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# CAPITAL AND CAPTIVITY: AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE U.S. ECONOMY

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## INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

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The spring semester of 2020 finished completely online, and my university, known for its focus on in-person instruction and a strong student to faculty ratio, succeeded in a forced pedagogical shift due to COVID-19. Additionally, the university made a unique decision to offer online summer courses and I would teach one: *Capital and Captivity: African Americans and the U.S. Economy*. After teaching online for the first time, I learned new ways to teach, to assess students, and to build class community. Due to our school's small population and location many students are unable to access the few in-person courses we offer each summer. COVID-19 altered the landscape of accessibility. I saw this new landscape as an opportunity. I am often the first educator to provide learners with an informed lens about what it means to be Black in America. I knew online teaching could expand that reach in an especially important, complex, and historical time. I share this syllabus and my journey with this course to support other faculty who desire to be responsive when the climate changes for us, our students, our institutions, and our nation. Additionally, I share this for folks in traditional disciplines who are not quite sure how to integrate race into their content, by showcasing that race shows up everywhere.

The year 2020 had been one landscaped with two pandemics, COVID-19 and the pandemic of state sanctioned violence against Black Americans. The violence against Black Americans was not new. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement was also not new. Due to COVID-19, everyone slowed down, making the violence against Black people more visible. Books about institutionalized racism, about being anti-racist, about white privilege, and white fragility were being heavily read by the U.S. majority—white America. I too was getting requests to speak about these issues. During the largest social justice movement in U.S. history, would students be interested in online engagement surrounding these issues as well?

Black Studies is interdisciplinary and analyzes all aspects of African American life through various angles. The economics section I teach in my *Introduction to African American Studies* course captures the attention of my students in a unique way. Students were suddenly aware of the U.S. structures in place that hindered African Americans from economic growth. They began to visualize how institutionalized racism works. Such awareness begins with recognizing the almost 250 years of enslavement and uncompensated labor forced on African Americans, and it heightens when students learn about African American exclusion from growing wealth in the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to redlining in homeownership (the prime source of wealth for most Americans). The story of America is the idea of working hard and gaining wealth in return—the American Dream. This is not the story for the majority of African Americans.

African Americans were captives in building the U.S. economy, and later would find themselves excluded from its potential. They were captive in consistent attempts at mobility with continual denials, once again

holding them captive to a system they helped create. I taught the upper-level elective *Capital and Captivity* for a six-week online course, with eight students. The pedagogy of this course allowed for the dialogue I anticipated students were looking for during the two pandemics—deep extended conversation surrounding race and how it shows up in our everyday. I revamped this old course to create an extension of my brief economics section from my introductory course. The course met for two hours four days a week. I organized the course to have three synchronous days of instruction a week and one day of asynchronous content. I built the course intentionally for online learning in a time of uncertainty for many. I considered how the required readings, media, assignments, and expected engagement, would need to center a new format of learning for not only my students but also myself as the educator. Most importantly, I wanted to ensure that students could connect what we were learning to their lives, and to their current COVID-19 and BLM experiences. I wanted to take an unanticipated angle on a course focused on economics, thus I centered course sections around topics of oppression that had an economic aspect to it often unrecognized. A major goal of all African American Studies (AFAM) courses is to provide students with the space and the tools to critically engage the information they are being exposed to—during the first week, students shared that they desired to see beyond the surface of current racial issues, and this was why they took the course. I structured the course with this objective in mind. As you will see in the course schedule, I began with the international slave trade. We discussed what they knew, or thought they knew about this massive industry of oppression. What all of my students did not anticipate learning was that the initial enslavement of Africans was not based on racist ideologies, but on economic goals. They learned that racism was socially constructed as a tool and justification to continue to enslave Africans and later to deny rights to their descendants. Racism is a product of the creation of capitalism and the necessity to keep it.

I was strategic in texts and media selections. I ensured that there were electronic versions of the required readings, and that the articles being used were on websites that students would have free access to. My goal pedagogically was to ensure students could easily find the required and suggested course content. Throughout my syllabus I put direct links to online articles, both under course materials, and within the schedule where the readings were due. On our digital class platform Canvas, I organized content with two main modules, 1. Readings and 2. Media/Films/Videos. I listed the items in the same order as they were to be used in class. Additionally, I provided a module for non-AFAM students with resources on common concepts and terminology. I chose to have numerous scholarly books for the course, but I required only one or two chapters from each. These chapters, which constitute less than 10 percent of the full text, were made available in pdf format on Canvas. Students received a glimpse into the writing style, the focus, and insights of these texts, prior to selecting one text to read in full and to write a review of as a primary assignment. The students enrolled in the class were from across the curriculum thus, their ability to self-select which books to engage fully with allowed them to choose a topic area close to their own interest. In some cases, it covered their primary academic focus. The goal of this course was to open students' eyes to how the issues of race and class, in a capitalist society appears across disciplines, including their own.

