**“BLACK LIFE MATTERS”**

HON 195H 06,Fall 2014

Thursdays 4 PM – 4:50 PM

Slonaker Conference Room

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Professor [Monica J. Casper](http://www.monicajcasper.com/)

Email: mjcasper@email.arizona.edu; phone: (520) 626-0656

Office hours: Thursdays 1 – 2:30 PM or by appointment

Office location: 110 GWS, 925 N. Tyndall Avenue

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course explores the ways in which Black lives matter—and fail to matter—in the United States. Drawing from *The Other Wes Moore*, as well as selected additional materials, we will discuss why Black lives are so often framed in terms of pathology, and treated accordingly. From the origins of African American life in slavery, to chronic health and economic disparities, to criminalization and the prison-industrial complex, to the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, the course examines how some lives are structurally made vulnerable to harm and risk. Throughout, we will attend to theories and examples of racism, racialization, and inequality.

**FIRST-YEAR READING**

Wes Moore. 2010. *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates.* Random House.



**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

1. **Class participation**. We will be covering intellectually and emotionally demanding material in this course and attempting to engage it as fully as possible; your committed engagement is crucial. Active participation—that is, not just showing up, but being prepared to discuss the readings and ideas and actually discussing them—will be worth 25% of your final grade.
2. **Critical Responses**. You will write three critical responses in this class, with each response worth 25% of your final grade, for a total of 75%. By “critical response,” I mean a one- to two-page engagement with a reading, a set of readings, or a concept/idea from the readings, films, and/or discussions. I’m not looking here for a summary of a theorist’s ideas, bur rather your *critical* assessment, engagement, and interrogation of the material. What you choose to focus on is up to you, but if you need some guidance in selecting and/or organizing your thoughts, I’m happy to help. The critical responses will be due via email (no hard copies, please) on the following days: **#1 due September 18, #2 due October 30**, and **#3 due November 20**. The responses should be typed, double-spaced, and submitted in MS-Word (for ease of in-text editing/grading). I’m indifferent to what formatting style you use (e.g., Chicago Manual, APA, MLA, etc.), but whatever you choose please be *consistent* throughout.

**GRADING AND ASSIGNMENT STANDARDS**

Class Participation 25%

Critical Response #1 25%

Critical Response #2 25%

Critical Response #3 25%

Total 100%

*Grading scale:*

A = 90% and higher

B = 80-89.9%

C = 70-79.9%

D = 60-69.9%

E = less than 60%

Also see: <http://catalog.arizona.edu/policies/984/grade.htm>

Requests for incompletes (I) and withdrawal (W) must be made in accordance with university policies which are available at <http://catalog.arizona.edu/2014-15/policies/grade.htm#I> and <http://catalog.arizona.edu/2014-15/policies/grade.htm#W> respectively.

 **WEEK 1, THURSDAY, 8/28**

Introductions • Course Business • Syllabus Review

Watch in Class:

Black Life Matters Ride PSA, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2uy2eQMZ5s&feature=youtu.be>

**WEEK 2, THURSDAY, 9/4**

Read:

“Editorial: Michael Brown and Anti-Black Violence,” *The Feminist Wire*, August 11, 2014, <http://thefeministwire.com/2014/08/editorial-michael-brown-anti-black-violence/>

“Poems for Ferguson: Vanessa Huang and Aya de Leon, *The Feminist Wire*, August 22, 2014, <http://thefeministwire.com/2014/08/poems-ferguson-vanessa-huang-aya-de-leon/>



The Brown Family

 **WEEK 3, THURSDAY, 9/11**

Read:

Radio Diaries, 2010, “Strange Fruit: Anniversary of a Lynching,” NPR, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129025516>

Listen in Class:

“Strange Fruit,” written by Abel Meeropol, performed by Billie Holiday

**WEEK 4, THURSDAY, 9/18**

Professor Casper out of town: No class!

Watch on your own:

Author Wes Moore on WGBH Forum: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2uQ_pVQcPA>

Due: Critical Response #1

**WEEK 5, THURSDAY, 9/25**

Guest speaker: Evelyn C. White

Read:

Audre Lorde, 1978, “Power,” <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/240144>



Audre Lorde

**WEEK 6, THURSDAY, 10/2**

Read:

Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963, “I Have a Dream,” <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihaveadream.htm>

Listen in Class:

“Mumia Abu Jamal on Martin Luther King, Women and the Movement,” *The Feminist Wire*, January 20, 2014, <http://thefeministwire.com/2014/01/mumia-mlk-women-and-movement/>

**WEEK 7, THURSDAY, 10/9**

Read:

“Badass Activist Friday Presents: Aishah Shahidah Simmons,” *Where Is Your Line?*, <http://whereisyourline.org/2011/09/badass-activist-friday-presents-aishah-shahidah-simmons/>

**WEEK 8, THURSDAY, 10/16**

Read:

Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, 2014, “The Girls Obama Forgot,” *New York Times*, July 29, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/30/opinion/Kimberl-Williams-Crenshaw-My-Brothers-Keeper-Ignores-Young-Black-Women.html?_r=0>

**WEEK 9, THURSDAY, 10/23**

Open discussion of *The Other Wes Moore*

**WEEK 10, THURSDAY, 10/30**

Listen in Class:

Darnell Moore and Brian Epps, <http://storycorps.org/listen/darnell-moore-and-bryan-epps/>

Due: Critical Response #2

**WEEK 11, THURSDAY, 11/6**

Guest speakers: Wade Davis, Jr. and Darnell L. Moore of [YOU Belong Initiative](http://youbelonginitiative.com/)

Read:

Darnell L. Moore and Wade Davis, Jr., 2012, “Tongues Untied: On ‘Coming Out,’ Anderson Cooper, and Frank Ocean,” <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/darnell-l-moore/anderson-cooper-frank-ocean-gay_b_1653017.html>

**WEEK 12, THURSDAY, 11/13**

Professor Casper out of town: No class!

