

AMST3740.1
American Popular Culture
Interdisciplinary Studies Department
Spring 2015



**SPRING 2014–AMST3740.1: American Popular Culture
Chronicling Stankonia: America’s Hip Hop South
MW 3:30 – 4:45PM**

Instructor: Dr. Regina N. Bradley

Email: rbradl14@kennesaw.edu**

**if you email me on a weekday (Monday thru Thursday) I should respond within 24 hours. Any emails sent during the weekend or on holidays (including Spring Break!!) will be answered within 72 hours.

Office: SO 4005

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00PM – 3:00PM or by appointment

If you ain’t kickin what you livin’ then you worthless ~ T.I., “Swagger Like Us”

Course Description:

Per the undergraduate catalog description, this course intends to “examine the construction of individual identities and identity groups in American culture. Students survey and critique a range of texts expressing and representing the formation of identity constructions around such categories as race, gender, ethnicity, national origin, class, and sexuality. Students consider the various historical, cultural and social forces that shape (and sometimes resist) diverse views of American identity both within and outside the U.S.”

Our course will use the medium of Hip Hop Culture to work through what we understand as the post-Civil Rights American South. Through an interdisciplinary framework consisting of readings (both critical and creative), music, and film we will investigate the implications of Hip Hop on how we think through and define southernness in the late 20th and 21st century. In other words, what does race or the lack thereof look like in the Hip Hop South? How does one’s understanding of southernness play on their consumption of Hip Hop as a black and/or American cultural expression?

Course Objectives:

- 1.) To develop and utilize a multidisciplinary critical framework to successfully engage with discourse surrounding contemporary identity politics and culture studies
- 2.) To challenge developing scholars to engage with unfamiliar texts, cultural expressions, and discourse in order to learn how to be socially and culturally sensitive and aware of modes of expression outside of their own experiences.
- 3.) To develop research and writing skills to help create/improve our voices as scholars and essayists through the following assignments:
 - Critical Autobiography (minimum of 3000 words)
 - Three (3) short critical analysis essays (minimum 300 words)

AMST3740.1
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****Explicit Content Statement****

Over the course of the semester you will be introduced to texts that may be explicit in nature (i.e. cursing, sexual content). Students should be fully aware that these types of texts, though offensive, should still be discussed with respect to the opinions of peers, the instructor, and creator of the text in question.

Required Texts and Materials:**

- 1.) *This Ain't Chicago*, Zandria F. Robinson ISBN-13: 978-1469614229
- 2.) *Long Division*, Kiese Laymon ISBN-13: 978-1932841725
- 3.) Select readings on Brightspace

****Weekly Reading****

Students will read and average of 50-75 pages a week for this course. This is crucial for informed and critical contribution to class discussions. Students should read the day's required readings ahead of the scheduled lecture.

ADA:

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should in the **FIRST WEEK OF CLASS** 1) register with and provide documentation to Disabled Student Support Services and 2) bring a letter to the instructor from Disabled Student Support Services for academic accommodations. No requirement exists that accommodations be made prior to completion of this approved University process. This and all other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. More information on Disabled Student Services can be found below:

Suite 267CarmichaelStudentCenter Addition

Phone: 770-423-6443 (Voice)

770-423-6480 (TTY)

Fax: 770-423-6667

Website: http://www.kennesaw.edu/stu_dev/dsss/dsss.html

Conflict Resolution

Should you have a concern about my teaching or policies, please schedule a meeting with me first. I am happy to meet and discuss your concerns. If I do not satisfy your needs, please contact the Coordinator of the American Studies Program Dr. Rebecca Hill: rhill54@kennesaw.edu.

Attendance:

You should always inform me, ahead of time when possible, about why you miss class. You have a total of two (4) absences without penalty. Five (5) absences will result in the lowering of your final grade by one (1) letter grade. Six (6) absences will result in your failure of the class.

AMST3740.1
American Popular Culture
Interdisciplinary Studies Department
Spring 2015



Save your absences for when you get sick or for family emergencies. Situations of excessive absence from class will be handled on a case by case basis and will need proper documentation (i.e. family death, personal illness, military deployment). If you are more than five (5) minutes late, this constitutes a tardy and you will be penalized with one absence every three (3) tardies. If you are fifteen (15) minutes late to class, it will be counted as an absence.

