

**Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies
Western University**

**1030F/G -Introduction to Black Studies
January – April 2026**

Instructor: Erica S. Lawson

Office Hour: Weds. 11:30am-12:30pm
(or appt. on zoom)

Location TC 341

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TA: Kaya Morgan Anderson

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Office Hour: Thurs. 10-11am

Course Description: Black Studies is comprised of the knowledge production practices and worldviews among African and African descendant peoples across the globe. Central to world-making, Black Studies is rooted in rich histories, cultures, and philosophies that have given rise to anti-colonial, anti-racist, Pan-African, and civil rights movements, including #BlackLivesMatter. This survey course introduces students to some of the foundational debates, ideas, and practices in the Black intellectual-activist tradition. We will locate a diversity of topics (e.g., liberation movements, racial capitalism, aesthetics, Afrofuturism, disability and queer studies, etc.) in historical frameworks - with a focus on resistance, resilience, and freedom – to address how these histories inform contemporary, lived experiences. Toward these objectives, we will assess select readings, guest lectures, talks, documentaries, music, poetry, and podcasts focused on addressing Black Studies.

Learning Objectives

- Explore issues of relevance to Black studies
- Address key terminologies in the discipline
- Discuss how resilience and resistance are central to Black life
- Understand key aspects of the Black intellectual-activist tradition
- Examine how historical experiences shape contemporary realities in Black life.

Learning Outcomes

- Familiarity with debates in the Black intellectual tradition
- Improved knowledge about Black histories
- Identify connections between historical experiences and contemporary events
- Improved research and writing skills
- Critical evaluation and analytical skills
- Application of theory/analysis to issues and events

Assignments (Instructions & due dates will be posted in OWL Brightspace). Please submit all written assignments in word (Not PDF) format and upload them to Brightspace.

- Attendance & Participation - 10%
- Commentary on one guest lecture – 15%
- Documentary Analysis – 20%
- Creative essay-style assignment – 20%
- Final exam 35% (date and time TBA)

January 7 - Welcome, course expectations, open discussion about Black Studies (co-facilitated with Dr. Jameelah Morrison, Anthropology and Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies); a word about plagiarism and use of AI.

January 14 - Black Studies: An Overview

Davis, A. (2023). "A Project Toward Black Life: Teaching Black Studies in the Humanities." *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, 47:224-233.

Hine Clark, D. (2014). "A Black Studies Manifesto: Characteristics of a Black Studies Mind." *The Black Scholar*, 44(2):11-15.

January 21 – Historical Roots of Black Studies

Sharpe, C. (2015). "Black Studies in the Wake." *The Black Scholar*, 44(2): 59-69.

Jackson, E.R. (2023). "The Nature, Scope, and Construction of Black Studies." In *An Introduction to Black Studies*. The University Press of Kentucky, pp. 1-9.

January 28 – Reading the Black Archives

Nelson, C. A. (2020). A "tone of voice peculiar to New-England" Fugitive Slave Advertisements and the Heterogeneity of Enslaved People of African Descent in Eighteenth-Century Quebec." *Current Anthropology*, 61(S22): S303-S316.

Mitchell, E., and de Abreu, J. (2019). "The Black Archives: Exploring the Politics of Black Dutch Radicals." *Open Cultural Studies*, 3: 402-413.

Huber, S. (2019). "Saidiya Hartman Unravels the Archives." *The Nation*
<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/saidiya-hartmans-astounding-history-of-the-forgotten-sexual-modernists-in-20th-century-black-life/>

February 4 – Liberation and Revolutionary Movements

Popkin, J.D. (2011). "Introduction." In *A Concise History of the Haitian Revolution*, Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 1-9.

Rashid, K. (2019). "Beyond the Fetters of Colonialism: Du Bois, Nkrumah, and a Pan-African Critical Theory." *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 52 (2-3): 271-282.

Guest Speaker: Dr. Greg Beckett, Department of Anthropology, UWO (to be confirmed)

Assignment Due: Monday February 9th at 11:59 pm

February 11 - Black Women in Liberation Movements

McCausland, J.A. (2020). "Who is Claudia Jones?" *Caribbean Quilt*, 5 (80-85).

Shakur, A; Chisemard, J. (1978). "Women in Prison: How We Are." *The Black Scholar*, 12(6): 50-57.

Davis, A. (2023). "Affirmations of Freedom." *American Quarterly*, 75(2): 391-394.

