

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

**REQUEST FOR INCLUSION OF A COURSE IN THE
GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM:
EDUCATION FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY**

DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL: AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES COLLEGE: ARTS AND SCIENCES

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1. Subject Code, Number, and Title: AAS 301 Writing for African American Studies

2. Credit Hours 3

2. Course Description

3. AAS 301 teaches students how to construct quality research papers for graduate, scholarly, and professional work and to produce advanced knowledge in the field of African American studies.

4. This course is (check one):

an existing course with no revisions (need not go through the input system)

an existing course with revisions (attach this form to Request for Course Revision form)

a new course (attach this form to Request for New Course form)

5. Check the General Education requirement this course is intended to meet. If the course is to be proposed for more than one requirement, submit a separate form for each one.

Effective Communication

Quantitative Reasoning (*QR designation*)

Writing Intensive (*WI designation*)

Perspectives on a Diverse World

Global Awareness

U.S. Diversity

Knowledge of the Disciplines

Arts

Humanities

Science

Social Science

Learning Beyond the Classroom (*LBC designation*)

- Self and Well Being
- Community Service, Citizenship, and Leadership
- Cultural and Academic Activities and Events
- Career and Professional Development
- International and Multicultural Experience
- Undergraduate Research

6. Rationale. Provide a concise, clear, jargon-free explanation of why this is a General Education course and how it fits into this specific area of the program. (The rationale should explain to students why they are taking the course. It should address both why it is part of the General Education program and why it fits into the particular category.) This rationale should appear on the general course syllabus provided here and should be included in specific course syllabi given to students. Note: *The Writing-Intensive courses are designed to provide students with the opportunity to continue to develop their writing through engagement with disciplinary strategies and conventions. Those proposing a WI course should explain in the rationale how and why the course is a writing-intensive course.*

Writing intensive courses are designed to provide students with the opportunity to continue to develop their writing through engagement with disciplinary strategies and conventions. Writing for African American Studies is designed to teach students how to construct quality research papers for graduate, scholarly, and professional work while producing advanced knowledge in the field of African American studies. The course exposes students to a wide array of scholarly journals, databases, and authoritative resources in the field. Students will learn how to identify appropriate sources to use in the research process, and they will learn to synthesize information from numerous and diverse sources. The course guides students through a step-by-step procedure leading to a refined, professional research paper that is theoretically and substantively rooted in the field of African American studies. Moreover, the research product will utilize one of several scholarly conventions used to produce and convey knowledge in the field. The course offers students the opportunity to refine and defend their own work and to constructively critique the work of others.

Students should understand that this course extends beyond what they have experienced as normal procedures and standards for writing research papers. We will pay much closer attention to every phase of the research process. Multiple revisions, close one-on-one attention to detail with the instructor, peer review and critique, and the requirement to defend your work via an oral presentation of the final research product are required. Students must learn and execute a system of data collection and storage that provides for the synthesis of data from an unlimited number of sources. Every phase of the research and writing process will be made transparent and scrutinized, including, but not limited to, constructing the research topic, maintaining a working outline, taking notes from diverse sources, identifying and applying appropriate conventions in documentation, including how, when and what to document. Moreover, given the interdisciplinary character of African American studies, this course will help students to develop an approach to constructing the research paper that is adaptable to diverse situations. AAS 301 serves to elevate and demystify the process of producing a high-quality research paper so that students can become better self-learners, produce knowledge in the field if they choose to do so, or comfortably adapt their research and writing skills to other professional and/or scholarly endeavors.

7. Clearly and concisely explain how this course meets each of the General Education outcomes for the requirement checked in number five (all outcomes should be addressed). To do this, (a) list the General Education outcomes for the requirement and explain how the course meets each outcome; and (b) explain, in general terms, the method(s) of evaluation to be used in the course and how these methods assess the degree to which students have met the General Education outcomes for this requirement.

Outcomes

- A. Develop and employ successful, flexible writing and reading strategies that support sustained inquiry in a discipline.