Important Dates:

March 3: Last day to withdraw without academic penalty

April 4 – April 10: Spring Break 2015

Evaluation and Distribution:**

Your grade for this course is based on a one thousand (1,000) point grade scale:

20% Quizzes

30% Short Critical Responses (300-500 words)

50% Critical Autobiography Project

- **30% Formal Essay (3000 - 4500 words)**
- **20% Album or Novel Liner Notes/Review (750-1000)**

Grade Scale:

900 – 1000 = A

800 – 899 = B

700 – 799 = C

600 – 699 = D

600 and below = F

**** I understand you are anxious about your grades in this course. Please do not wait until the last day of class to express these concerns. I am happy to meet and discuss your progress in the course but will not consider extra credit.**

Late Work Policy

ALL assignments must be submitted to pass this course. Late work drops a letter grade per calendar day it is late (i.e. a day late assignment that earns a 'B' will have a final grade of a 'C'). Technical failures and difficulties are not excuses for permission to turn in late work. Late work will NOT be accepted more than two (2) days after the due date unless a substantial reason is documented.

Quizzes (200 points)

Quizzes will be based on class readings and occasionally class discussions. Please read to make sure you stay on top of class readings and participate in class lectures to do well on quizzes!

Quizzes are due by 11:59:59PM the night they are assigned.

Short Critical Responses (300 points)

Short Critical Responses are a focused discussion of a particular aspect of a text or class discussion that you feel warrants further attention. These responses are short to challenge you to speak directly to the topic of interest without “writing around it.” Be bold and direct in these responses. Discuss how the text or discussion in question uses hip hop culture to address issues of race and contemporary southernness. **Responses should be a MINIMUM of 300 words and a MAXIMUM of 500 words. Responses over 500 words will not be graded.** You are responsible for **THREE (3) responses throughout the course.**

Album or Novel Liner Notes

Liner Notes are the additional pieces of writing and notes that give an album more context. They provide additional information/interpretation about themes from the album, the names and info of those who worked on the album, artists’ biographies, or lyrics for the listener to gain better understanding of an album. In other words, liner notes are annotations for the album’s message and delivery. This assignment is part of your larger critical autobiography project. You will select a southern hip hop album that is near and dear to your heart or you feel is crucial to how we understand southernness in the post-Civil Rights Era. You may also write a set of liner notes (i.e. context and a playlist) for the novel we are reading this semester *Long Division*. This assignment should highlight an artist/album/song that sparks your interest and is framed with the critical themes and scholarship discussed in this course. Liner Notes are encouraged to include an interdisciplinary approach, i.e. close readings of lyrics and music videos; interviews and content; cultural production (how your topic is presented to its audience); sound studies, etc. These reviews are more than “it was a good album/song” or “this is a great artist.” So what? Your review should critically deconstruct (pick apart) your topic. Some questions your analysis should answer (but are certainly not limited to):

- What problem/observation/concern are you addressing from the album?
- How does your reading provide context and further understanding of the album as a lens of southern hip hop identity?
- What is the significance of this artist/album/song to a larger conversation about race, gender, and/or 21st century American identity?

Your review should demonstrate a reading of hip hop that is underrepresented/underutilized and warrants further analysis and/or a trend in Hip Hop culture that stimulates your interest with regard to the topic of the course. Successful essays execute the following:

- **MINIMUM of 750 words, MAXIMUM of 1000 words**
- **TWO (2) outside, scholarly sources (MINIMUM 1 book outside of the course readings)** to support your argument



- Demonstrated mastery of and contribution to current available scholarship about your topic
- Professional Format (MLA or APA)

Critical Autobiography: (300 points)

Your critical autobiography is a formal essay that answers the question of how you define southernness and race using music. You are not required to use hip hop as a focal point of your discussion, but it should be referenced to help keep you connected to the course objectives. In other words, when did you realize you were southern? How did music help you make this realization? You are expected to creatively think about and engage topics that explore how popular culture in the South – like hip hop – could help one work through increasingly complex navigations of race, gender, class, and identity in the 21st century.

