

Western Michigan University  
Summer II 2024  
African American and African Studies 2100:  
Forms of Black Consciousness  
Dr. Jennifer Richardson

### Course Overview

This course focuses on the history of Black Consciousness in the African Diaspora (particularly looking at Black Portuguese and Black American communities) from the seventeenth to twenty-first century. It is concerned with forms of Black expression and social action as they are manifested in specific historical, cultural, and sociological contexts using comparative approaches. Some of the themes include Black feminist thought, culture, naming and identity, movement and migration, and the rhetoric of freedom in Black ideology. The idea of Black Consciousness has been in existence long before Black Lives Matter; it has been around for generations. The idea takes various shapes and forms that are dependent upon its context and environment. However, Black Consciousness has arguably been best articulated by prominent South African activist, Steve Biko. In his seminal work “The Definition of Black Consciousness,” Biko describes Black Consciousness in the following ways:

1. Being black is not a matter of pigmentation—being black is a reflection of a mental attitude.
2. Merely by describing yourself as black you have started yourself on a road towards emancipation, you have committed yourself to fight against all forces that seek to use your blackness as a stamp that marks you out as a subversive being.<sup>1</sup>

The course will use a variety of primary and secondary source materials to explore the chronological evolution of Black Consciousness. Throughout the semester, students will gradually absorb and stretch their critical thinking skills by reading about, interpreting and digesting other, related ideas and movements. However, we will focus on historical and contemporary Black experiences and communities in the United States (and colonies) and Portugal (and colonies).

### Student Learning Goals

- To define “Black Consciousness” and be able to identify it in past historical and contemporary examples.
- To articulate the similarities and differences between Black Consciousness and other forms of black and African ideologies in both written and oral forms of expression.
- To articulate how Black Consciousness and other forms of black and African ideologies may:
  - a) change over time and
  - b) be articulated across different ethnicities, national identities, and historical circumstances.
- To effectively critique secondary and primary sources.

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<sup>1</sup> Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like: Selected Writings*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 48.

## Student Expectations

Students will be expected to **complete the assigned readings and other materials; participate** in class discussions, attend class lectures and outings. Most of the course reading and assignments will be available on E-Learning. Other texts will be available for purchase through WMU bookstore or available through the library. We'd meet for classroom instruction/discussion/ lectures at scheduled times throughout each week. All outside the classroom activities will be counted toward the course's contact hours.

## Some Required Materials for the Course\*

A detailed list of films, and texts will be provided in the course schedule.

- Hartman, Saidiya. *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007
- Selections from- Adi, *Pan-Africanism* (recommended, any edition)
- Phyllis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America"
- More, M. P. (2014). The intellectual foundations of the Black Consciousness Movement. *Intellectual traditions in South Africa: Ideas, individuals and institutions*, 173-196.
- Film, *Quilombo* (<https://www.justwatch.com/us/movie/quilombo>)
- "The Story of Marcus Garvey: A Documentary" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpsKWGIZIhw>)
- Du Bois, "The Damnation of Women" (*Darkwater*)
- Sharpley-Whiting, "Femme Negritude"
- Pan-African Congress Resolutions, 1947
- "We Charge Genocide," 1951
- Curington, C. (2020). "WE SPEAK BACK!": Challenging Belonging and Anti-Blackness in Portugal. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, 17(2), 337-362.
- Martins, A. A. D. P. (2010). Portugal, postcolonial reconfigurations and the colour divide. *Partíamos como se não fôssemos: homenagem a Horácio Peixoto de Araújo*, 41-52.
- Santos, P. M. (2018). The other in us: Representation of black African identity in Portuguese social space. *Journal of anthropological research*, 74(4), 468-484.
- "South African Freedom Charter," 1955
- "All African People's Conference Resolution," 1958
- King, Jr., "The Birth of a New Nation"
- Angela Davis, "Speech Delivered at the Embassy Auditorium"
- Documentary: "Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution"
- Video: "Apartheid: The Rise and Fall of South Africa's 'Apartness' Laws"
- "Combahee River Collective Statement"
- "The Rank and File Women of the Black Panther Party and Their Powerful Influence"
- Pough, "Reconstructing Black Womanhood"
- 13<sup>th</sup> (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krfcq5pF8u8>)
- Cooper, *Eloquent Rage*, "Bag Lady"
- Adichi, "We Should All be Feminists"

- Hannah-Jones, Nikole. The 1619 Project, Hulu.

### **Required Assignments for the Course\***

- Field Notes
- Journal Notes
- Critical Connection Essay
- Peer Interviews

### **Required Outings for the Course\***

- The African Lisbon Tour in partnership with Black in Portugal Community Group
  - This is a 4-hour walking tour. (I have identified this tour and community and can communicate directly with them to plan for a private day of tour and talks) <https://africanlisbontour.com/>
- Tagus River tour in the most modern area of Lisbon (Parque das Nações) and head towards the southeast to talk about the foundation of Lisbon as a city, the customs and traditions that have involved its evolution until the present day. View of Lisbon's most emblematic neighborhoods and monuments.
  - (I have identified this tour <https://www.viator.com/tours/Lisbon/Private-Tour-6-hours-by-Boat-on-the-Tagus/d538-398419P2> However, I am open to other similar tours.)
- A bus tour of the 3 routes around Lisbon highlighting the African presence in the city between the 15th and 21st centuries. The purpose of these maps is to show the historic and modern-day presence of Africans in the city. People from Africa have participated for centuries in building the Portuguese nation. In this process, Africans have performed indispensable tasks, but also the hardest and most devalued ones. Active in all wealth-creating sectors, Africans—slaves or free—have played an important role in structuring Portuguese urban life.
  - [https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/historical-roadmap-african-lisbon-between-15th-and-21st-centuries\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/historical-roadmap-african-lisbon-between-15th-and-21st-centuries_en) I need help with curating this type of tour.
- Meet with and interview:
  - Local experts in government (people of African descent in parliament)
  - Locals in cultural and music scenes (e.g., revolutionary and anti-racist music)
  - Afro- feminist activist organizers
    - I need assistance connecting with and identifying these individuals