

UWS 22a Black Voices in the Twentieth Century

Tuesdays and Thursdays: 8:00am to 9:30am

All meetings for this class will be over Zoom. See our Latte page for the Zoom links for class meetings and office hours.

Instructor: Ryan Hitchcock

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 9:30am to 10:30, via Zoom (please make an appointment by email beforehand).

Email: ryanhitchcock@brandeis.edu

Introduction:

This course introduces students to the power of writing as a means of communication, and as a way of thinking and understanding. Students will complete a series of writing assignments, engaging in a process of reading, drafting, reviewing, and revising, while working in peer groups, individually and with their instructor. Our focus will be on Black voices in twentieth century American culture, ranging from the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance, to bell hooks' reflection on the role of the image. We will discuss a range of literary and historical movements such as the Harlem Renaissance, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Arts Movement, and Black Feminism. We will explore questions of identity, sociology, history, culture, and aesthetics. This course will encourage us to think about questions including: How does a minority voice make itself heard by an often indifferent cultural majority? How does one politically persuade an often hostile audience? How is one's personal history and sense of identity influenced by historical, political, and cultural circumstances? What happens at the intersections of gender and race? In this class we will grow as readers and writers as we listen to the voices that have already discussed these issues, and as we craft our own responses to these questions.

Course Requirements:

- 1) Daily Participation and Attendance
- 2) Attend Critical Conversation on **March 9th** and complete Experiential Assignment by **March 30th**
- 3) Weekly Latte Posts (including a Critical Conversation Written Reflection due on **March 11th**, an experiential assignment by **March 30th**, and a reflection on the Comparative Genre Analysis by **March 18th**)
- 4) Weekly pre-drafts of major assignments
- 5) Lens Essay due on **March 2nd**
- 6) Research Proposal due on **April 1st**
- 7) Researched Argument due on **April 22nd**
- 8) Portfolio due on **May 14th**

Grading:

Lens Essay: 20%

Research Proposal: 10%

Researched Argument: 35%

Class participation (includes weekly Latte posts, research presentations, Critical Conversation, Comparative Genre Analysis, and experiential assignment): 30%

Portfolio: 5%

Required Course Texts:

All of the readings are on latte.

Accommodations:

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in class, please see me right away.

Writing Center:

The Writing Center offers free online help in two formats: [60 minute face-to-face appointments](#) over Zoom and [an e-Tutoring document drop service](#) for written feedback. Writing Center feedback balances larger writing issues, such as organization and use of evidence, with more mechanical concerns, such as sentence structure and syntax. For both options, feedback will be guided by issues that you raise. Regardless of your chosen format, you will receive clear steps to improve your writing from a trained consultant.

Formatting:

Please submit all essays to latte in Word. **Microsoft Office is available to all Brandeis students for free** (<https://www.brandeis.edu/its/services/software-business-systems/software/index.html>). Essays should follow MLA format and use 1-inch margins and 12-point Times New Roman font.

First-Year Experience and Critical Conversations

UWS is the centerpiece of the First-Year Experience, which introduces students to the intellectual life of the university. As part of the UWS, students attend at least one Critical Conversation between faculty from different departments. The goals of the Critical Conversations are to build cohort identity and introduce students to scholarly discourse—including some of the ways in which our faculty engages with the world and each other. Write a one page double-spaced response to the Critical Conversation in which you answer the following questions: What techniques did the speakers use to convince you of their argument? What was effective? What was less effective? How did faculty from various perspectives (or disciplines) approach the topic differently? How did the speakers handle scholarly disagreements? How might you use some of the argumentation techniques in your own writing, specifically your research paper?

Experiential Learning Assignment:

Visit a virtual archive that is relevant to the course (for example, if you follow this link you will see digitized archival materials related to the Ford Hall occupation at Brandeis, as well as a Diary of a Young Civil Rights Worker: <https://its.brandeis.edu/research/archives-speccoll/exhibits/index.html>). You could also explore archives at other institutions, for example the Hutchins Center: <https://hutchinscenter.fas.harvard.edu/>. Write a four paragraph reflection on how the archive presents historical material, and what the implications of its presentation are.

Comparative Genre Analysis (CGA)

Scholars from different disciplines make different choices when writing. These choices aren't random, but reflect what people value in their writing. For example, the nature of *evidence*

depends on the type of information that makes up a discipline. In science, evidence may be the results of an empirical study; in history, evidence might include primary sources such as historical newspapers and archival documents, in English, evidence may come from a single poem or novel. Understanding that different disciplines produce different genres of writing will help you better understand what you read. It will also help you have more awareness of your own writing in the future

UWS Goals:

The University Writing Seminar introduces you to the power of writing as a means of communication and as a process of thinking and understanding. You will formulate meaningful arguments, support them with observations and evidence, and convey them clearly and persuasively. You will gain the tools to be a successful and confident writer in any discipline and become an active participant in critical conversations across the University and beyond. Most importantly, these skills will prepare you to engage as an informed citizen in a global society.

