

Birmingham-Southern College
Three Pillars of Africana Thought: Douglass, Du Bois, and Fanon
Fall Semester 2022
Meeting Time: M-W, 2:00-3:20 p.m.
Humanities Center 003
HI 247/PS 247 GP

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Dr. Mark S. Schantz, Humanities Center 325
Mr. Matt Dale, Teaching Assistant

Preamble: We are all unconditionally committed to your success in this course. Please let us know how best to assist you.

Office Hours: Please consult with each instructor to schedule times to meet outside of class. We want to be available to you so please contact us to set up times to meet.

This course is an introduction to Africana thought through an emphasis on the works and legacies of Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Frantz Fanon. What is meant by Africana thought is the philosophical, social, and historical discourses and aesthetic expressions having emerged from Africa and African diasporic communities with contributions from the Anglophone, Francophone, Lusophone, and Arabophone worlds. Importantly, Africana thought represents the critical, self-reflexive efforts of New World black people across the globe to make sense of their conditions as racialized selves, which often involved envisaging alternative social orders and modes of existence necessary for their continued survival and flourishing. While we pay special attention to Douglass, Du Bois, and Fanon—to whom we refer as “Three Pillars of Africana Thought”—we explore works by their interlocutors, acknowledging the fact the knowledge is produced always in crucibles of dialogue and exchange. We aim also, therefore, to acknowledge the collective efforts necessary to realize the accomplishments and feats that are sometimes attributed to the individual only.

Global Perspectives: As approached in this course, Africana Thought is inherently a global dialogue. As diasporic communities grapple with fundamental questions of identity and alternative social orders and futures, the topic could not be otherwise. In this way, our course fits snugly within the Global Perspectives dimension of the Explorations General Education Curriculum. In such courses, students will thus be able to:

- Examine an element of global complexity in relation to aesthetic, cultural, geographic, historical, political, economic, societal, religious, or philosophical perspectives appropriate to the discipline (or, in our case, disciplines).
- Identify cultural differences among peoples within a world community.

- Demonstrate how world views are shaped by fundamental differences in cultural values.

Please be alive to these learning outcomes as we proceed with the course readings and assignments.

Learning Outcomes for This Course in Particular: Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Identify, analyze, and critique central arguments found in various political theory texts.
- Demonstrate in writing assignments and class discussions the capacity for critical assessment and reflection.
- Apply theoretical frameworks to real world happenings.

Required Texts:

Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855)

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861)

W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) & *Darkwater* (1920)

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) & *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963)

Additional readings: Will be available on the Moodle site for this course or online will also be required. See the outline of readings and assignments for details.

On an *ad hoc* basis, we may also toss in additional short readings, handouts, to the required reading. We are also particularly keen to know what additional sources you may want to explore. Students are responsible for keeping themselves up to date on any changes in the schedule of readings, assignments, etc.

Course Evaluation:

1. Attendance/Participation: Both attendance *and* participation are critical (not merely for instrumental purposes). Let us be clear that one is not a substitute for the other. You, for example, cannot make up in participation where your attendance lacks. You must **both** attend class **and** actively contribute to class conversation. More, this class will be a project of making meaning out of the readings together. Students—*you*—are central to that task.

Let us tell you what we mean: Contributing to class on a regular basis is the *sine quo non* for success in this course. All of us need to contribute every day to make this class a success in community learning. Adopting the classroom posture of “I’m just listening” or “I’m shy, so I don’t talk much” or “I like to take in all the comments” will not be sufficient. Active engagement is the key. Otherwise, you are just coasting and benefiting from the hard work that your classmates are putting on the floor. There’s not much difference between sitting silently in a discussion seminar and plagiarism on an academic paper. In both cases, you are trading in the work done by someone else. As one former student put it in one of our classes, don’t be a “parasite.”

Another way to put it: Before each class, ask yourself what you plan to contribute or to offer for the day. What will be your gift to us? Students perforce always want to know what they are “getting out” of a class—this is understandable and inherent part of how our Western, liberal, and individualistic culture commodifies education. You put in your money, and you get knowledge. We invite you to reconsider this model. Rather than thinking about what you will receive from any given class meeting, think first about what you will offer the class. And what you will discover is that the more you offer, the more you will receive.

In addition to the attendance and participation requirements detailed above, you are also required to, with another student, facilitate **2 (TWO)** class discussions of your choosing. The selections will be made at the beginning of the semester. Typically, we would like you to submit a brief to us in writing via email a couple of days before your team facilitates the class—the idea here is to help you think about some salient points to raise. This brief need not be more than a typed page or two but should reflect some of your thoughts about how to address the readings and how to engage our class. Please also be attentive to what your classmates do well; keep an eye on class process as well as class content.

A note on notes: The readings we will explore in this course are rich, challenging, deep, complex, and emotionally powerful. It may be a good thing for you to make reading notes before each class—that is, jot down in a way that is easily useful for you those passages you love; those passages you don’t understand, statements with which you disagree; themes and issues that resonate; ah-ha passages that help you to understand what the reading is about. If you can quickly locate those passages and points in class discussion, you will make a substantial contribution to keeping our learning process both specific and lively.