Watch on your own:

“About the Black Youth Project,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6utSojOdQE>

Trailer for *African American Lives*, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aalives/> (The entire series is available in the UA Library if you want to watch more!)

**WEEK 13, THURSDAY, 11/20**

Watch in Class:

“The Mystery of Black-White Differences in Infant Mortality,” from *Unnatural Causes*, PBS, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INc1a6u8yP4>

Due: Critical Response #3

**WEEK 14, THURSDAY, 11/27**

No class –Thanksgiving break.

**WEEK 15, THURSDAY, 12/4**

Open discussion of *The Other Wes Moore*

Course Wrap-Up

### **CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR**

To foster a positive learning environment, students may not text, chat, make phone calls, play games, read the newspaper, or surf the web during lecture and discussion. Students are asked to refrain from disruptive conversations with people sitting around them during lecture. Students observed engaging in disruptive activity will be asked to cease this behavior. Students who continue to disrupt the class will be asked to leave lecture or discussion and may be reported to the Dean of Students.

The Arizona Board of Regents’ Student Code of Conduct, ABOR Policy 5-308, prohibits threats of physical harm to any member of the University community, including to one’s self. These codes and policies may be read here:

 <http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/policiesandcodes/studentcodeofconduct>

 <http://policy.web.arizona.edu/disruptive-behavior-instructional> <http://policy.web.arizona.edu/threatening-behavior-students>

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**The UA’s policy concerning Class Attendance and Administrative Drops is available at: <http://catalog.arizona.edu/2014-15/policies/classatten.htm>

The UA policy regarding absences on and accommodation of religious holidays is available at http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/policies-and-codes/accommodation-religious-observance-and-practice.

Absences pre-approved by the UA Dean of Students (or Dean designee) will be honored. See:
http://uhap.web.arizona.edu/chapter\_7#7.04.02

**LATE WORK POLICY**

As a rule, work will not be accepted late except in case of documented emergency or illness. You may petition the professor in writing for an exception if you feel you have a compelling reason for turning work in late.

**USE OF PERSONAL ELECTRONICS**

Some learning styles are best served by using personal electronics, such as laptops and iPads. These devices can be distracting to some learners. Therefore, people who prefer to use electronic devices for note-taking during class should seek to minimize disruption to those around them. If you plan to record any part of the seminar, you must obtain permission from all participants.

**GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR COURSE PARTICIPATION**

You are expected to “show up”—physically and intellectually—and to be prepared to participate in the seminar. You should attend class regularly, do the assigned reading when it is assigned, turn your written work in on time, and actively join in discussions.

For some students, participating verbally in semi-public discussions with your peers and instructors may feel difficult. Nevertheless, you are expected to conscientiously engage with assigned course materials, to express your positions and reactions to the best of your ability, to be respectful of others who might differ with you, and to trust that you are entitled to the same respect from others. Use the space of the university classroom to think freely and deeply, and to practice your skills for addressing the substantive issues involved in things you learn about and perhaps feel passionately about.

**ACCOMMODATION**

It is the University’s goal and mine that learning experiences be as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, you are welcome to let me know so that we can discuss options. You are also encouraged to contact Disability Resources (520-621-3268) to establish reasonable accommodations. If course assessments, assignments, physical layout, or materials are inaccessible or present barriers to participation, I am happy to redesign, as I strive to create a learning environment that is inclusive. **For additional information on Disability Resources and reasonable accommodations, please visit** <http://drc.arizona.edu/>.

**Please be aware that the accessible table and chairs in this room should remain available for students who find that standard classroom seating is not usable.**

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS**

Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and freely discuss the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work/exercises must be the product of independent effort unless otherwise instructed. Students are expected to adhere to the UA Code of Academic Integrity as described in the UA General Catalog. This code may be accessed here:

 <http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/codeofacademicintegrity/>

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS**

UA Non-discrimination and Anti-harassment policy: <http://policy.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/Nondiscrimination.pdf>

UA Academic policies and procedures are available at:
[http://catalog.arizona.edu/2014-15/policies/aaindex.html](http://catalog.arizona.edu/2013-14/policies/aaindex.html)

Student Assistance and Advocacy information is available at:

<http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/student-assistance/students/student-assistance>

**CONFIDENTIALITY OF STUDENT RECORDS**

As required by law under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), student records are confidential. This law and its applicability to your educational records may be accessed here: <http://www.registrar.arizona.edu/ferpa/default.htm>

**SUBJECT TO CHANGE STATEMENT**

Information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policy, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.