I structured the course into six sections based on the six-week summer schedule. I divided the sections and weeks into two content areas, with all readings being due for the week. I also purposefully did not have any assignments due during the week, but on the Sunday before the section began. This was a new type of learning for them and a new type of teaching for me. However, I did structure this course in a manner that would allow me to easily alter it for a traditional semester of in-person instruction. The access to the content on a digital platform would make the in-person course even more accessible for those with potential economic hardship. There were 4 major assignments in this course. Two assignments happened weekly to allow for me to assess individual student engagement with the content, and to assess what they may not be understanding in the course. Prior to the week's start, students had to complete discussion

posts and responses to their peers on Canvas. This technique ensures that students have content to share during course discussions. At the end of the content week students wrote a reflection on what they learned from class discussions, additional insights, and how the week impacted them. This reflection assignment was one of the most impactful for me as the professor, it allowed for me to see deeper into my students, especially considering we were not in person. I gave extensive feedback on the reflections, sharing my insights on any questions they posed, and sharing my appreciation for their vulnerability. The main requirements in assessing both assignments were for them to be complete and on time. In a fast-paced course, such weekly assignments were imperative.

One of the two major assignments was a Timeline Project, which allowed students to be creative in how they connected race to economics, with the goal of showcasing how it was institutionalized within the U.S. Here are a few examples of student presentations: *Commercializing Black Queer Culture; Jazz: Steeped in Economic Oppression and Perseverance*; and *The History of Discrimination in US Housing Policy and Land Ownership*. This project was the most informative to assessing students' understandings of how economics is integrated into institutionalized racism within the U.S. They had to showcase key aspects on their timeline and their impacts on the economic status of Black Americans. And in presenting they had to draw the connections between all key aspects in a conversational way, understandable to anyone. The book review assignment also proved to be insightful for the students, as many reflected that they had never written a book review in college. It was a simple way to engage them more deeply with how the economy impacts race and their chosen area of focus. Lastly, in assessment students had to speak every single class session. I reiterated that without discussion in a learning environment, discussion about race and inequity in their everyday worlds would not become easier. I told them to lean into the space, a space with very few students, which meant there was a unique engagement possibility that they often do not get the chance to experience. The students spoke regularly and were confident in being honest about what they did not know nor expect. The most impactful aspect of this course was learning that my white students were using the course content, and the tools they were gaining, to speak with their family members about BLM. They were having hard conversations outside of the classroom, during a time of two pandemics, and they were being listened to. The goal of being conversant in conversations about race was met.

Considering that this course was the first AFAM course for all students but two, I knew that it was especially important to start from the basics, but I also knew that perhaps this would be their only AFAM course. On the first day of class I was intentional to remind students to avoid jargon, to ensure that everyone would be able to understand what was being shared. Throughout the course, I took it upon myself to pause discussion if a term came up that I knew we all would benefit from defining. It has been my experience in teaching social justice novices that even when they are *confidently* using such jargon, they themselves are not completely aware of the meaning.

Yet on the other hand, if this course were to be mostly AFAM majors, the structure of the class would remain the same, but my expectations would not. When students are positioned well in the AFAM curriculum, the class discussions should delve deeper, and their individual work should be on a level in which my commentary is pushing them to find new critical angles and creativity. In class, I would not need to speak as much nor guide as much. In my experience teaching required upper-level AFAM courses, students guide the conversation, utilizing the assigned content and foundational knowledge but also the pedagogical tools gained in their other AFAM courses. However, even with AFAM majors, I would still require them to be explicit in any jargon they are using because as they continue to learn, having to share exactly what they mean, is the best way to ensure full understanding. I would not be the one to define the term as we pause, rather the students would revisit their own understandings of the term. As with

any course, assessing the students in the room is essential to pedagogical adjustment for reaching desired outcomes.

The most complex aspect to this course as a professor, was continuing to recenter conversations around how economics is present and a major part of the issues we were discussing. Students continually focused on current events and personal experiences, and consistently we had to reconnect to our resources, and draw the lines of how the past informs their present. I began utilizing PowerPoints to ensure we covered all the essential content and reconnected back to the theme of capital and captivity. At the end of each class, I reviewed where we saw economics appear in our discussions, and how there was no disconnect, but simultaneous systems of impact. Reiterating that when we discuss race, we cannot discuss it without discussing economics, and politics, and gender, and so on. Unfortunately, there was so much I wanted to cover, and the students too, but not enough time. In adjusting the course for the future, I have removed one book that I found to be too complex for my students to understand at their level. The text was near the end of the course and I have now replaced it with online articles instead. I have also saved several timeline presentations as examples for students to gain insight on how best to showcase institutionalized economic racism.

