

HAROLD WASHINGTON COLLEGE

PROF. DONYEL HOBBS WILLIAMS
STUDIES 101

AFRICAN AMERICAN

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Survey of African American Studies from an interdisciplinary perspective. Writing assignments, as appropriate to the discipline, are part of the course.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a multi-disciplinary course that introduces students to and facilitates an exploration of the social, political and economic culture of American people of African descent. The course incorporates lectures, discussions, and audio-visuals to help students gain an understanding of the processes and dynamics that impact the lives of Black Americans.

STUDENTS FOR WHOM THIS COURSE IS INTENDED

Students who need to satisfy their:

- General Education Requirements and ascertain transferability of courses to Baccalaureate study.
- IAI Human Diversity Requirement. (All students must take at least one course that explores human diversity within the United States or from non-Western perspective. This course may satisfy a general education, concentration, or an elective requirement.)

MODULE* INTRODUCTION and RATIONALE

Although the term colorism was coined by Alice Walker in 1983, the practice of favoring complexions within racial/ethnic groups—usually light complexions over dark complexions—dates back to the era of enslavement and beyond. The purpose of this module is to explore the complexities of the concept of skin color within groups, specifically within African diasporic groups in the United States and Brazil.

**The resources used for this module are subjective. Educators may integrate their own sources.*

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOs)

After completion of this module, students will be able to:

1. contextualize colorism in the U.S. and Brazil utilizing:
 - a. discussion {*examples of guiding questions listed below*}
 - b. comparison and contrast
 - c. investigation
 - d. differentiation (between colorism and racism)
2. complete, including evaluating sources, a research-based Scavenger Hunt assignment. (*included below*)
3. design/create a study guide from a peer-reviewed journal article. (*assignment and rubric included below*)

Throughout the module, a discussion of colorism may be facilitated by selecting questions from the list below, as they relate to the topic of discussion.

1. Who coined the term “colorism” and when?
 2. What is the history of colorism? When was colorism first acknowledged?
 3. When was colorism first studied?
 4. What is the history of colorism in the US and Brazil?
 5. What’s the difference between racism and colorism?
 6. What’s the difference between intraracial colorism and interracial colorism?
 7. What are some examples of colorism in the U. S.? in Brazil?
 8. What are some common myths about colorism?
 9. Where does colorism exist?
 10. Where does colorism come from?
 11. Why does colorism exist?
 12. Why does colorism exist in the US and Brazil?
 13. Why do some people not want to talk about colorism?
 14. Why do some people insist that colorism does not exist?
 15. Why do some people have negative attitudes about dark skin?
 16. Why do some people have negative attitudes about light skin?
 17. Why is colorism important?
 18. How do you define colorism?
 19. How do other physical characteristics besides skin color play a role in colorism?
 20. How much research has been done on colorism?
 21. How might colorism be different in more racially diverse places versus more racially homogenous places?
 22. How do people benefit from colorism?
 23. How do white people view or understand colorism?
 24. How do people view or understand colorism within their own race?
 25. How do people view or understand colorism within other races?
 26. How does colorism affect people around the world?
 27. Is colorism just about skin color?
 28. Is colorism more prevalent in some places than others?
 29. Is there such a thing as light skin privilege? dark skin privilege?
- Questions about Colorism and Media:**
34. What role does traditional media, as well as social media play in perpetuating colorism?
 35. What are some examples of colorism in traditional media and in social media?
 36. What role does colorism play in the entertainment industry, the sports industry and/or the beauty and fashion industries?
 37. How can we use traditional media as well as social media to help end colorism?
 38. How does colorism manifest in predominantly white media?

39. How does colorism manifest in media predominated by people of color?

Questions about Colorism and Economics, Education, Law, Politics, Religion, & Society

40. What role does colorism play in education and schooling, religion or churches, politics, the judicial system as well as employment and career opportunities?

41. How does colorism impact socioeconomic status, income and wealth?

42. How do class, wealth, and socioeconomic status impact colorism?

43. How does colorism impact immigration policies, as well as immigration experiences?

44. How can education and schooling, religion and churches, the political arena, the judicial system and employers in the workplace counteract or prevent colorism?

Questions about Colorism and Family, Friendship, Marriage, & Dating

45. What role does colorism play in dating and marriage?

46. What's the difference between colorism and preference?

47. How does colorism influence or impact friendships?

48. How can we develop and sustain friendships across the color spectrum?

49. How does colorism affect families?

50. How do parents perpetuate colorism?

51. How can parents counteract colorism?

52. How are children affected by colorism?

53. How can children counteract colorism?

54. How does age affect experiences with colorism?

55. How does extended family perpetuate colorism?

56. How can extended family counteract colorism?

57. How can we teach children/how can children learn about colorism?

58. How can we help break the generational cycle of colorism?

Questions about Colorism and Gender

59. How does gender intersect with colorism?

60. How does colorism affect dark skinned women? dark skinned men?

61. How does colorism affect light/fair skinned women? light/fair skinned men?

62. How does sexuality intersect with colorism?

63. How do boys and girls experience colorism differently?

64. How do men and women experience colorism differently?

Personal Questions about Colorism

65. Who can I/you talk to about colorism?

66. What are/were some of my/your experiences with colorism?

67. Do I/you/we have negative attitudes about dark skinned people? about light skinned people?

68. Do I/you/we have positive attitudes about dark skinned people? about light skinned people?
69. How does colorism affect me? you?
70. How do I/you feel about my own skin color?
71. How can individuals heal from colorism?