UWS Outcomes:

Students will be able to:

- Understand writing as a recursive process of thinking and communication
- Articulate elements of effective writing and integrate them into their own work
- Participate in critical conversations by responding to openings, problems or contradictions in existing scholarship
- Assess their own and others' writing with respect to audience and purpose
- Generate original questions and pursue independent research
- Identify and evaluate sources and use them responsibly

Drafting:

Four steps lead up to the final draft of each essay:

- **Pre-draft assignments.** Each essay will be preceded by two or three pre-draft assignments—short pieces of writing designed to help you develop ideas.
- **First drafts.** You are required to turn in a first draft of each paper. You will receive feedback on this paper that will help you write a final draft
- **Peer Review.** After the first draft of each paper is due you will form a group with two of your classmates and read each other's drafts. In class you will give your partners feedback. I will collect your peer review letters and they will count as part of your grade. These activities increase your sense of audience awareness and give you an opportunity to reflect on the concepts we have discussed in class.
- **Conferences.** Each student will have two twenty-minute conferences with me over the course of the semester, one to discuss the first draft of each major assignment. Attendance is required; missing a conference is the equivalent of missing a class. Sign-up sheets will be distributed in class. Note that we will only have one class during conference weeks.

Class participation: Your consistent participation in class sessions constitutes a significant portion of your grade and is the most critical component of a successful course. Class participation includes:

- Your prompt, prepared, alert, consistent attendance
- The completion of reading assignments by the dates listed in the syllabus
- Your thoughtful contributions to class discussions

Late Work, Extensions and Minimum Page Requirements

If you need an extension on an assignment, please let me know at least 24 hours before the assignment is due. Otherwise, late work, including first submissions, will lead to a reduction of third of a grade per day (B+□B□B- and so on) on the final paper. In addition, final papers that do not meet minimum page requirements will receive a third of a grade reduction for each page that the paper falls short.

Attendance

Attending class is essential for you to get the most from this course; in-class discussions are critical for your learning. Therefore, please do not miss class unless you have an emergency. If you miss more than three classes, each additional absence will result in the lowering of your final grade for the course by a 1/3 of a grade. Please contact me in the event of an emergency that prevents you from attending class. **Seven or more absences will result in a failing grade.**

Academic Honesty

You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. The University policy on academic honesty is distributed annually in section 5 of the *Rights and Responsibilities* handbook. Instances of alleged dishonesty will be forwarded to the Department of Student Rights and Community Standards. Potential sanctions include failure on the essay, failure in the course and suspension from the University. If you have any questions about my expectations, please ask.

Email Etiquette:

When you write to me or another professor or professional, please include a greeting (“Dear Ryan”), full sentences, proper punctuation, and your name at the bottom of the email. **Always** include a brief note with an attachment. This is good practice for when you enter the world beyond college.

Zoom Etiquette:

- Videos: If your bandwidth supports it, please keep your video on during the class meeting and use gallery view during class discussions so you can see your classmates. This is an important means of having a sense of ourselves as a group—working together and interacting in a virtual space when we cannot assemble in a classroom.
- Accessibility: Any students with accessibility concerns related to video calls should inform the instructor as soon as possible at the start of the semester so these concerns can be addressed in a timely manner.
- When you participate in classes or conferences online via Zoom, you will be expected to behave professionally and to communicate to me and your peers in the same courteous manner that you would use in class. Discourteous and abusive behaviors – trolling, spamming, flaming, displaying inappropriate content, disruptive behavior, etc. – will not be tolerated.
- Privacy: The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) protects all student data and extends as well to the classroom experience.

In accordance with federal guidelines regarding your privacy as well as the privacy of your classmates, only you are allowed to attend and to participate in this class.

Four-Credit Course

Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

CLASS SCHEDULE

All assignments are due before the start of class

Week 1

Feb 2 (T) Introductions

Feb 4 (Th) Read: “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” “Johannesburg Mines,” and “Weary Blues” by Langston Hughes, “Can Black Art Ever Escape the Politics of Race” by Vinson Cunningham, “Yet Do I Marvel,” “Tableau,” and “Incident” by Countee Cullen

Submit: Briefly summarize and reflect on the essays by Langston Hughes and Vinson Cunningham. Represent each writer’s argument and make connections between the essays and the poems. This should be at minimum three paragraphs, but ideally more.