## **COURSE SYLLABUS: AN AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES UPPER LEVEL ELECTIVE: CAPITAL AND CAPTIVITY: AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE U.S. ECONOMY**

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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This course is designed to be both an introduction and a deep dive into the interconnectedness of African Americans and Capitalism within the United States. Capitalist ideologies are continually at the foundation of the captivity (oppression) of African Americans. Emphasis is on the ways in which African Americans have financed the capitalist gains in this country, and the ways that capitalism in the U.S. has harmed African Americans. Capitalism feeds many of the industries that are the necessities of life—healthcare, education, job, and food security—are more accessible to some than all, and one's status within the U.S. economy is a major determinant. This inequity becomes very apparent during national emergencies. This course focuses on the economic intricacies within U.S. systems, and uses a social impacts approach to engage with the inequity of the U.S. economy. Major areas of economic oppression potentially to be covered include: The Slave Trade & U.S. Slavery, Mass Incarceration (free labor), Education (Student Loan Debt), Sports and Music (Black culture/White Ownership), Housing policies (Redlining/Blockbusting), Medical Industry (Health Advancements/Black Bodies), Drug Industry (Marijuana), Lottery (The Numbers), and Pandemics and Natural Disasters (Hurricane Katrina & Covid-19). Major course resources are excerpts from prominent texts, articles, and various media.

### **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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This course promotes critical engagement with the causes, realities, and consequences of U.S. Capitalism on African Americans by discussing the individual, institutional, cultural, and structural dynamics of the economic disparities, its power, and its privileges.

This course provides opportunities for students to engage in dialogue about issues of:

- Knowledge – what do you know about these issues, and how/why do you/do you not know it?

- Identity – what is your narrative in these issues, and not only your individual narrative but your ancestral narrative?
- Power – How does your identity relate to the power infused in capitalism? What are the ways that power is presented in the U.S. economy? Who has the power and who has access to it?

**CAPITAL AND CAPTIVITY STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ARE AIMED TO SATISFY THE LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE UNIVERSITY'S KNOW REQUIREMENT (KNOWLEDGE, IDENTITY, & POWER) AS EXPLAINED IN THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:**

This course is designed to analyze the complex economic and racial situation of the United States of America. The objective of the course is to study, through ethnic and race theories of positionality, the complexities of living in a capitalist nation. Primarily, the course will discuss historical and contemporary economically linked issues that aid in the oppression of Black people in the United States by studying the historical contexts that led to economic injustices and inequities. There are four major types of assignments for this course: 1) discussion posts 2) weekly reflection papers 3) a book review, and 4) an Institutional Economic Racism Timeline.

**COURSE PHILOSOPHY AND A CLIMATE OF MUTUAL RESPECT**

This class, which is an African American Studies class, has some distinctive features. As with other classes, students enroll for their own reasons, pursue their own objectives, and engage the course material with varying degrees of commitment and enthusiasm. However, unlike some other classes, the subject matter of Capital and Captivity might evoke strong emotions among students. Discussions about race, class, and gender, have always been challenging for U.S. audiences. Still, we will not be silenced by the difficulty of fruitfully discussing politically sensitive issues. Some may care more than others, some will be more knowledgeable than others, and some may be more committed to their perspectives than others.

Members of this class, which is a scholarly community, in interacting with one another will speak respectfully, listen thoughtfully, and engage critically in discussions on matters related to race. This class will foster free expression, critical investigation, and the open discussion of ideas. This means that all of us must help create and sustain an atmosphere of tolerance, civility, and respect for the viewpoints of others. Similarly, we must all learn how to probe, oppose, and disagree without resorting to tactics of intimidation, harassment, or personal attack. **No one is entitled to harass, belittle, or discriminate against another on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, gender, national origin, or any other status or identity.**

**CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE AND EXPECTATIONS:** Listed below are a few guidelines that will promote a positive learning environment for you, your colleagues, and your professor. This list is not comprehensive:

1. Students will use respectful language and respect the rights and opinions of others when speaking with one another and the professor. Students will not interrupt or talk over others.
2. Students will avoid disruptive behaviors in class (e.g., chronic tardiness, talking in class on unrelated topic(s), consuming food/drink in a *disruptive* manner, reading newspapers or other non-class related material, "packing up" before the end of class, having side conversations—the professor may ask you to share).
3. Students will accept feedback (including but not limited to) regarding conduct and academic performance in a mature manner consistent with professional standards.

4. Students will strive to integrate feedback and will consult with the instructor regarding ways in which feedback may be incorporated.

**RESPECT CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE CLASSROOM:** Course participants may reveal information about themselves that they would not want others outside of the class to know. If you share something you wish to keep confidential, please state so prior to sharing, and as the professor I will also ask the class to keep it confidential. But do realize it is not guaranteed.

**ATTENDANCE** is expected of all students but may not be taken officially on a daily basis. Participation is a major component to this course. Without it the content will not be fully processed and digested. Class attendance and participation are expected. If you miss more than 4 classes, the professor could ask you to drop the course due to inability to pass.