(30% of the course grade)

2. Short responses: You will be asked to submit four short (1-2, double-spaced, typed pages) responses due at the beginning of class. You will have the opportunity to sign up for classes of your choosing with the only limitation being that we’d like to restrict each day to 3-4 students.
(20% of the course grade)

3. “Round-up” short essays: This course is structured into four segments. The first three are marked by direct engagement with works by Douglass, Du Bois, and Fanon. The first segment,

then, will be a treatment of Douglass' work, the second Du Bois', and the third, Fanon's. After each of those three segments you will be required to write a short, what we are calling a, "round-up" essay where in 4-5 pages you will reflect on important themes, concepts, and interesting tensions. **(15 % each for the first two, and 20% for the third; 50% total for the course)** Due dates for the "round-up" essays will be forthcoming.

A note on writing: More details on each of these assignments will be forthcoming. We urge you to consider that excellent writing is always the result of re-writing! Please get an early start on your assignments and know that we stand ready to review outlines or drafts of written work if you provide us with adequate time to review your work and to offer feedback.

The Honor Code & Academic Conduct: You are expected to abide by the College's rules of academic honesty. Please refer to the Student Handbook for Birmingham-Southern College's Honor Code and its statement on plagiarism. When you turn in someone's else's work under your own name, and/or paraphrase, quote, or borrow ideas that are not your own without proper citation, you commit plagiarism—a serious academic offense with consequences ranging from failing the course to disciplinary action by the college. Students suspected of violating the Honor code will be referred immediately to the Honor Council.

Students with Disabilities: If you are registered for accommodations, please make an appointment with one or both of us as soon as possible to discuss accommodations that may be necessary. During this discussion, you are not expected to disclose any details concerning your disability though you may discuss these details at your discretion. If you have a disability but have not yet registered, please contact Dr. Sandra Foster, Assistant Director of Accessibility Services and Resources, at 205-226-7909 (x1909) or smfoster@bsc.edu, or visit Norton 228.

Title IX: Birmingham-Southern College is committed to the creation and maintenance of a safe learning environment for students and the campus community. The College forbids any type of sexual or gender-based misconduct among its students, faculty, and staff. The College encourages all members of the academic community to report suspected sexual and gender-based misconduct to the appropriate authorities so that it can be investigated, remedied, and eliminated. BSC forbids retaliation against any person who has opposed, reported, or participated in an investigation concerning sexual or gender-based misconduct. See [BSC Title IX](#) for more information, including an [online report form](#). If you or a peer have experienced such misconduct, there are faculty and staff members who are trained in supporting students by answering questions and helping them navigate this process. The list of advocates can be found [here](#), among other [helpful resources](#) you will find listed on the Title IX website.

BSC Resources for Writers: The Writing Center, located in the Humanities Center 102, offers one-on-one assistance for student writers. The center serves all writers at all points in the writing process. Peer tutors spend thirty minutes to an hour per appointment, and there is no limit to the number of tutoring sessions you can have. Drop in during regular hours (M-Thurs, 3:30-10 & Sunday 5-10) or email writingcenter@bsc.edu to make an appointment. We suggest

strongly that—whatever your excellence in writing—that you stop by the Writing Center to review your work. Professors Laura Tolbert and Anna Williams are superb directors in the Writing Center and we encourage you to reach out to them with particular questions or concerns.

Class Sessions, Topics, and Readings: Please note that we will offer a more finely grained rendering of the reading assignments for each day. So, for example, when we consider Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom*, we will provide you with more detail of what chapters are due each day. A rule of thumb—acquire the habit of reading ahead, giving yourself time to digest major points and arguments and to make reading notes.

August 24: Introduction to Africana Studies. Why Douglass, Du Bois, and Fanon?

August 29: James Baldwin, "A Talk to Teachers" (1963)

Pillar 1: Frederick Douglass

August 31 – September 12: Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855)

September 6 – Labor Day: No Class.

September 14 – Angela Davis, "Unfinished Lecture on Liberation"

September 19 – September 28: Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861)

OCTOBER 1: FIRST ROUNDUP PAPER DUE

Pillar 2 : W.E.B. Du Bois

October 3 – October 10: *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)

October 12—October 19: *Darkwater* (1920)

October 24 – “On Being Crazy” from *The Crisis* (1923)

OCTOBER 28: SECOND ROUNDUP PAPER DUE

Pillar 3: Frantz Fanon

October 31: “Algeria Unveiled” from *A Dying Colonialism*

November 2 – November 9: *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952)

November 14—November 21: *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963)

November 25 – Thanksgiving Break; No Class.

November 28 – Reading: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, “Honoring W. E. B. Du Bois” (1968)

November 30 – Final Class Reflections

DECEMBER 9: FINAL ROUNDUP PAPER DUE