February 14– 22: Reading Week

February 25 – Racial Capitalism & Reparations

Kelly, R.D.J. (2017). "What Did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism: A critique that anticipated the political currents of contemporary America." *Boston 50 Review*.
<https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/robin-d-g-kelley-introduction-race-capitalism-justice/>

Clegg, P. (2014). "The Caribbean Reparations Claim: What Chance of Success?" *The Round Table*, 103(4): 435-437.

Slavery Reparations in the Caribbean: What to Expect?

<https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/slavery-reparations-in-the-caribbean-what-to-expect/>

Racial Capitalism

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZSBT67IHXo>

Documentary Assessment Assignment: In this class, we will watch and discuss a 30-minute documentary about reparations for Caribbean countries with a focus on Barbados. You are

expected to write a 1000-1200-word assessment of the documentary in conversation with our discussion about racial capitalism. The central question to be addressed is: How should we critically assess the call for reparations in light of our knowledge about racial capitalism? Please see assignment instructions in “Assignments & Instructions.”

March 4 – Queering Black Studies

Gumbs, A.P., and Wallace, J.R. (2016). “Something Else to Be: Generations of Black Queer Brilliance and the Mobile Homecoming Experiential Archive.” In *No Tea, No Shade: New Writings in Black Queer Studies*, eds. E. Patrick Johnson. *Duke University Press*, pp. 380-394

Grey, C. (2025). “Forget-Me-Not, Though the Nation Will: Black Queer Mourning, Homonationalism, and the Politics of Memory.” *Topia (Montreal)* 50(1): 103-118.

Guest Lecture: Dr. Cornel Grey, GSWS, UWO.

Assignment Due: Monday March 9th at 11:59 pm.

Black Diasporas – March 11

Walcott, R. (2025). “Longing Across the Black Diaspora: Love, Being and the Door of No Return.” *Topia (Montreal)*: 46(1): 7-13.

Milléo Martins, L.M. (2018). “Dionne Brand and Afua Cooper: Diaspora and Continuities Shaped by National and Regional Cultures.” *African American Review*, 51(3): 197-209.

Nur, S.A. (2022). “On Being and Becoming Black in a Globally Dispersed Diaspora.” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 52(3): 257-269.

Guest Lecture: Dr. Ismahan Yusuf, Geography & Environmental Studies, TMU (to be confirmed).

Assignment Due: Monday March 16th @ 11:59 pm.

March 18 – Black Arts/Aesthetics

Ford, T. (2015). “The Afro Look and Global Black Consciousness.” *Journal of Contemporary African Arts*, 37: 28-37.

Miller, M.L. (2016). “Black, Queer, Dandy: The Beauty Without Whom We Cannot Live.” *Journal of Contemporary African Art*, (38-39): 32-39.

March 25 – Afrofuturism

Smith, C., and Coleman, L.S. (2022) “Ancestor is king: the role of Afrofuturism in Beyoncé’s Black is King.” *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 39(4): 247-259.

Womack, Y. (2013) “Evolution of a Space Cadet.” In *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-fi and Fantasy Culture*. Lawrence Hill Books, pp. 11-26.

Guest Speaker: Dr. Katrina Younes, GSWS, UWO (to be confirmed)

April 1 – Disability in Black Studies

Schalk, S. (2020). Contextualizing Black Disability and the Culture of Dissemblance.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society*, 45(3): 540-545.

Hinton, A. (2017). ‘And So, I Bust Back’: Violence, Race, and Disability in Hip Hop: *CLA Journal*, 60(3): 290-304.

April 8 – Black Joy

Johnson, J. (2015). “Black Joy in the Time of Ferguson.” *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 2(2): 177-183.

Wrap up and Review

COURSE POLICIES (*Please note that minor adjustments or changes can be made to the course outline at any time*)

Correspondence Statement

The centrally administered e-mail account provided to students will be considered the individual’s official university e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at his/her official university address is attended to in a timely manner. You can read about the privacy and security of the UWO email accounts [here](#).

Students are encouraged to email the instructor or their tutorial leader if they have questions about the course. Students can expect a response from me within 48 hours during the work week. Students are not guaranteed a response over the weekend, or on holidays. Only emails using your “@uwo.ca” account will be answered.

Please send a follow-up email if you haven’t heard from me after 48 hours. I want to hear from you.