### **GRADING SCALE:**

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A: 90-100; B: 80-89; C: 70-79; D: 60-69; F: 0-59

### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

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All readings will be available digitally. These are books that we will read excerpts from, and you will need to select one for your final assignment. Texts with an \* are not eligible for book review.

Berry, V. T., Fleming-Rife, A., & Dayo, A. (2015). *Black Culture & Experience: Contemporary Issues*. New York: Peter Lang.

\* Conrad, C. A., Whitehead, J., Mason, P., & Stewart, a. J. (2005). *African Americans in the U.S. Economy*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Jack, A. A. (2019). *The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges Are Failing Disadvantaged Students*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

\* Kiuchi, Y. (2016). *Race Still Matters: The Reality of African American Lives and the Myth of the Post Racial Society*. Albany: State University of New York.

\* Kiuchi, Y. (2019). *Playing on an Uneven Field: Essays on Exclusion and Inclusion in Sports*. Jefferson: McFarland.

Owens, D. C. (2017). *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology*. Athens: University of Georgia.

Rhoden, W. C. (2006). *Forty Million Dollar Slaves: The Rise, Fall, and Redemption of the Black Athlete*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

Rothstein, R. (2017). *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation.

### **RECOMMENDED TEXTS:**

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Alexander, M. (2012). *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press.

Dyson, M. E. (2007). *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster*. New York: Basic Civitas.



- Katznelson, I. (2005). *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Norton.
- Taylor, K.-Y. (2019). *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership (Justice, Power, and Politics)*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Washington, H. A. (2006). *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*. New York: Harlem Moon

### **DIGITAL SOURCES: BOLDED ITEMS ARE REQUIRED.**

**READINGS ARE UPLOADED ON CANVAS OR YOU CAN PURCHASE A COURSE READER IN THE BOOKSTORE.**

#### **CORONAVIRUS:**

- **"America set up black communities to be harder hit by COVID-19 Experts hope the pandemic is 'a wake up call'"** <https://www.theverge.com/2020/4/8/21213974/african-americans-covid-19-coronavirus-race-disparities>
- **"White Paycheck Protection Program borrowers were treated better than Black borrowers, study says"** [https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/equality/507578-white-paycheck-protection-program-borrowers-were-treated?fbclid=IwAR1FGPXjUbBIU3SvzkLcU3BZekz6eGyDRr8cSIIYWgFLDM0IJWqa\\_5HbdUo](https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/equality/507578-white-paycheck-protection-program-borrowers-were-treated?fbclid=IwAR1FGPXjUbBIU3SvzkLcU3BZekz6eGyDRr8cSIIYWgFLDM0IJWqa_5HbdUo)
- "The Black Plague: Public officials lament the way that the coronavirus is engulfing black communities. The question is, what are they prepared to do about it?" <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/the-black-plague>
- "How to reduce the racial gap in COVID-19 deaths" <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2020/04/10/how-to-reduce-the-racial-gap-in-covid-19-deaths/>
- "It's not obesity, it's slavery: We know why Covid is killing so many black people." <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/25/opinion/coronavirus-race-obesity.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage&fbclid=IwAR2qhmcBqJku1hhRavHrwz7R2jy8bKZyJ5kF65hFZLjgYaYYwdoPoL7hsvY>
- "Coronavirus Devastates Black New Orleans: 'This Is Bigger Than Katrina'" <https://www.wsj.com/articles/coronavirus-is-a-medical-and-financial-disaster-for-blacks-in-new-orleans-11590226200?fbclid=IwAR0fbCaFqSRWxSywvmPLp7Lksv0BxISOVCxtjZMRxZtimhmITRWxN-WVxy4>

#### **LOTTERY & MARIJUANA:**

- **"Daughter Of A Numbers Runner Witnessed An Underground Economy In Action"** (NPR) <https://www.npr.org/2019/02/04/691241463/daughter-of-a-numbers-runner-witnessed-an-underground-economy-in-action>

- **"Adam Ruins Everything: The Sinister Reason Weed is Illegal"**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXPOw2unxy0&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR2rC\\_xyM49vT8bzVOiCk-n1AcyaxCiGUNrPiPgMFWZd-xGu\\_gicoCRPKA8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXPOw2unxy0&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR2rC_xyM49vT8bzVOiCk-n1AcyaxCiGUNrPiPgMFWZd-xGu_gicoCRPKA8)

#### PRISON PROFIT:

- **"Adam Ruins Everything: The Shocking Way Private Prisons Make Money"**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqQa\\_OgM6hg&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1SkEudzpSCYOIKAbNO4kAWQ9bvztp2gANoYjZt7zeHUNAx6Tm0axLZGUM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqQa_OgM6hg&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1SkEudzpSCYOIKAbNO4kAWQ9bvztp2gANoYjZt7zeHUNAx6Tm0axLZGUM)
- The Sentencing Project-online site <https://www.sentencingproject.org/issues/incarceration/>
- **"The Economic Impact of Prison Rehabilitation Programs"**  
<https://publicpolicy.wharton.upenn.edu/live/news/2059-the-economic-impact-of-prison-rehabilitation/for-students/blog/news.php>

