

William Paterson University  
Department of Africana-World Studies

## **AWS 2140/80: African American Family Life\* Winter Session 2016**

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*"It is the family that gives us a deep private sense of belonging. Here we first begin to have our self defined for us." - Howard Thurman*

### **Course Description:**

This course examines the socio-historical and contemporary issues relevant to the functioning of the African American (Black/African/African diasporic) family. The purpose of the African American family is to socialize its members so they can navigate through the larger society and effectively handle the various issues facing people of African ancestry (racism, cultural hegemony, etc.). The African American family is also responsible for transferring to its members cultural values and historical memories which provide the means by which they can function as healthy African people. Following the functionary role of the African American family, this course offers an in-depth analysis and critique of various sociological, psychological and historical arguments about the African American family, its members, structure and characteristics. This course utilizes the African worldview in order to properly understand the various aspects of the African American family. Ultimately, our goal is to accurately and completely understand the African American family as an enduring cultural institution.

### **Course Objectives:**

1. Demonstrate a broad understanding of the African worldview and its impact on the structure of the African American family;
2. Recognize traditional African characteristics inherent in the African American family;
3. Articulate refutation of misrepresentations of the African American family by Eurocentric thinkers, authors and/or researchers;
4. Critically discuss articles and readings from an African Centered perspective;
5. Articulate a position on the African American family based on prior knowledge and current readings;
6. Use research of one's respective family trees/histories in order to help one better grasp and relate to the class readings and discussions.

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## **Student Learning Outcomes:**

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

1. Demonstrate in writing an understanding of the African worldview and its impact on the structure of the African American family;
2. Explain the traditional African characteristics inherent in the African American family in exams and writing assignments;
3. Effectively refute in class discussion and in writing misrepresentations of the African American family by Eurocentric thinkers, authors and/or researchers;
4. Critically discuss articles and readings from an African Centered perspective in class discussions and in writing;
5. Effectively express in class discussion and in writing a position on the African American family based on prior knowledge and current readings;
6. Demonstrate a written and verbal connection between their respective family trees/histories in order to help them better grasp and relate to the class readings and discussions.

## **Text & Readings:**

I will be providing the readings for the semester via Blackboard along with any other pertinent course information (syllabus, guidelines for assignments, etc.) It will be your responsibility to have the readings with you each day. While there are many ways that you can have the readings with you in class, the point is, you **MUST** have them with you when we discuss the course materials. *All students enrolled in this class have been automatically enrolled in Blackboard. Please make sure to check Blackboard and your WPUNJ email accounts regularly for any announcements, information or changes that may be made to the class schedule.*

## **Course Requirements:**

### **Participation: (200 points)**

Course participation will be determined via two criteria. First, you must log on at least 4 (four) times per week during the duration of this course. Three (3) of these days should be between Monday - Friday, and one day should be on Saturday or Sunday. Second, you must participate in the course Discussion Board by providing substantive comments (50-100 words) and critical questions of the ideas expressed by your fellow classmates, instructor and the readings. Thus, you must not only log on at least four (4) times a week, but also provide substantive comments and questions on at least three (3) occasions within the course of a week in order to gain the minimum portion of your participation grade. *Please note that at least three (3) posts within the course of 7 days is the minimum and is equivalent to passing (i.e. a D), you must do more than the minimum to receive a higher grade.* Please also understand that I am concerned with the **quality** and **relevance** of your discussion board comments. Regarding **quality**, please keep your comments clear and to the point. Furthermore, your comments should be well written and grammatically clear. Regarding **relevance**, your comments should speak directly to the question or topic under review. Irrelevant or side-tangents that are not directly linked to the material at hand will only work against you for this portion of your grade, thus try to stay on task with clarity.

***\*PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT IF THERE IS AN ISSUE THAT WILL IMPACT YOUR ATTENDANCE AND/OR PARTICIPATION IN THIS CLASS SIGNIFICANTLY, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT I BE NOTIFIED IMMEDIATELY IN ORDER TO PREVENT ISSUES WHEN FINAL GRADES ARE DUE. IT IS SO MUCH EASIER FOR ME TO BE SYMPATHETIC AND HELPFUL IF WE CAN PLAN BEFORE THINGS GO WRONG RATHER THAN AFTER.\****

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**Assignments:**

Be aware that it is only under EXTREME (i.e. documented illness, a death in the family, etc.) circumstances that late work will be accepted. *Any work submitted after the due date will not be graded.*

**Readings:**

The weekly reading assignments should be critically analyzed and understood. My expectation is that students are able to answer the following questions about the assigned readings for the week:

1. What is the main idea of the article(s)?
2. How do the article(s) relate to the larger issue/class topic? What is the relevance of this article?
3. How do the articles relate to each other?

