CSI 234: African Americans and the Politics of Reparations (More than a Check)
Hampshire College <> Spring 2012 <> TTh 2-320pm. <> FPH 101
Professor Tinson <> Office hours: Tues 4-6pm, Wed 3-6pm, Thurs 4-6pm
Office: FPH G-2 <> schedule all appts via email: ctinson@hampshire.edu

Description: Racial reparations have been and continue to be one of the most explosive contemporary issues. Some argue that this country’s history of enslavement renders some form of reparations necessary to the quest for social justice; that understanding reparations is central to honest conversations about race and racism. Others argue that reparations for past injustices such as slavery are unfair. Still others refuse to discuss the topic altogether. This course is concerned with the historic and contemporary reparations debate as it pertains to African Americans. We will pay close attention to how historians, artists, legal scholars, political scientists, grassroots community activists and legislators have approached this issue, and gauge its relevance in our “post-racial” moment. This course is suitable for first year distribution requirements.

Objectives
* To gain a historical understanding of reparations claims by African descendants
* To identify the social, cultural, political and economic aspects of reparations
* To illustrate the diversity of opinions with regard to reparations
* To assess the reparations debate within contemporary struggles for social justice

Course texts – Available for purchase at the Food for Thought bookstore

1. Mary Frances Berry, My Face is Black is True: Callie House and the Struggle for Ex-Slave Reparations (New York: Vintage, 2005).


*Additional Essays and Articles will also be posted to the course Web site. See URL above. See also Recommended Books at the end of the syllabus.

**Documentary and Film**


**Audio—NPR Reparations Coverage:**  

**COURSE PARTICULARS – VITAL INFORMATION FOLLOWS. READ CAREFULLY.**

*PROF. TINSON’S PHILOSOPHY OF CRITICAL EDUCATION:* As we are seeking a courageous vocabulary of race and social justice, active, informed dialogue is encouraged and appreciated (attacks are not); we encourage getting real about race, staying engaged with the readings, avoiding self-pity. We expect some discomfort, and anticipate that some issues will be left unresolved. And remember: critical thinking is valued over self-righteousness.

**STUDENT PARTICIPATION:** Students are required to read all assigned course readings, however students will also select readings for which they will lead course discussions throughout the semester.

**ATTENDANCE AND TARDINESS**—Attendance is critically important and therefore mandatory. *Three unexcused absences will result in no evaluation.* Persistent tardiness is unacceptable under any circumstances. Your attendance and tardiness will be included as a part of the overall course participation portion of each student’s course evaluation.

**EMAILING THE PROFESSOR**—Please type the course number (CSI 234) in the subject line of all correspondence directed to me. If you need an answer to a burning question or need to inform me of a pressing issue (e.g. a medical absence), do not wait until the last minute to notify me. I need at least 24 hours lead time to answer you. Plan accordingly. **However, I do not accept emailed assignments.**

**COURSE EVALUATION POLICY**—In accordance with the student assessment practices of Hampshire College, each student will be evaluated based upon their course attendance and participation, and the fulfillment of all assignments in a
satisfactory and timely manner. (Non-Hampshire students see “Five College Students” next.)

**FIVE COLLEGE STUDENTS**—Those who are not Hampshire students will receive a letter grade a conventional A-Fail grading scale instead of a written evaluation. Each assignment will be graded accordingly, including the final project.

**NO LAPTOPS. UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED TO USE YOUR LAPTOP DURING COURSE MEETINGS.**

**COURSE PORTFOLIOS**—All students are required to submit all of their written work at the end of the semester. If you do not hand your portfolio in by the deadline, you will be in danger of receiving a **No Eval**. No exceptions. Work turned in late cannot be guaranteed an evaluation.

**SEVERE WEATHER & CLASS CANCELLATION (just in case)**—On severe weather days please call your College’s weather information line to check the status of school closing. If the school is open plan to attend class. If school is closed due to weather, I usually issue (via email) a small assignment to make up for lost class time; so don’t be surprised. 😊 If for some reason the professor is unable to come to class the Afro-American Studies administrative assistants will place a written notice of class cancellation on the classroom door.

**ALL OUT-OF-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE TYPED.** Handwritten assignments will not be accepted.

**LATE ASSIGNMENTS AND REWRITE POLICY** – Yes, students are allowed to rewrite their written/evaluated assignments. All rewrites must be received no later than one week (or two class meetings) after the assignment was evaluated by the instructor and returned to the student. However, assignments turned in late cannot be revised for reconsideration.