#### SLAVERY:

- **"In order to understand the brutality of American capitalism, you have to start on the plantation."** <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/slavery-capitalism.html>
- **"How Slavery Became the Economic Engine of the South"**  
<https://www.history.com/news/slavery-profitable-southern-economy>

#### HURRICANE KATRINA:

- **"Katrina Hurt Blacks and Poor Victims Most"** <https://news.gallup.com/poll/19405/katrina-hurt-blacks-poor-victims-most.aspx>
- **"'Stark' racial divide in views on post-Katrina recovery, study finds"**  
<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/8/24/study-black-residents-of-new-orleans-more-critical-of-recovery.html>

#### STUDENT EXPLOITATION:

- **"All the ways student debt exacerbates racial inequality — 'it's like landing in quick sand'"**  
<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/all-the-ways-student-debt-is-exacerbating-racial-inequality-its-like-landing-in-quick-sand-one-black-student-says-2019-07-18>
- **"Nine Charts about Wealth Inequality in America"** (Updated)  
<https://apps.urban.org/features/wealth-inequality-charts/>
- **"College Sports Are Affirmative Action for Rich White Students"**  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2018/10/college-sports-benefits-white-students/573688/>

#### MEDICAL PROFIT:

- **"Book Review: The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot"** <https://bloom-obgyn.com/book-review-the-immortal-life-of-henrietta-lacks-by-rebecca-skloot/>
- **"Henrietta Lacks's family wants compensation for her cells"**  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/henrietta-lackss-family-wants-compensation-for-her-cells/2017/02/14/816481ba-f302-11e6-b9c9-e83fce42fb61\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/henrietta-lackss-family-wants-compensation-for-her-cells/2017/02/14/816481ba-f302-11e6-b9c9-e83fce42fb61_story.html)



- "Cornel West on Capitalism and Health pandemics"  
[https://www.democracynow.org/2020/6/1/cornel\\_west\\_us\\_moment\\_of\\_reckoning?autostart=true&fbclid=IwAR231Q8v1BCgkjR1ZyclIS\\_3p59y4kPz4zf8VZ84r02nmE62gUjDr\\_UICM](https://www.democracynow.org/2020/6/1/cornel_west_us_moment_of_reckoning?autostart=true&fbclid=IwAR231Q8v1BCgkjR1ZyclIS_3p59y4kPz4zf8VZ84r02nmE62gUjDr_UICM)

#### CAPITALISM:

- **"Capitalism Always Produces Racism"** [https://www.leftvoice.org/capitalism-always-produces-racism?fbclid=IwAR0OIOBztqN9quB87KESD19Qy-OpIC5cUx-pAUYA\\_6m8uvhVBdH-kYTYpQ4](https://www.leftvoice.org/capitalism-always-produces-racism?fbclid=IwAR0OIOBztqN9quB87KESD19Qy-OpIC5cUx-pAUYA_6m8uvhVBdH-kYTYpQ4)
- **"In order to understand the brutality of American capitalism, you have to start on the plantation."** <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/slavery-capitalism.html> Repeated under Slavery
- **"How the GI Bill's Promise Was Denied to a Million Black WWII Veterans"**  
[https://www.history.com/news/gi-bill-black-wwii-veterans-benefits?fbclid=IwAR0utBS0Xj\\_HwqMqaW9IQQT2kQLwbOclK1t5T14k7Dy7\\_oEKMDIXsyWlnqQ](https://www.history.com/news/gi-bill-black-wwii-veterans-benefits?fbclid=IwAR0utBS0Xj_HwqMqaW9IQQT2kQLwbOclK1t5T14k7Dy7_oEKMDIXsyWlnqQ)
- **"If American corporations are people, why aren't they taxed like people?"**  
<https://qz.com/87204/if-apple-and-other-american-corporations-are-people-why-arent-they-taxed-like-people/>

#### REPARATIONS

- **"A Call For Reparations: How America Might Narrow The Racial Wealth Gap"**  
<https://www.npr.org/2020/06/24/882773218/a-call-for-reparations-how-america-might-narrow-the-racial-wealth-gap>
- "An Historical Timeline of Reparations Payments Made From 1783 through 2020 by the United States Government, States, Cities, Religious Institutions, Colleges and Universities, and Corporations"  
<https://guides.library.umass.edu/reparations?fbclid=IwAR3I5QL5E58do49bzrwhVlrrpQyPZn5VI30khP6Yp40070M5AB1VZTEMV8g>
- "The United States owes Black America reparations"  
<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/united-states-owes-black-america-reparations/?fbclid=IwAR1ze0VfHAWCbC4GqmgJsCynvimW4hYMRLXw7cxzb1ufXBwelAjSWSWFxo>
- "What Reparations for Slavery Might Look Like in 2019"  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/23/business/economy/reparations-slavery.html>