Utilizing a common area of focus, students will carve out specific research topics that are rooted conceptually and theoretically within the foundational concerns of African American studies. Foundational concerns refer to enduring categories of thought that emerge from the contextual elements of the African-American and African-diasporic experiences. For example, the problems of historical discontinuity, omission, and distortion; the problem of double-consciousness; the expropriation and distortion of Black cultural forms; the role of African cultural survivals in African-American cultural formations; the problem of maladaptations to racial-cultural oppression; the challenges of economic dependency and underdevelopment; the significance of revitalization and pluralistic movements; the examination of problems related to the reconstruction of identity and the development of a positive self-image; and so on. Development of the research paper will involve learning strategies to locate relevant authoritative sources and to identify debates, issues, and perspectives germane to the research project. The general focus provided in the attached syllabus, from which students will develop their research topics, is African American expressive culture from 1865 to the 1970s.

Students will engage in the following writing tasks:

1. After preliminary reading and discussion of relevant scholarly articles in the field, students will construct topics for their research that will be refined over the course of the semester. Periodically, this process will become the focus of in-class discussion and revision.
2. Students will construct an annotated bibliography of a minimum of twenty-five sources (primary and secondary) relevant to their selected topics. The annotated bibliography will become the foundation for data collection. Students will have the opportunity to revise this document as they gain greater clarity regarding the focus of their research and their informational needs. Students may add or subtract sources for their papers at a later date and are not limited by the bibliographic assignment, which is intended as a heuristic aid. The annotated bibliography will facilitate in-class discussion around locating and identifying relevant, authoritative sources. It will help students to learn and pay attention to various conventions in documentation, formatting, and mechanics related to punctuation and grammar. The annotations will require students to capture the core utility of each data source and to convey this in a succinct and straightforward manner. Sharing and revising these materials in class will help students to learn to pay attention to detail and to form strategies for refining their writing.
3. Students will construct working outlines that will become the basis for periodic class discussion. Students will save the various stages of their outlines so that they can see how the central themes and key points of their outlines mature and gain greater clarity over time. The major points of the outline will become the basis by which students organize their notes in preparation for the various phases of writing the research paper. These outlines will become periodically the focus of in-class revision and critique.
4. Students will learn to construct bibliography and note cards, which will become the periodic object of in-class activity and critique throughout the course of the semester. This activity will help students to develop a systematic approach to data collection that can accommodate an unlimited number of sources and to learn conventions for recording bibliographic material from varied materials. In-class dialogue and one-on-one feedback from the instructor will help students to develop an efficient and effective note-

taking process. Students will learn to integrate this process with their working outlines in order to produce drafts of the research paper.

5. Students will review and critically assess a major text pertinent to the general research theme of the course. This assignment will help the instructor to determine the writing proficiency of individuals in the class. It will further serve as the basis to address such issues as topic sentences, sentence and paragraph construction, style and voice, development of ideas, organization, description, analysis, and so on. Review and discussion of the text will serve to ground students in an important body of knowledge that can inform their individual projects. Moreover, in their reviews and in in-class discussions, students will be asked to identify key areas of concern that might constitute foundational issues in African American studies. Consequently, students will learn the importance of theory development in relationship to the research process and epistemological elements underlying the production of knowledge in the field.

The text selected for student review, given the current thematic focus of the course, is *Black Manhattan* by James Weldon Johnson. Scholars in the field understand that this is one of the most important non-fictional works to emerge from the Harlem Renaissance. All works that examine the evolution of a Black theatrical workforce; the history of Black traditions in theater, musical comedy, and popular songwriting; the development of the community of Harlem; the emergence of the Harlem Renaissance; and more, must draw upon this seminal work. James Weldon Johnson, a lawyer, was the first African American to serve as secretary of the NAACP. A prominent and highly respected poet and novelist, Johnson also produced groundbreaking collections of African American poetry and spirituals. Johnson's novel, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, was central to a smaller cultural flowering among African Americans that predated the Harlem Renaissance. With his brother, J. Rosamond Johnson, a noted songwriter, James Weldon Johnson wrote "Lift Every Voice and Sing," widely recognized as the African American national anthem.