**ONE REFLECTIVE PAPER, TWO CRITICAL ESSAYS AND ONE RESEARCH PAPER** – Students are required to write one short reflective essay, two critical papers, and one research paper throughout the semester. These essays are a chance for you to explore an idea and to demonstrate your understanding of the particular themes and concepts we have read, observed and discussed in the course. **These essays should be no shorter than 6 full double-spaced pages in length and not longer than 8 pages.** In these essays you are expected to draw upon one or more of the aspects of the reading, film/video, musical, or literary contents that pertain to historical, social and or political developments concerning the controversy and debate surrounding reparations claims. **Research Papers must be 12-15 pages in length on a subject closely related to our course. Additionally, it is essential that**
students use proper citation methods (Chicago or MLA) in these essays. If you don’t know what this means, now is a good time to find out.

**Historical-thematic Structure:**
History * Debate and Controversy * Contemporary Reparations Movements

*N.B. For purposes of efficacy, any part of this syllabus may be changed at the discretion of the professor.*

READING OUTLINE
Please come prepared to discuss material on the day it is assigned.

**Week 1**
Thurs. Jan 26

**ENSLAVEMENT & THE 19TH CENTURY ROOTS OF REPARATIONS CLAIMS**

**Week 2**
Tues. Jan 31
**Essay #1 Due**

Thur. Feb 2
Historical Background: *The Forty Acres Documents*, p. 1-74 (on-line)

**Week 3**
Tues. Feb 7

Thurs. Feb 9
Mary Frances Berry, *My Face is Black is True*, Intro to Ch. 1
Week 4

Tues. Feb 14
Berry, My Face is Black is True, Ch 2 and 3

Thurs. Feb 16—ADVISING DAY. NO CLASSES. PLEASE CONTINUE READING.

Berry, My Face is Black is True, Ch 4 and 5

Week 5

Tues. Feb 21
Berry, My Face is Black is True, Ch. 6 and 7

Thurs. Feb 23rd {W.E.B. Du Bois’s 148th Birthday}

Berry, My Face is Black is True, Ch 8 through epilogue

Essay #2 Due on Tuesday 2/28 – please write a thoughtful critical essay that engages a salient aspect of the Callie House story and the evolution of the reparations movement. Your paper might discuss tactics and strategies employed in the ex-slave pension movement, or might engage why the story has only recently come to light. Were there any questions that you were left with that the author might have addressed? Etc. Your essay is expected to be from 5-7 pages of well-organized prose. Use proper citation style where appropriate.

Week 6

REPARATIONS: ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR

Tues. Feb 28th >>> Essay #2 Due

Winbush, “Introduction;”


Thurs. March 1st
Trask, “Restitution as Precondition of Reconciliation: Native Hawaiians and Indigenous Human Rights;”

Winbush, “And the Earth Moved: Stealing Black Land in the United States;”

Week 7
Tues. March 6th
Harper’s Magazine, “Does America Owe a Debt to the Descendants of Its Slaves?;”

Westley, “Many Billions Gone: Is It Time to Reconsider the Case for Black Reparations?”;
Outterson, “Slave Taxes;”

REPARATIONS: ARGUMENTS AGAINST

Thurs. March 8th
Williams, “Presumed Victims;”

McWhorter, “Against Reparations;”
Steele, “…Or a Childish Illusion of Justice?: Reparations Enshrine Victimhood, Dishonoring Our Ancestors;”

Horowitz, “Ten Reasons Why Reparations is A Bad Idea;”
Allen and Chrisman “A Response to David Horowitz” (on-line)

Watch:
*Available on-line:
http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/172088-1
REPARATIONS AT THE GRASSROOTS

Week 8

Tues. March 13th >>> FINAL PROPOSALS DUE

Worrill, “The Black United Front and the Reparations Movement;”


Recommended: Black Manifesto, edited by Lecky and Wright

Thurs. March 15th
Wise, “Debtor’s Prison;”


Essay #3 Due on 3/29 after Spring Break: Choose two scholars, activists, groups or organizations on different sides of the reparations issue. In a thoughtful well-written essay of five to seven pages in length, compare and contrast the perspectives. Based on your evaluation of both sides, make a case for or against reparations. You might also think of a third option that you would like to explore. Discuss these possibilities in your essay.