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- "Explaining the Gender Wage Gap"  
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2014/05/19/90039/explaining-the-gender-wage-gap/>
- "The narrowing, but persistent, gender gap in pay" <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/03/22/gender-pay-gap-facts/>

## ASSIGNMENT GRADE DISTRIBUTION

<u>ASSIGNMENT TITLE</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENT POINTS</u>
Five Canvas Discussion Question Posts	20 points each Total = 100
Five weekly content Reflection Papers	50 points each Total = 250
Book Review	= 100
Timeline Project and Presentation: Institutionalized Racism Via [your chosen] Economic Medium	Timeline 100 points + Presentation 50 points = 150
Participation	= 100
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>= 700</b>

## ASSIGNMENTS & REQUIREMENTS:

### FIVE CANVAS DISCUSSION QUESTION POSTS:

20 points each. Total of 100 points. (10 points are for your questions and 10 points are for your answers) Throughout the semester you will go to Canvas and post questions and answers about the forthcoming week's readings and various media. You first must write your own set of two questions and then you are required to respond to/add on to at least two of your peers' questions. Your questions should inquire about the week's content in a way that leads to critical discussion. If you have questions about clarity of content, please as an upper-level student, do further research on your own, and please be sure to share links about it with the class. Feedback is to be respectful, as is all aspects of communication in this course. However, this is the course to push one another, to learn to have hard discussions and how to move through them. Discussion posts will be expected to be written on a time frame as a form of reading accountability and participation. It will also guide our extensive discussions.

**\*I graded these discussion posts based primarily on completeness and being turned in on time. Questions they posted must be ones that are open-ended and ones that would create discussion, not simply a yes or no, or easily direct answer. After the first week of posts, I reached out to any students who perhaps were not responding in the manner expected, and I gave them tips for their future posts. If students did not adjust their posts based on my feedback, then I would take points away for those aspects and would state this in my feedback. I also asked students to share on Mondays aspects of their Canvas posts that were especially impactful. This was a great tool to get the week going in the new content area. I too would reflect on my own insights from reading their posts.**

### FIVE WEEKLY CONTENT REFLECTION PAPERS:

50 Points each. Total of 250 Points. In these short papers, at least 2 pages double spaced, to be uploaded to Canvas, you will reflect on the content covered in class the preceding week. In these papers please respond to: 1. What did you not anticipate in the texts and media you read and watched prior to class this week? 2. What has been an impactful area of discussion for you and why? 3. Where are you in this week's content? These are reflective which means you should share your voice in them. Be sure to go back to the positionality<sup>1</sup> work we did at the beginning of the course and select aspects of your positionality to reflect

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<sup>1</sup> In the first week of class I led an activity in which students had to assess and understand their own positionality to the content we were engaging with. This is especially important as there were no Black students in the class, and only one student of color. Most students also had not taken a course with a Black professor before, and I have

upon in the week's content. This is really the space for you to share with the professor what you further want to discuss. DO NOT REPEAT WHAT WE SAID IN CLASS. This is not a description of the week rather; it is further engagement.

**\*I graded these papers based on whether students responded clearly to the three areas requested. This assignment gave me the most insight into how my students were engaging with the content and how I could adjust my pedagogy if needed. I responded to any questions they posed, and I also shared any resources that I believed they would appreciate for further individual research. Most students did well with this, however I did have to work with one student regarding their positionality in their approach to the course, the content, and their engagement with their peers.**

### BOOK REVIEW:

100 Points. Your major written assignment in this course involves reading one of the books that we have read excerpts from (see list under required texts). You must read this text on your own time, and you must have it approved by me (this is to avoid extensive overlap). This book review should be between 5 to 7 pages double spaced. The goal of this review is to analyze what is strong about the book and/or is lacking, in discussing how capitalism/U.S. economy is connected to African American oppression. Does the book allow for readers, and at what level of a reader (meaning academic abilities, not reading level), to gain insight into how African Americans are harmed by it? You should use direct citations from the book to support your discussion. I will give you an additional set of questions, and thus a template to work from. Due During Exam Period. Upload to Canvas.