6. Students will produce multiple drafts of the research paper. This process will be monitored by one-on-one interaction with the instructor, in-class discussion and revision, and peer review. Systematic examination and refinement of sentence structure, formatting, description, analysis, organization, documentation, and the like will emerge from this activity. Students will learn to move from their note cards to draft construction. When, how, and what to document, as well as plagiarism, will become paramount issues. Students will learn how to appropriately integrate applicable information from extensive and diverse sources into their narratives and to refine the research paper for insight, organization, and clarity.
7. Students will learn to reduce their major research paper to a short oral presentation. Moving from the larger paper to a brief set of notes, students will present the main findings of their work to their peers for critique and evaluation. Students must defend their work. They will be asked to talk about the research and writing process, the relevance and quality of the sources they used, and the basis for their conclusions.

This outcome will be assessed through how well students select and refine a topical area, develop and implement a working outline, construct an annotated bibliography to support the research process, and implement an appropriate system of data collection (the effective utilization of note and bibliography cards) and storage to support an in-depth and detailed research paper.

- B. Use writing strategies that achieve the purposes for writing and address the expectations of audiences within a disciplinary context.

The course will provide extensive exposure to past and current intellectual traditions in the field and to the critical relevance of various categories of thought to African American studies. This exposure, peer review, review by the instructor, assigned reading, classroom discussion, and multiple opportunities to refine the research product will enhance student understanding of audience expectations within the discipline.

As a field of study, African American studies is heavily focused toward producing, preserving, and conveying knowledge. Orienting our students to write for a scholarly audience best prepares them for these kinds of enterprises. Graduate work leading to research, writing, and teaching in the field and work in such areas as student affairs (cultural centers); museum studies; information science, including special collections and research centers; public policy; legal studies; publishing; theater and other creative arts; radio, TV, and film production; and the like are broadly served by obtaining the skills necessary to write for a scholarly audience. Additionally, the critical thinking skills, attention to detail, high standards for assessing information, research and organizational techniques, and other skills obtained from this approach are readily adaptable to other expressive and professional endeavors.

This outcome will be assessed through student participation in peer review and in-class activities and discussions, including periodic trips to the library to explore diverse data sources (electronic databases; microfilm collections, including relevant newspapers and magazines; scholarly journals; reference sources; government documents; videotape and DVD collections; special collections; etc.) This outcome will also be assessed through how well students are able to focus their drafts to meet the requirements of a scholarly audience. We will specifically look for how well students develop and convey a clear and concise research problem, connect the problem to some broader theoretical concern, develop a reasoned and well documented argument or analysis, synthesize data from diverse authoritative sources, determine how their work contributes to the existing literature, identify shortcomings in their own work and the work of others, use appropriate conventions in presentation and documentation, and develop a sense of what future research needs to be done.

- C. Formulate research questions and employ strategies for researching and responding to those questions.

The course is organized around the production and refinement of a major research paper in African American studies. Reading and discussion and analytical reviews will be used to fully develop an understanding of the parameters of the field. The research process will be based on formulating research questions relevant to the foundational, theoretical, and conceptual limits of African American studies. Students will learn how to systematically locate, access, record, store, analyze, and synthesize authoritative information relevant to their research project. Using the tools of a working outline and bibliography and note cards, students will learn to construct research papers from an unlimited number of sources.

A major objective of the course is to help students understand how writing a high-level research paper can be greatly facilitated by learning an executing a step-by-step process that allows for flexible planning, meaningful search strategies, organization of the research and writing process, refinement of ideas, and adaptability in terms of the size and length of the research product.