In order to answer these questions, you should be performing a “close reading” of the assigned articles. Below are a couple of suggestions on how to perform close readings:

- When you read the articles for this course (and for any course, for that matter) you should be aware of and analyze the authors’ approach to the subject, his/her general argument(s), position(s), conclusion(s), etc.
- Again, you should ask yourself questions such as, “What is the author’s main thesis? What are the general strengths and weaknesses of the piece? Did the author sufficiently support his/her thesis by providing sufficient research and evidence to support his/her claims? Did he/she answer my own questions on this topic? Are there any themes in the readings or between selected readings?”

**WebQuest Assignments: (50 Points each, 100 points total)**

Two (2) WebQuest assignments will be given throughout the course of this class. WebQuest assignments are investigative web-based searches that you are required to perform. Instructions and directions for each WebQuest assignment will be given one week prior to their due dates.

**Reaction Papers: (50 points each, 100 points total)**

Students will be required to hand in two (2) short reaction papers throughout the course of the session. The 3 page typed papers will be assigned periodically and will cover various topics discussed in class as well as assigned course readings. (Paper guidelines will be distributed prior to the first paper’s due date).

**General Comments on the Course Workload:**

Given that this course is completely online, the workload may seem a bit much but, in actuality, it is not more than what you would regularly experience over the course of a regular class meeting during the course of a semester. As the above course outline and outline of requirements explains, you will be expected to complete: 2 reaction papers, 2 webquest assignments, and participate regularly during our online discussions. You will have access to your grades once assignments have been graded and the grades are posted on the Gradebook in Blackboard. This means that you can keep track of your progress throughout the duration of the semester.

**General Comments on Electronic Communication:**

Blackboard allows a variety of means to communicate. As discussed throughout this syllabus we will rely heavily upon Discussion Boards throughout this semester. When communicating with the instructor via email make sure your email subject line includes the course number (AWS2140/80) and that, within the body of the email, you identify yourself as a student in this course.

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## Grading Policy:

Participation	200	points
WebQuest Assignments	100	points
Reaction Papers	100	points
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>points</b>

## Grading Scale:

A:	100-95	B-:	82-80	D+:	69-66
A-:	94-90	C+:	79-76	D:	65-63
B+:	89-86	C:	75-73	D-:	62-60
B:	85-83	C-:	72-70	F:	59 and below

## Policy on Academic Honesty

*Plagiarism and academic cheating are prohibited. Essential to intellectual growth is the development of independent thought and a respect for the thoughts of others. The prohibition against plagiarism and cheating is intended to foster this independence and respect.*

*Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's labor, another person's ideas, another person's words, and/or another person's assistance. Normally, all work done for courses -- papers, examinations, homework exercises, laboratory reports, and oral presentations -- is expected to be the individual effort of the student presenting the work. Any assistance must be reported to the instructor. If the work has entailed consulting other resources -- journals, books, or other media -- these resources must be cited in a manner appropriate to the course. It is the instructor's responsibility to indicate the appropriate manner of citation. Everything used from other sources -- suggestions for organization of ideas, ideas themselves, or actual language -- must be cited. Failure to cite borrowed material constitutes plagiarism. Undocumented use of materials from the World Wide Web is plagiarism.*

*Academic cheating is, generally, the thwarting or breaking of the general rules of academic work or the specific rules of the individual courses. It includes falsifying data; submitting, without the instructor's approval, work in one course that was done for another; helping others to plagiarize or cheat from one's own or another's work; or actually doing the work of another person. Any student suspected of academic cheating and/or plagiarism will be given a zero for that assignment and will not be allowed to make up those points in any way.*

## Message from the Writing Center

The Writing Center ([www.wpunj.edu/writing-center/](http://www.wpunj.edu/writing-center/)) provides one-on-one tutoring for any WPU student working on any kind of writing in any stage of development. We work with students on writing issues such as outlining, thesis clarification, organization, style, transitions, citing, and grammar, and we help them learn how to edit and proofread their own writing. Our aim is not just to produce a better piece of writing; it's to produce a better writer. Students can make an appointment at <https://wpunj.mywconline.com>, or stop by Atrium 128 or VR 3048.

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## Schedule

### Section 1: Introduction

#### Module 1: Introductory Assignment (12/26 - 12/28/15)

- Course Introduction; Student Introductions; Review of Syllabus; Posting of Questions/Comments/Concerns.