**\* I handed out a detailed assignment prompt for students. There were 3 sections: I: 30 points- Title; Information about the book (copyright); Abstract/Summary of the text; Connection to the course. II: 50 points- Major themes and arguments; Evaluation (did the book do what it was supposed to do?). III: 20 points- Which chapters are most impactful to content of the course?; Would you recommend this book and to whom? I graded based on fulfilling these requirements, clarity in writing, and organization.**

**Resource:**

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/common\\_writing\\_assignments/book\\_reviews.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/common_writing_assignments/book_reviews.html)

### TIMELINE PROJECT AND PRESENTATION: INSTITUTIONALIZED RACISM VIA [YOUR CHOSEN] ECONOMIC MEDIUM

The timeline itself is 100 points. Your presentation is 50 Points. You will create a timeline in PowerPoint format, of instances throughout time related to one aspect of the economy. We will cover various themes in our analyses and critical dialogue about how capitalism has influenced the oppression of African Americans. You will pick one of those themes and using a timeline, showcase how over centuries that economic institution has perpetually harmed African Americans. Obviously, you cannot select every single incident, so you must pick and choose those that you see are important to note, and your presentation will justify your selection. (Perhaps it is the type of audience you are making the timeline for that influences your selections.) The strongest way to teach and prove institutionalized racism is to have years of evidence that showcases it. Your presentation will be no longer than 10 minutes, and the class will ask

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learned it is imperative to have open discussion about who is in the room and from where they look. This activity is based on the Power Flower Activity developed by Educating for a Change by Rick Arnold, Bev Burke, Carl James, D'Arcy Martin, and Barb Thomas (Toronto: Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Action and Between the Lines Press, 1991). To find this resource you can go here:

<https://www.mightypurpose.me/uploads/1/0/1/2/10123067/flowerpowerexercise.pdf>

questions to follow up on your engagement with the content and your strength in understanding it. Please be creative in your PowerPoint. Timelines can show up in various ways. Due the last week of class.

**\*In grading the timeline, I looked for whether: 1. theme was clear, 2. they were direct in connecting the economics component to their theme, 3. what they highlighted as important, was clearly stated and connected back to their theme and goal. Their presentation was especially important, as they had to prove that they could converse about their theme and the connection to economics clearly and concisely to anyone. If I felt that they had missed an aspect I followed up with questions. I also made sure at the end of each presentation their peers shared affirmations.**

**PARTICIPATION:**

100 Points. This is essential to your growth and what you will gain from this course. Silence is not an option. You need to speak each class period. Your question posts and answer posts give you pre-prepared conversation starters. If you are not participating, I will contact you to discuss how to encourage participation. You have signed up for a course about race and identity, all discussions will be about this, and you must participate.

**COURSE SCHEDULE: WE WILL HAVE 3 SYNCHRONOUS CLASSES A WEEK. FRIDAY CLASSES ARE ASYNCHRONOUS.**

*Readings are due the week they are located under.*

<u>COURSE SECTION</u>	<u>CONTENT FOCUS</u>	<u>READINGS &amp; MEDIA &amp; ASSIGNMENTS DUE:</u>
<u>SECTION 1:</u> <b>Week 1</b>	Introduction to Course Basics about U.S. Economy & African Americans	Introduction to Course. Why did you take this course? Review Syllabus <b>Readings:</b> <i>Race Still Matters</i>   Chapter 6 Online: How the U.S. Economy Works <a href="https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/oecon/chap2.htm">https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/oecon/chap2.htm</a>
	Slave Trade & U.S. Slavery and Capitalist Foundations	<u>PowerPoint</u> presentation covering an extensive history of the international slave trade with emphasis on the U.S. <u>Discussion</u> <b>Readings:</b> <i>African Americans in U.S. Economy</i>   Chapters 2 & 3 Online: "In order to understand the brutality of American capitalism, you have to start on the plantation." <a href="#">Link</a>

<p><u>SECTION 2:</u> <b>Week 2</b></p>	<p>Mass Incarceration and Mass Profit: U.S. Prisons are filled with Black People</p>	<p><b>Due Sunday Before:</b> <b>#1 Canvas Question Post Due</b></p> <p>Power Flower Activity assessing our positionalities within the U.S. <u>PowerPoint</u> presentation reviewing the prison system and where race fits in. <u>Discussion</u> <b>Readings:</b> Finish any readings leftover from last week. <b>Viewings:</b> Film: <i>13<sup>th</sup></i> [On Netflix or YouTube] YouTube Video: Adam Ruins Everything- Prisons [Link on Canvas]</p>
	<p>Criminalizing/De-criminalizing Black Ideas: When Marijuana became White and other Drugs</p> <p>&amp; From the Numbers to the State Lottery</p>	<p><b>Book Selection Due for Book Review</b></p> <p><u>PowerPoint</u> presentation covering the breakdown of infractions, misdemeanors, and felonies, and what penalties are attached. <u>Discussion</u> <b>Readings/Podcast:</b> Online: "Daughter of a Numbers Runner": NPR Podcast on Detroit Numbers <u>Link</u> <b>Viewings:</b> Film: <i>Freeway: Crack in the System</i> [Stream on Canvas] YouTube Video: Adam Ruins Everything- Marijuana [Link on Canvas]</p>
<p><u>SECTION 3:</u> <b>Week 3</b></p>	<p>Black Bodies/White Ownership: African Americans in Sports</p>	<p><b>Due Sunday Before:</b> <b>#2 Canvas Question Post Due</b> <b>Section 2 Weekly Content Reflection Due</b></p> <p><u>PowerPoint</u> presentation covering main points of readings, with additional real-world examples, and commentary. <u>Discussion</u> <b>Readings:</b> <i>40 Million Dollar Slaves</i>   Chapter 4 <i>Playing on an Uneven Field</i>   Chapter 7 <b>Viewings:</b> Film: <i>30 for 30: The Fab Five</i> [Stream on Canvas]</p>
	<p>Black Culture/White Ownership: African American Music, Theft, &amp; Cultural Appropriation</p>	<p>Discuss Timeline Project <u>PowerPoint</u> presentation covering cultural appropriation vs. appreciation, with economic analysis of current issues. <u>Discussion</u> <b>Viewings:</b> Film: <i>Bleaching Black Culture</i> [Stream on Canvas]</p>