- Your essay should be in the range of 3000-5000 minutes
- Use of a **MINIMUM of THREE (3)** peer-reviewed sources to support your analysis. **Only ONE (1) of course texts will count towards this requirement. DO NOT USE WIKIPEDIA or similar sites as sources in your analysis.** However, feel free to use it to jumpstart your search for sources or understanding of a topic. It should not be the be all end all of your project's critical analysis.
- Be creative! Use humor, be descriptive, etc. Give yourself time to edit and construct a product that demonstrates your best work.

Writing Center

Tutors and readers can help you with many writing assignments, including essays, research techniques, revision, organization, and strategies for improving grammar and punctuation. It's best to make an appointment for individual writing conferences by calling 770-423-6380. The Center is located in EB 242 and has a website:

<http://www.kennesaw.edu/english/WritingCenter/index.shtml>

A Note on Civility

I will not tolerate disruptive language nor disruptive behavior. Disruptive language includes, but is not limited to, violent and/or belligerent and/or insulting remarks, including sexist, racist, homophobic or anti-ethnic slurs, bigotry, and disparaging commentary, either spoken or written (offensive slang is included in this category).

While I do not disagree that you each have a right to your own opinions, inflammatory language founded in ignorance or hate is unacceptable and will be dealt with immediately.

Disruptive behavior includes the use of cell phones, pagers or any other form of electronic communication during the class session (e-mail, web-browsing). Disruptive behavior also



includes whispering or talking when another member of the class is speaking or engaged in relevant conversation (remember that I am a member of this class as well). This classroom functions on the premise of respect, and you will be asked to leave the classroom if you violate any part of this statement on civility.

Academic Integrity Statement

Every KSU student is responsible for upholding the provisions of the Student code of Conduct, as published in the [Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs](#). Section 11 of the Student Code of Conduct addresses the University's policy on academic honesty, including provisions regarding plagiarism and cheating, unauthorized access to University materials, misrepresentation/falsification of University records or academic work, malicious removal, retention, or destruction of library materials, malicious/intentional misuse of computer facilities and/or services, and misuse of student identification cards. Incidents of alleged academic misconduct will be handled through the established procedures of the University Judiciary Program, which includes either an "informal" resolution by a faculty member, resulting in a grade adjustment, or a formal hearing procedure, which may subject a student to the Code of conduct's minimum one semester suspension requirement. *** If you have any doubt about whether your work is plagiarized, please see me at once and we will discuss your questions (without penalty). Please read and understand: Once a work is submitted, there is no excuse for plagiarized work!!**

ALL INCIDENTS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY WILL BE REPORTED!!!!

Plagiarism

Plagiarism of ANY assignment will be counted as an automatic failing grade ("F"), and, if serious enough, failure in this course. No student shall receive, attempt to receive, knowingly give or attempt to give unauthorized assistance in the preparation of any work required to be submitted for credit as part of a course (including examinations, laboratory reports, essays, themes, term papers, etc.). When direct quotations are used, they should be indicated, and when the ideas, theories, data, figures, graphs, programs, electronic based information or illustrations of someone other than the student are incorporated into a paper or used in a project, they should be duly acknowledged."



Disclaimers:

I. Please do not feel you have nothing to contribute if you are unfamiliar with or do not engage hip hop on a regular basis. Your perspective is welcome and necessary to complicate what hip hop means!

II. The tone and language used in this course will not be sugarcoated. I will intentionally provoke you in order to stimulate conversation and challenge your comfort zones. This is by no means a way to attack your personal beliefs or character; rather, my intentions are to force you to think about issues and concerns from various viewpoints outside your own.

III. Please do not view me as inaccessible. Utilize office hours and schedule appointments so I can be of assistance.

IV. Do not –I repeat DO NOT – turn in writings and critical analyses that you think are “safe.” The purpose for scholarship is to challenge, stimulate conversation, and be as innovative as possible. Write fluidly and openly. Push it to the limit! Do not restrict your observations in fear of retaliation. That will not happen here.