This outcome will be assessed through an examination of student efforts to produce and refine annotated bibliographies, note taking, and working outlines; to analyze, through a written review, a classic work related to the general research focus of the class; and to organize and integrate data from diverse

authoritative sources into the various drafts of the research paper. Assessment involves intense scrutiny and feedback at every phase of the research process.

D. Use discipline-specific genres to communicate information.

A major objective of this course is to give students an understanding of what it means to write a truly rigorous research paper so that they can reproduce this process whenever necessary in their student and professional lives.

Among its texts, the course will utilize *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* by Kate L. Turabian. Students will learn forms of documentation that encompass both note (numbering) and parenthetical conventions. Students will learn how to appropriately document diverse data sources. Examples are electronic databases and internet sources, books, articles in journals and magazines, sources with multiple authors, unpublished works, dissertations, edited works, newspapers, interviews, sound recordings, videorecordings, performances, works of art, published proceedings, sources with no author given, reprint and paperback editions of books, translations, books in a series, materials from special collections, and so on.

This outcome will be assessed by how well students are able to appropriately document diverse authoritative sources in the various drafts of their research papers using the *Kate L. Turabian A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. In-class examination and revision of students' drafts will be an important aspect of assessment.

E. Understand conventions for communication, disseminating, and interpreting information within a discipline.

Students will use critical reviews, the research paper, and scholarly oral presentations in the course to disseminate their research findings. This process will be guided by sustained dialogue on the intellectual traditions of African American studies represented by existing academic and scholarly publications in the field. For example, the instructor will periodically disseminate articles from various journals in African American studies to review and discuss conventions in documentation and presentation in the field. Students will bring their drafts to class where their use and understanding of these conventions will be assessed and refined via in-class discussion, peer review, and direction by the instructor.

This outcome will be assessed by the quality of the book reviews, the quality of the final draft of the research paper, and the quality of the oral presentation based on the research paper.

Evaluation (Overview)

Using multiple indicators, the instructor will assess how well students meet the General Education outcomes for the course. He/she will provide a general theme out of which the class will develop specific and focused areas of research. This process will be augmented and facilitated by assigned reading and discussion related to the general research theme, assigned reading and discussion related to the mechanics of writing a research paper, a critical review of an assigned text related to the research theme, and participation in class projects and activities. These class projects and activities will include discussion of the assigned reading, discussion of the various student projects, peer review of written work, in-class revision of various writing products,

and periodic trips to the library to examine relevant sources for research. The research process will proceed in phases that will allow for in-depth examination of critical components of the research and writing process and intense refinement of the research product.

Students will be awarded points for each phase and component of the course. For example, students can receive a maximum of ten points for each official class meeting. The actual number of points awarded will be based upon appropriate preparation, demonstrated knowledge of assigned readings, and active participation in discussion and in-class activities. The instructor will grade each written assignment on a ten-point scale for content and development and a ten-point scale for relevant mechanics (spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, format, etc.)

Note that students will have the opportunity to revise each written assignment, which can potentially raise their point totals, prior to submission of the final draft.

The oral component will be assessed on content and presentation. Each component or phase will have a designated amount of points. The total points assigned to each component or phase will be multiplied by the average percentage score (derived from the application of the ten-point scale assessments) received for the assignment. The result will be the number of points used to tabulate the final grade. The final grade will be based on the percentage achieved by dividing the sum of the points earned for each phase or component by the total possible points. However, the student must submit the final draft of the research paper to receive credit for the course.

- 8. Attach a syllabus (1-inch margins and 10-12 pt. font). The syllabus must include the rationale from #6 above and clearly reflect the outcomes and methods of evaluation detailed in #7 above.

Please submit all materials in electronic form.

Action of the Department/College

1. Department

Vote of department faculty: For _____ Against _____ Abstentions _____

Department Head

Date

2. College

College Dean

Date

Action of General Education Advisory Committee

Vote of General Education Committee: For _____ Against _____ Abstentions _____

Chairperson, General Education Advisory Committee

Date

Approval

Associate Vice-President for Undergraduate Studies and Curriculum

Date