<p><u>SECTION 4:</u> <b>Week 4</b></p>	<p>U.S. Policies are not for everyone: Housing &amp; Home Ownership</p>	<p><b>Due Sunday Before:</b> <b>#3 Canvas Question Post due</b> <b>Section 3 Weekly Content Reflection Due</b></p> <p><u>PowerPoint</u> presentation covering history of housing policies that harmed people of color <u>Discussion</u> <b>Readings:</b> <i>The Color of Law</i>   Chapter 3 "The Roots of the Widening Racial Wealth Gap: Explaining the Black-White Economic Divide" [PDF Uploaded to Canvas] <b>Viewings:</b> Film: <i>The Power of Illusion: The House We Live In</i> [Link on Canvas]</p>
	<p>The U.S. Meritocracy Myth: Education &amp; Wealth</p>	<p>Discuss Book Review Requirements <u>PowerPoint</u> presentation covering student loan debt analysis by race and educational attainment. <u>Discussion</u> <b>Readings:</b> <i>The Privileged Poor</i>   Introduction <i>Black Culture &amp; Experience</i>   Chapter 5 Online: "All the ways student debt exacerbates racial inequality — 'it's like landing in quick sand'" <a href="#">Link</a></p>
<p><u>SECTION 5:</u> <b>Week 5</b></p>	<p>Medical Advancements via Black Bodies: The Tuskegee Experiment and The Story of Henrietta Lacks</p>	<p><b>Due Sunday Before:</b> <b>#4 Canvas Question Post due</b> <b>Section 4 Weekly Content Reflection Due</b></p> <p><u>PowerPoint</u> presentation covering historical information about the Tuskegee experiment and Henrietta Lacks <u>Discussion</u> <b>Readings:</b> Online: "Henrietta Lacks's family wants compensation for her cells" <a href="#">Link</a> Online: "Book Review: The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot" <a href="#">Link</a> <b>Viewings:</b> Film: <i>Something the Lord Made</i> [Stream on Canvas]</p>
	<p>The White Father of Gynecology and the Black Enslaved Woman's body</p>	<p><u>PowerPoint</u> presentation covering historical information about gynecology during slavery and Black women's bodies as profit. <u>Discussion</u> <b>Readings:</b> <i>Medical Bondage</i>   Chapter 1</p>

<p><u>SECTION 6:</u> <b>Week 6</b></p>	<p>State of Emergency: Leaving behind African Americans</p> <p>From Hurricane Katrina to Covid-19</p>	<p><b>Due Sunday Before:</b> <b>#5 Canvas Question Post due</b> <b>Section 5 Weekly Content Reflection Due</b></p> <p><u>Discussion</u> <b>Readings:</b> <u>Articles about Hurricane Katrina</u> Online: "Katrina Hurt Blacks and Poor Victims Most" <a href="#">Link</a> Online: "'Stark' racial divide in views on post-Katrina recovery, study finds" <a href="#">Link</a> <u>Articles about Covid-19</u> Online: "White Paycheck Protection Program borrowers were treated better than Black borrowers, study says" <a href="#">Link</a> Online: "America set up black communities to be harder hit by COVID-19 Experts hope the pandemic is 'a wake up call'" <a href="#">Link</a> <b>Viewings:</b> Film: <i>When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts</i>   Episode 1 [Stream on Canvas]</p>
	<p>It's all Connected: Institutionalized Racism via the U.S. Economy/A Call for Reparations</p>	<p><b>Due: Timeline Presentations</b></p> <p><u>Final Discussions</u> <b>Readings/Podcast:</b> Online: "A Call For Reparations: How America Might Narrow The Racial Wealth Gap" <a href="#">Link</a> Online: "Capitalism Always Produces Racism" <a href="#">Link</a></p>
<p><u>EXAM PERIOD</u></p>	<p>Exam period</p>	<p><b>Due: Book Review</b> [Upload to Canvas]</p>