Week by Week Schedule*

*Subject to change with advanced notice

Week 1:

1/7: Course Introduction and Syllabus Review via Brightspace

Week 2:

1/12: Robinson, "Introduction"

1/14: Robinson, "Finding the Black South;" Darren Grem, "The South Got Something to Say"
(BRIGHTSPACE)

Week 3:

1/19: **MLK DAY HOLIDAY – NO CLASS**

1/21: Matt Miller, "Dirty Decade: Rap Music and the U.S. South 1997-2007" (BRIGHTSPACE); Killer Mike and Joycelyn Wilson, "Killer Mike and the Hip Hop Imagination" (BRIGHTSPACE)

Week 4:

1/26: **LECTURE: Outkast and the Hip Hop South**

1/28: Frannie Kelley, "Outkast and Atlanta" (BRIGHTSPACE); Jason Parham, "Outkast Contextually" (BRIGHTSPACE); Jon Pareles, "Rappers Turn Dialectic into a Conversation" (BRIGHTSPACE)

Week 5:

2/2: Film: *Idlewild*

2/4: Film: *Idlewild*

Week 6:

2/9: Discussion: *Idlewild*;

2/11: Robinson, "Post Soul Blues"

Week 7:

2/16: Jesmyn Ward, "No Mercy in Motion" (BRIGHTSPACE); "Beating the Drum (Interview with Jesmyn Ward)" (BRIGHTSPACE)

2/18: Charles M. Blow, "The Curious Case of Trayvon Martin," (BRIGHTSPACE); David J. Leonard and Lisa Guerrero, "Playing Dead: the Trayvoning Meme and the Mocking of Black Death" (BRIGHTSPACE)

Week 8:

AMST3740.1
American Popular Culture
Interdisciplinary Studies Department
Spring 2015



2/23: Regina Bradley, "Fear of a Black in the Suburb" (BRIGHTSPACE); Brittney Cooper "Michael Dunn and Open Season on Black Teenagers" (BRIGHTSPACE); Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Black Boy Interrupted"

2/25: *Outkasted Conversations: Kiese Laymon* (BRIGHTSPACE); Laymon, "How Hip Hop Stole My Southern Black Boy" (BRIGHTSPACE); **QUIZ 1**

Week 9:

3/2: *Long Division*, "One Sentence" through "Click That"

3/4: *Long Division*, "Baize" through "That Work Shed"

Week 10:

3/9: *Long Division*, "Quarter Black" through "Eyes Have It"

3/11: *Long Division*, "And a Way" through end of the book

Week 11:

3/16: Robinson, "Not Stud'n' 'em White Folks"

3/18: Joshua Newman, "NASCAR and the Southernization of America" (BRIGHTSPACE); Erich Nunn, "Country Music Souls of White Folks" (BRIGHTSPACE)

Week 12:

3/23: Tressie McMillan Cottom, "Reading Hick Hop" (BRIGHTSPACE); **LINER NOTES DUE**

3/25: Cheryl Harris and Devon Carbado "Loot or Find: Fact or Frame?" (BRIGHTSPACE); John L. Jackson "HBO's Utopian Realism: Down in the Treme" (BRIGHTSPACE);

Week 13:

3/30: John Ortved, "Ratchet: The Rap Insult that Became a Compliment" (BRIGHTSPACE); Regina Bradley, "I Been On (Ratchet)" (BRIGHTSPACE); Brittney Cooper, "(Un)clutching My Mother's Pearls" (BRIGHTSPACE);

4/1: Heidi Lewis, "Exhuming the Ratchet Before It's Buried" (BRIGHTSPACE); VIDEO: "Beyonce Black Feminism Backlash" (BRIGHTSPACE); **QUIZ 2**

Week 14: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Week 15:

4/13: **CRITICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY WORKSHOP GROUP 1**

4/15: **CRITICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY WORKSHOP GROUP 2**

Week 16:

AMST3740.1
American Popular Culture
Interdisciplinary Studies Department
Spring 2015



4/20: **LECTURE: Visualizing the Hip Hop South**

4/22: David Banner, "Walking with Gods" (BRIGHTSPACE); John Jennings and Damian Duffy, *The Hole* (EXCERPT) (BRIGHTSPACE); John Jennings and Stacey Robinson, *Black Kirby* (BRIGHTSPACE)

Week 17:

4/29: Course Wrap-up

**CRITICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHIES DUE MAY 1,
2015 BY 11:59:59PM**