In Class: Discussion and introduction to close reading

Week 2

Feb 9 (T) Read: “We Real Cool,” “A Primer for Blacks,” and “a song in the front yard” by Gwendolyn Brooks; “I, Too” and “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” by Langston Hughes; “won’t you celebrate with me” by Lucille Clifton, “What Can We Learn from the Rise and Fall of ‘Political Blackness’” by Kwame Anthony Appiah
Submit: At least one paragraph focused on one of the poems. You may want to consider: What sort of experience is this poem about? What is the poet’s attitude toward this experience? How is mood, tone, and meaning conveyed through specific words and phrases?

In-Class: introduction to lens assignment sequence, close reading

Feb 11 (Th) Read: “Sonny’s Blues” by James Baldwin

Submit: Lens Essay Draft 1.1

In-Class: Close reading and discussion

Week 3

Feb 16 (T) Read: “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” by W. E. B. Du Bois

Submit: lens essay draft 1.2

In-Class: What is a lens? How do different texts speak to each other? What is a theoretical perspective? Discussion of Du Bois.

Feb 18 (Th) Watch: Baldwin/Buckley Cambridge Union Debate

Submit: Lens Essay Draft 1.3

In-Class: Discussion

Week 4

Feb 23 (T) Read: *Write Now* essays “Soldiers on the Street: How Insecurity can Justify Authoritarianism;” “Impish Impulses: Madness and Language in Edgar Allen Poe” and “Elements of the Academic Essay” by Gordon Harvey
Submit: Lens essay draft 1.4
In-Class: Discussion of *Write Now* essays, how to apply lens to text, how to incorporate sources and close reading into argument

Feb 25 (Th) Read: “In Our Glory: Photography and Black Life” by bell hooks
In-Class: Discussion

Week 5

March 2 (T) Read: None
Submit: **Complete Draft of Lens Essay Due**
In Class: Peer Review

March 4 (Th) Read/Watch/Install: Complete the “Get to Know Zotero Module,” including the introductory video. Make sure to have Zotero installed and operational on your computer before class
Submit: none
In-Class: Librarian Visit and Zotero tutorial

Week 6

March 9 (T) *No university exercises. Attend Critical Conversation “Black and Jewish Identities: Visions of Freedom” via Zoom from 5:30 to 6:30*

March 11 (Th) Read: None
Submit: **Critical Conversation Written Reflection**
In-Class: Discuss Critical Conversation, strategies for public speaking and presentations, introduction to Researched Argument.

Week 7

Mar 16 (T) Read/skim: “Intersectionality’s Definitional Dilemma” by Patricia Hill Collins (sociology) and “Evidence on Discrimination in Employment: Codes of Color, Codes of Gender” by William Darity and Patrick Mason (economics)
Submit: none
In Class: Discussion and comparative genre analysis

Mar 18 (Th) Read/Skim: “The Rise of African American Intellectual History” by Brandon Byrd (history) and “Object Lesson(s)” by Autumn Womack (English)
Submit: **Comparative Genre Analysis**
In Class: Discussion and comparative genre analysis

Week 8

Mar 23 (T) Conferences (No Class)

Mar 25 (Th) Read: Online Research Educational Modules (OREMS) on Latte
Submit: **Revised Lens Essay**
In Class: Librarian visit and research tutorial

Week 9

Mar 30 (T) Read: None
Submit: **Experiential Assignment Written Reflection**
In Class: Presentations

April 1 (Th) Read: *Write Now* research essay “‘The Most Dangerous Negro’: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the FBI”
Submit: **Research Proposal (Researched Argument Pre-Draft 2.1)**
In-Class: Discussion, workshopping researched argument.

Week 10

April 6 (T) Conferences (No Class)
Submit: **Researched Argument Pre-Draft 2.2**

April 8 (Th) Read: “The Case for Reparations” by Ta-Nehisi Coates
Submit: None
In-Class: Discussion

Week 11

April 13 (T) Read: none
Submit: **Researched Argument Pre-Draft 2.3**
In-Class: writing workshop

April 15 (Th) Read: “Stranger in the Village” by James Baldwin
Submit: non
In-Class: Discussion, writing workshop

Week 12

April 20 (T) *No class (Wellness Day)*

April 22 (Th) Read: none
Submit: **Complete Draft of Researched Argument**
In-Class: Peer Review

Week 13

April 27 (T) Presentations

April 29 (Th) Presentations

Week 14

May 4 (T) Presentations

May 6 (Th) *Study day*

May 14 (F) **Final Draft of Researched Argument and Portfolio Due**