Our first few days of class will function as an attempt to orient each of you to the online learning experience and explore your thoughts and ideas on the topics that will be covered in this course. Your first assignment will be a short essay that answers the following questions:

- Who are you?
- Where are you from? Where were you born? Where are your parents from?
- How would you define yourself racially, ethnically and/or culturally?
- What is your gender?
- What is your major and/or minor? Or intended major/minor?
- Why have you decided to take this class?
- Why did you decide to take this course *online*?
- What do you intend to get out of this class?
- Have you ever taken a course online before? If so, what was the name of the course? What were the pros and cons of that learning experience?
- How do you think the online learning differs from the in class learning experience?

In a complete essay, answer the questions above to the best of your ability. You can answer the questions in any order you desire, but please keep in mind that there should be some flow and movement of ideas in order for this assignment to manifest itself as a **complete essay**. Student answers are to be posted online for all of the other students to view. Answers should be posted on the Discussion Board in the thread titled **Student Introductions**. As the first assignment of the semester, you must post your personal introduction by December 28, 2015 at 11:59 pm (the end of the day). Student introductions posted after this date will be considered late (please refer to my policy on late assignments above). Between December 28 and December 30, 2015, I will read each student introduction and provide my own answers to the questions.

In addition to your personal introductions, like in any class, you are required to review and discuss the course syllabus. Therefore, please review the following document (this syllabus) and place any questions, comments or concerns on the Discussion Board in the thread entitled **Questions, Comments and Concerns Regarding Course Syllabus**. This thread can also be found in the Discussion Board Section of Blackboard.

### Section 2: The Problems of Western Social Science

#### Module 2 (12/28 - 12/30/15):

- Western conceptions of culture
- Pathological School/Pathogenic School
- Adaptive Vitality/Strengths School
- The Moynihan Report
- The Goals of African Centered Sociological Research(ers)
- Strengths of Black Families

**Readings:** Carruthers, "Science and Oppression"

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**Dodson, "Conceptualizations and Research of African American Family Life in the United States"**

**Moynihan, "The Tangle of Pathology"**

**Johnson, "The Search for Values in Black Family Research"**

**WebQuest Assignment #1 due (12/31/15)**

**Section 3: The African Background & Family Structure**

**Module 3 (12/31/15 - 1/2/16):**

- The African characteristics/roots of the Black family
- African vs. European family structure
- Lineage, descent and kinship
- Consanguinity and conjugality
- The African family and enslavement
- African patterns in the African American family
- Public policy and family structure

**Readings: Sudarkasa, "Interpreting the African Heritage in African American Family Organization"**

**Franklin, "African American Families: A Historical Note"**

**Hill, "The Impact of Welfare Reform on Black Families"**

**Section 5: Socialization and Familial Roles**

**Module 4 (1/3/16 - 1/5/16):**

- The Maternal Role and Black motherhood
- The Paternal Role and Black fatherhood

**Readings: Collins, "The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture"**

**Lempert, "Other Fathers: An Alternative Perspective on African American Community Caring"**

**Writing Assignment #1 due (1/5/16)**

**Module 5 (1/6/16 - 1/8/16):**

- The family as a socializing agent
- Racial Socialization of Black Children

**Readings: Jackson, et al, "Family, Socialization, Environment, and Identity Development in Black Americans"**

**Murray & Mandara, "Racial Identity Development in African American Children: Cognitive and Experiential Antecedents"**

**Section 6: Gender Roles and Relations**

**Module 6 (1/9/16 - 1/11/16):**

- Gender/Sexual scripts
- Gender and sexual Socialization
- Gender and sexism in the Black community
- Gender roles in marriage and the family

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**Readings:** Collins, Black Sexual Politics, “Very Necessary: Redefining Black Gender Ideology”  
Hill, “Teaching and Doing Gender in African American Families”  
Harris, “Marginalization by the Marginalized: Race, Homophobia, Heterosexism, and ‘the Problem of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’”

**WebQuest Assignment #2 due (1/11/16)**

**Module 7 (1/12/16 -1/14/16):**

- Black Male/Female Relationships
- Dating, Marriage and Mate Selection

**Readings:** Franklin, “Black Male - Black Female Conflict: Individually Caused and Culturally Nurtured”  
Chapman, “In Search of Love and Commitment: Dealing with the Challenging Odds of Finding Romance”  
Dickson, “The Future of Marriage and Family in Black America”

**Writing Assignment #2 due (1/16/16)**

**LAST DAY TO DROP A COURSE: SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26**  
**LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW FROM A COURSE: SATURDAY, JANUARY 2**

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