WEEK 9 – SPRING BREAK: MARCH 17-25TH 2012

REPARATIONS IN POPULAR CULTURE AND EDUCATION

Week 10

Tues. March 27th
Cobb, “The Devil and Dave Chappelle;”

Bambi Haggins, “In the Wake of N---- Pixie: Dave Chappelle and the Politics of Crossover Comedy”
Thurs. March 29th >>> ESSAY #3 Due
Secours, “Riding the Reparations Bandwagon”

Nzingha, “Reparations + Education = The Pass to Freedom;”

Winbush interview with immediate descendants of enslaved Africans, Should America Pay? pp. 286-322

Guest: Dr. Kofi-Charu Nat Turner, UMass, Amherst

CASE STUDIES:
IVY LEAGUE SCHOOLS, INSURANCE COMPANIES, AND REPARATIONS

Week 11

Tues. April 3rd
Case Study: Brown University
http://www.brown.edu/Research/Slavery_Justice/

Thurs. April 5th
Case Study: Yale University
http://www.yaleslavery.org/

Week 12

Tues. April 10th
Insurance Companies and Reparations:
Excerpt from Black Exodus, pp. 22-31

Farmer-Paellmann v. FleetBoston, Aetna, Inc., CSX in Winbush, Should America Pay?, p. 348-360; and CA Insurance Company documents

Jennifer Hamilton, “The Case of the Genetic Ancestor”

Guest: Dr. Jennifer Hamilton, CSI, Hampshire College

TOWARDS SYNTHESIS AND RENEWAL

Thurs. April 12th
Walters, Price of Racial Reconciliation, Ch. 1 and 2
Week 13

Tues. April 17\textsuperscript{th}
Walters, \textit{Price of Racial Reconciliation}, Ch. 3 and 4

Thurs. April 19\textsuperscript{th}
Walters, \textit{Price of Racial Reconciliation}, Ch. 5 and 6

Week 14

Tues. April 24\textsuperscript{th}
Walters, \textit{Price of Racial Reconciliation}, Ch. 7 and 8


Thurs. April 26\textsuperscript{th}

Congressman John Conyers’s (D-MI) Bill for a Study on the Impact of Slavery on African Americans HR40IH, 105\textsuperscript{th} Congress 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, HR40


Week 15

Tues. May 1\textsuperscript{st}  Student presentations

Thurs., May 3\textsuperscript{rd}  Student presentations

\textit{All Final Papers and portfolios are due to my office mailbox in FPH on Monday, May 7\textsuperscript{th} by 5pm. No Exceptions. See Incomplete Policy under “course portfolio” above.}
Definitions of Culminating Semester Assignments

“Essay”  Might include a full-length essay, an extensive annotated bibliography, or an interview with a “notable” artist, educator, organizer, or activist.

“Project”  Might include a creative project of your choosing such as a visual art piece, a collection of poems, a high school lesson plan, a community arts project, a zine, a website, etc. All projects must also include a descriptive write-up detailing the ideas and strategies contained therein.

EXTRA MATTER

WEBSITES

Federation of Southern Cooperatives (Black Farmers Network)  http://www.federationsoutherncoop.com/

Land Loss Prevention  http://www.landloss.org/

Black Farmers & Agriculturalists  http://www.bfaa-us.org/

Torn From the Land series:  http://www.theauthenticvoice.org/Torn_From_The_Land_Intro.html

C-SPAN Video Library  http://c-spanvideo.org

National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America  http://www.ncobra.org/

Voxunion  http://www.voxunion.com/


United for a Fair Economy  http://www.faireconomy.org/
RECOMMENDED BOOKS

*Robert L. Allen, Black Awakening in Capitalist America
Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga, This Bridge Called My Back
Herbert Aptheker, American Negro Slave Revolts
Grace Lee Boggs, Living for Change
*Alfred Brophy, Reparations: Pros and Cons
   (Free E-book accessible thru the library Web site)
Aime Cesaire, Discourse on Colonialism
Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks
C.L.R. James, The Black Jacobins
Audrey Lorde, Sister Outsider
Jeffrey B. Perry, Hubert Harrison: The Voice of Harlem Radicalism
*Randall Robinson, The Debt
*Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa
Penny Von Eschen, Rage Against Empire
Robert F. Williams, Negroes with Guns
(And anything by bell hooks, Edward Said, Howard Zinn, Noam Chomsky, and Paulo Freire.)
*Books that directly pertain to this course