Meeting Time: TR 9:30-10:45am  
Class Location: Miller 014

Office Hours: TR 11am-12pm  
Office: Diamond 215  
Phone 859-4712  
Email: sjackson@colby.edu

## **AA/AM 276: AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES**

**Catalog Description:** An interdisciplinary examination of black cultural expression from the slave era to the present—including folktales, the blues, gospel music, work songs, jazz, sermons, dance, literature, and social institutions—tracing the stages of development of a distinctive black culture in America, its relationship to the historical, social, and political realities of African Americans, and its role in the cultural formation of the United States.

**Course Overview:** This course will be a comprehensive course that covers African American culture in the United States from slavery up to the present. Your readings consist of key works by individuals who lived during or have studied the periods covered. We will review films, speeches, music, etc., which are all useful in helping to provide you with an historical and social context for the course.

Read each chapter carefully and ask questions or make comments about the readings in class. Some of the readings are very short while others are much longer. We will use the *Study Guide for Let Nobody Turn Us Around* in class to help guide discussion. It is important that you engage in discussions in class as this will help you to gain a better grasp of the material. Feel free to pose your questions or comments to the class in order to get discussion started on what may be very important points. I am in my office during the posted times above. My email address and phone number are also listed at the top of this syllabus. Please be aware, however, that I do not check email and voicemail every day.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** It is expected that upon completion of this course all students will have either acquired or begun to:

- Develop the ability to understand the impact of historical events in shaping African American culture.
- Provide a historical and sociological analysis of key events and issues that have affected and continue to affect African Americans.
- Improve their ability to express themselves verbally and orally.
- Enhance their ability to understand the strengths and weaknesses in the arguments of others and in one's own.
- Refine their writing skills while being able to be critical of their writing strengths and weaknesses.

**Required Texts:**

- Marable, Manning and Leith Millings, eds. 2003 [2000]. *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: Voices of Resistance, Reform and Renewal*. Lanham, Maryland: Roman and Littlefield.
- Queeley, Andrea. 2003. *Study Guide for Let Nobody Turn Us Around*. Lanham, Maryland: Roman and Littlefield
- Additional readings and out of class film viewings may given at the discretion of the professor.

**Academic Dishonesty:** Colby’s academic dishonesty policy is found in the student handbook. Academic dishonest includes plagiarism and engaging in dishonest behavior when it comes to submitting your work. Plagiarism means that you are handing in work that is not your own. It includes improperly cited material or material that is not cited. This material includes that found in books and articles and on the internet.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Weight for Each Assignment:**

Writing assignment – February 21	10%
Writing assignment – April 1	10%
Writing assignment – April 17	10%
Writing assignment – May 1	10%
Post-2000 Group Project – May 6 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup>	10%
Midterm Exam – March 20	25%
Final Exam – Friday, May 16, 12:30-2:30pm	25%
<b>= TOTAL 100%</b>	

**Writing Assignments:** There are four writing assignments that will help you to improve your professional writing and analytical skills. These assignments will focus on the course material and will require that you apply your knowledge of the issues covered. The page lengths will vary widely, depending on the assignment. You will be given a handout which clearly describes each assignment in advance of its due date.

In your written assignments, you will discuss the course material and how the material applies the question. Your responses must be typewritten and will vary in length depending on the assignment. In some instances, your work may be peer reviewed. When graded by the professor, your writing quality will be evaluated based on the following: content/thoroughness 50%; clarity/organization 25%, style/professionalism 25%. If asked to cite your sources, you will use the American Sociological Association (ASA) Style Guide in the body of your paper and bibliography. A copy of the *ASA Style Guide* is also available under my name at the reserve desk Miller Library. You may want to search the internet for two excellent websites at Cal State LA and Buffalo State for samples. (Simply type in *ASA Style Guide* in the search engine of Google or other site and click on to the link for the aforementioned institutions and style guide.) Please make a copy of your paper for your files. Assignments are due in class on the due date.

**Exams:** You will be given one midterm and a final exam. Each exam covers 1/2 of the course and is worth 25%. The exams are non-cumulative meaning that the material covered during the first 1/2 of the course will not appear on the second exam (although some overlap of events, philosophies, concepts, etc., is to be expected). The exams are definitions (short essay) and long-essay format. You will be given a choice of terms to define and a choice of essay questions from which to choose. Choose those essays that you feel best equipped/prepared to respond. Before the first exam, I will provide you with an idea of how the exam questions will be formulated. Everyone will be responsible for leading review before the midterm. You will also assist by coming up with questions that you

believe might be good questions for the exam. (Note: This does not mean that the questions will be used exactly as they are stated in class or that they will be used at all!)

**Post-2000 Teach-In Project:** You will be grouped with approximately two to four others in the class to teach the class about some aspect of African American culture after the year 2000. Choose your main topic and provide the class with a selection of readings that you have gathered using only those sources using the *Proquest CSA Sociological Abstracts*. Select at least 4-5 readings. Provide the instructor with the list of readings prior to your discussion and on the day of the discussion, provide your classmates and the instructor with the list and main points you will be covering. You can do this in the form of a PowerPoint or handout on the day you lead discussion. We will discuss this in more detail and you will receive a handout of guidelines prior to the due date.

