

Introduction to African Black Psychology

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Mission Statement

In keeping with the Jesuit, Catholic, liberal arts tradition, the Department of Psychology educates students in the science of behavior and mental processes with sensitivity toward the diversity of all people so students may use psychological knowledge and insight to address human concerns.

Course Description: This course will provide an introduction to the field of African-centered and Black psychology, one of the social sciences. It will utilize an African-centered framework to examine salient themes in the psychology of the people of African descent. It is my hope, that through this examination, the learner will become more knowledgeable about the psychological experiences of people of African descent and the role of history and culture in human development.

Required Texts: Belgrave, F.Z. & Allison, K.W. (2006). African American Psychology: From Africa to America.

Additional readings will be distributed in class.

Course Objectives:

- To develop an understanding of the traditional African worldview and how it differs from the Western worldview.
- To develop an understanding of African-centered approaches to psychology and how they differ from European approaches.
- To understand the historical development of Black Psychology- i.e. how culture and the legacy of oppression and racism have affected the psychological development of African Americans.
- To become familiar with the theories, research, and writings of Black psychologists in the field.

Course Readings:

The readings for the course include a required text, as well as a selection of empirical articles, reviews, and book chapters. These readings have been selected to help facilitate achievement of the learning objectives outlined above.

Attendance and Participation

It is my expectation that you will attend every class and be an active contributor to discussion, when appropriate to do so. While I recognize that there are individual differences in talkativeness and learning styles, I expect that you will make a concerted effort to convey enthusiasm and engagement with the course material when possible. As a reminder, your participation will be evaluated on the *quality* and not the *quantity* of your contribution. In the event that you are unable to attend class, please let me know in advance. Attendance and participation in class discussion will account for 40 points.

Debate

You will be required to participate in one of three scheduled group debates on a controversial issue in African American psychology. For example, “Should IQ and achievement testing be used for admissions and purposes of educational placement?” or “Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?” (Tatum, 1999). The debate is worth 60 points.

Reflection/Reaction Papers

During the course of the semester, you will be asked to write three reflection/reaction papers in response to an assigned topic related to the psychological experience of African Americans. The expected length for these papers is approximately 1-2 double-spaced pages. Papers are to be submitted at the start of the class period and may not be submitted electronically. Papers will be worth 20 points each (60 points total).

Final Paper

For the final paper, I will ask you to identify a specific issue of interest to you and write a brief paper (**totaling no more than 4 double-spaced pages, 12-point, Times New Roman, one-inch margins**) highlighting a specific question or set of questions that remains unanswered with regard to the topic, outlining how you might investigate the question(s) further, and concluding with a discussion of the significance and implications of the topic and research questions for the study of the psychological experiences of African Americans. You should seek approval of your topic. I will provide further details regarding this assignment early in the semester. The final paper will be worth 140 points.

Overview of Tentative Course Schedule

- Introduction and Overview
- Background, Foundations, and Theory
- Africentric Psychology
- Theories of Race and Racism
- Kinship and Family
- Educational Systems and Achievement

Debate # 1

- Racial Identity
- Religion and Spirituality
- African American Mental Health
- Language
- Drug Use and Abuse
- Aggression, Violence, and Crime
- Course Wrap-Up