COURSE WEBSITE

All course information, including assignments, will be posted on the course website. Go to <https://owl.uwo.ca/portal>

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

The instructor acknowledges that students have commitments elsewhere (i.e., other courses, jobs, caregiving, etc.), however, enrolment in this course constitutes a commitment to engage meaningfully with the subject material and participate in class. Students are invited to bring in materials (articles, blog posts, YouTube videos, etc.) that they feel are relevant to the week's topic. Note, however, that this is not a substitute for assigned readings. The assigned texts will serve as the basis for our conversation, and you must connect whatever material you are referencing/presenting to the assigned readings so that your peers may participate effectively.

CLASS CONDUCT

Students are expected to arrive on time. Showing up to class late disrupts the flow of conversation and is often distracting.

Please refrain from using electronic devices (i.e., laptops, phones, etc.) unless employed for class purposes. Recordings are not permitted. Electronic devices will not be permitted during in-class tests or exams.

LATE AND OUTSTANDING ASSIGNMENTS

Late assignments will receive a 2% deduction per day. Weekends count for two days penalty. An assessment cannot be submitted after it has been returned to the class. An alternative assignment will be assigned under special circumstances.

Students seeking academic consideration must submit a request within 28 days of the assignment deadline.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty is a serious offense and will be treated as such in this class. Students should refrain from presenting someone's work, ideas, opinions and/or writing as their own. Proper citation and referencing are key. Ignorance of plagiarism is not an excuse for representing someone's work as your own. I strongly encourage all students to familiarize themselves with the university's policies on academic misconduct. You have the tools to succeed in this course without engaging in academic misconduct. Connect with the instructor or your TA if you have concerns or are experiencing difficulty. We are here to help.

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

TURNITIN

All written assignments must be submitted through Turnitin. Access to Turnitin will be available through the OWL course website. According to university policy: "All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted

will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement currently between the University and Turnitin.com.”

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Students are prohibited from using artificial intelligence (AI) tools to complete coursework. Submitting work that you did not create yourself violates Western’s academic integrity policy. You may, however, use AI software for light editing (e.g., check for grammar, punctuation, etc) of assignments and information-gathering purposes. You are responsible for verifying the accuracy of information gleaned from these platforms. Submitted assignments should be a representation of your intellectual efforts.

ACCESSIBILITY AND WRITING SUPPORT

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Accessible Education (AE) at (519) 661-2147 or aw@uwo.ca for any specific question regarding an accommodation or review [The policy on Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Please see me during office hours if you are unable to attend class regularly so that arrangements can be made regarding your participation mark. Special consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis. I ask that you meet with me in advance or contact me via email to discuss anticipated absences/delays in your attendance or assignment submission.

I also encourage all students to make use of the Writing Support Centre. For further details, visit <http://writing.uwo.ca>

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

The policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be viewed [here](#).

MEDICAL POLICY

I encourage students to read the Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness at the following link: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. *Please do not submit medical notes to the instructor or your tutorial leader.* Contact your academic counsellor and we will work to develop an appropriate solution.

STATEMENT ON GENDER-BASED AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced gender-based or sexual violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, here. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

PROFESSIONALISM & PRIVACY

Western students are expected to follow the [Student Code of Conduct](#). Additionally, the following expectations and professional conduct apply to this course: All course materials created by the instructor(s) are copyrighted and cannot be sold/shared. Recordings are not permitted (audio or video) without explicit permission. Permitted recordings are not to be distributed.

COPYRIGHT AND AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDING STATEMENT

Course material produced by faculty is copyrighted and to reproduce this material for any purposes other than your own educational use contravenes Canadian Copyright Laws. You must always ask permission to record another individual and you should never share or distribute recordings.

SUPPORT SERVICES

The following links provide information about support services at Western University.

[Academic Counselling](#)

[Appeal Procedures](#)

[Registrarial Services](#)

[Student Development Services](#)

[Student Health Services](#)

GRADING SCHEME

Assignments will be graded according to the scheme provided by Western University. I have copied this table below for reference:

Grade	Percentage
A+	90-100% (One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level)
A	80-89% (Superior work which is clearly above average)
B	70-79% (Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory)
C	60-69% (Competent work, meeting requirements)
D	50-59% (Fair work, minimally acceptable)
F	Below 50% or assigned when course is dropped with academic penalty.

See also: [Code of Student Conduct](#)