**Class Conduct and Participation:** While there is no grade for participation, your active participation may be helpful in assessing “borderline” grades. It is assumed that you are in this course because you are eager to learn and to complete the requirements for your degree. You will be expected to arrive to class on time and ready to participate. If you find it necessary to arrive late, please do so as unobtrusively as possible. I do not give credit for attendance because it is assumed that you are taking the course because you have enrolled in it and are interested in the material. If you are absent for an extensive period and have a valid reason, please be sure to notify the Dean of Students office. If you find it difficult to stay awake in class, I would rather you leave and walk around outside or whatever else may help you to remain awake.

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## **COURSE READINGS**

**PLEASE HAVE ALL READINGS COMPLETED AND BE READY FOR DISCUSSION ON THE DAYS INDICATED.**

In addition to using the Study Guide, you are encouraged to think of questions that may help you to understand the material. This will be a way for us to discuss what was interesting or problematic in the readings. You should also make note of any key terms discussed in the readings. Understanding them as you go through the readings should make reviewing these terms for the exam and other assignments much easier. All assignments are boxed and shaded.

### **Week 1: Historical Context**

*Thursday, February 7 -* (M&M) Introduction

### **Week 2: Foundations: Slavery and Abolitionism, 1789-1861**

*Tuesday, February 12 -* (M&M) Section One Introduction and Chapters 1-6

*Thursday, February 14 -* (M&M) Section One – Chapters 7-14

### **Week 3: Foundations: Slavery and Abolitionism, 1789-1861 and Reconstruction and Reaction: The Aftermath of Slavery and the Dawn of Segregation, 1861-1915**

*Tuesday, February 19 -* (M&M) Section One – Chapters 15-19

**Thursday, February 21 - ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE** and (M&M) Section Two – Introduction and Chapters 1-5

**Week 4: Reconstruction and Reaction: The Aftermath of Slavery and the Dawn of Segregation, 1861-1915**

**Tuesday, February 26 -** (M&M) Section Two and Chapters 6-10  
**LIBRARY REFERENCES CLASS – Meet by the reference desk in Miller Library**

**Thursday, February 28 -** (M&M) Section Two and Chapters 11-17  
**VIDEO:** Excerpt from *W.E.B. DuBois: A Biography in Four Voices*

**Week 5: From Plantation to Ghetto: The Great Migration, Harlem Renaissance, and World War, 1915-1954**

**Tuesday, March 4 -** (M&M) Section Three – Introduction and Chapters 1-5  
**VIDEO:** Excerpt from *W.E.B. DuBois: A Biography in Four Voices*

**Thursday, March 6 -** (M&M) Section Three – Chapters 6-10

**Week 6: From Plantation to Ghetto: The Great Migration, Harlem Renaissance, and World War, 1915-1954**

**Tuesday, March 11 - ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE** and (M&M) Section Three – Chapters 11-14

**Thursday, March 16 -** (M&M) Section Three – Chapters 15-18

**Week 7: From Plantation to Ghetto: The Great Migration, Harlem Renaissance, and World War, 1915-1954**

**Tuesday, March 18 -** (M&M) Section Three – Chapters 19-21 and **GROUP REVIEW**  
Each group will provide a review of the material they were assigned.

**Thursday, March 20 - MIDTERM EXAM**

**Week 8: Section Four: We Shall Overcome: The Second Reconstruction, 1954-1975**

**Tuesday, April 1 -** (M&M) Section Four – Introduction and Chapters 1-5 and music selections

**Thursday, April 3 -** (M&M) Section Four – Chapters 6-11  
**VIDEO:** Excerpts from *Eyes on the Prize: Fighting Back* and *Ain't Gonna Shuffle No More*

**Week 9: We Shall Overcome: The Second Reconstruction, 1954-1975**

**Tuesday, April 8 -** (M&M) Section Four – Chapters 12-13  
**AUDIO:** Malcolm X's "Message to the Grassroots"

**Thursday, April 10 -** (M&M) Section Four – Chapters 14-15  
**VIDEO:** Excerpt from *Eyes on the Prize: Power!*

**Week 10: We Shall Overcome: The Second Reconstruction, 1954-1975**

*Tuesday, April 15 -* (M&M) Section Four – Chapters 16-19 and music selections

*Thursday, April 17 -* **ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE** and (M&M) Section Four – Chapters 20-24  
**VIDEO:** Excerpt from *Eyes on the Prize: A Nation of Law?*

**Week 11: Section Five: The Future in the Present: Contemporary African-American Thought, 1975 to the Present**

*Tuesday, April 22 -* (M&M) Section Five – Introduction and Chapters 1-6

*Thursday, April 24 -* (M&M) Section Five – Chapters 7-10

**Week 12: Section Five: The Future in the Present: Contemporary African-American Thought, 1975 to the Present**

*Tuesday, April 29 -* (M&M) Section Five – Chapters 11-14

*Thursday, May 1 -* **ASSIGNMENT #4 DUE** and (M&M) Section Five – Chapters 15-18

**Week 13: Post-2000 Teach-In Projects**

*Tuesday, May 6 -* **POST-2000 TEACH-IN**

*Thursday, May 8 -* **POST-2000 TEACH-IN**

**FINAL EXAM**

*Friday, May 16 -* **12:30-2:30pm**