Questions about Healing & Solutions to Colorism

72. Who's responsible for colorism healing?
73. Who's responsible for breaking the cycle of colorism?
74. What does it take to end colorism?
75. What are some possible solutions to colorism?
76. What can I do on a personal level to help end colorism?
77. What can we do on a communal level to help end colorism?
78. What work has already been done to help end colorism?
79. What work is currently being done to help end colorism?
80. How can we learn to love and appreciate our own skin, hair, and features while also loving or appreciating others?
81. Have I addressed my own biases and issues with colorism so that I do not perpetuate colorism among others in the world?
82. Does colorism get easier to deal with as we age?
83. Will colorism ever end?

MODULE AGENDA

WEEK 1

DAY 1

DISCUSSION: Introduction to colorism

Guiding question: What is colorism?

Following a discussion of students' responses, students will view the 2011 documentary *Dark Girls* (71 min). Students are required to take notes. Students' notes correspond to the following activity that will serve as the context for the subsequent discussion:

You have viewed the 2011 documentary *Dark Girls*, which explores the concept of colorism—prejudice or discrimination based on the relative lightness or darkness of skin; generally a phenomenon occurring within one's own group—specifically, in the Black community.

As part of a civic engagement project, you have been selected to deliver a presentation about colorism at your neighborhood high school.

Based on the film, list five (5) concepts to discuss. Responses must consist of clear and concise sentences.

DAY 2

DISCUSSION: *Dark Girls*

Points for discussion:

Students' responses: Based on the film, list five (5) concepts to discuss.

Points for discussion:

1. Rape of enslaved women by white men
2. structural racism: policy & practices that perpetuate colorism
3. stratification/stratified by complexion
4. allocated status based on 64 distinctions in skin color
5. paper bag test: skin light than a paper bag is preferential
6. snow & blow: skin white as snow; hair blows in the wind (credibility, reliability allocated based on skin color)
7. history of colonization
8. colonizer superiority
9. internalized colorism
10. colorism as a politically & sociologically determined phenomenon; not inherent in human psyche
11. essence of slave mentality; disparaging dark-skinned women
12. Black/dark-complexioned women least coupled group
13. global internalized racism
14. broader worldwide view; white supremacist framework
15. whiteness valued around the world
16. exploitation of American images into other countries
17. Countries highlighted: Cuba, Dominican Republic, Panama, Ethiopia (East Africa), Korea, Thailand, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Gambia, Ghana, South Africa

HOMEWORK: Read and annotate ...

{*I chose the articles “Brazil’s Colour Bind” and “Colorism: A Sad Reality Makes Dark-Skinned Blacks Less Accepted While Light-Skinned Blacks Have “Less Difficulty” being able to Blend into White Environments”—written from a personal perspective—to introduce students to colorism in Brazil. *Educators may select similar resources for this purpose.*}

Nolen, S. (2015, July 31). Brazil’s colour bind. The Globe and Mail.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/brazils-colour-bind/article25779474/>

Travae, M. & Eiras, N. (2018, December 19). Colorism: A sad reality makes dark-skinned blacks less accepted while light-skinned blacks have “less difficulty” being able to blend into white environments. Black Brazil Today.

<https://blackbraziltoday.com/colorism-a-sad-reality-makes-dark-skinned-blacks/>

WEEK 2

Day 1: Introduction to colorism in Brazil

DISCUSSION:

- “Brazil’s colour bind”
- “Colorism: A sad reality makes dark-skinned blacks less accepted while light-skinned blacks have “less difficulty” being able to blend into white environments”

Day 2: Colorism in Brazil

DISCUSSION: “136 variations of Brazilian skin colors”

When Brazilians were given a chance to describe their skin color, they came up with 136 shades and variations. The survey was conducted in 1976 by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, and was published again in a 2011.

Students will be provided the list of the 136 terms for the basis of the discussion below:

1. What does this list say about Brazilians and the way they see themselves?
2. “Black” and “White” are not included in the survey responses. What might be an explanation for this?
3. What is effective about this list?
4. What is problematic about this list?
5. Given a choice, how would you describe your skin color?
6. Would you prefer to use/list/identify as this color permanently?

HOMEWORK & ASSESSMENT

COLORISM SCAVENGER HUNT: The purpose of this assignment is to enhance students’ research skills. Internet scavenger hunts serve as tool to hone students’ Web searching ability and problem solving. Scavenger hunts can be an evaluative activity when students have to find information of a specific type or value. The lesson involves providing students with a goal and then having them search the Internet to fulfill that goal. The items required for the scavenger hunt prompt students to search a variety of sources, including journal articles, movies, documentaries, general internet searches, etc. The link/web address or *url* for each source must be included.

COLORISM SCAVENGER HUNT

1. What is colorstruck? {*Do not list information related to the short story “Colorstruck” by Zora Neale Hurston*}
2. What is pigmentocracy?
3. What is the *Clark Doll Experiment*? (Your answer should consist of three to five (3-5) sentences.
4. In the U.S. the *paper bag test* and concepts such as “*snow & blow*” were used to determine an individual’s status in society? Locate one or two similar concept(s) in Brazilian society.

5. Complete the following information regarding an American-based documentary on colorism:
 - a. When was it produced?
 - b. What is the documentary about?
6. Complete the following information regarding a Brazilian-based documentary on colorism
 - a. When was it produced?
 - b. What is the documentary about?
7. Locate a movie* that examines colorism in the Black community. Your response should include:
 - a. Title and year
 - b. Producer
 - c. Main cast
 - d. Synopsis

****Response must be a movie; a documentary or other film is not acceptable.***

8. Provide six (6) examples of claims of colorism bias relating to celebrities (these people can be sports figures, entertainers, etc.) in the US and Brazil—*three each*. (For this section, you must include the a) person's name, b) the claim/controversy, and c) the source.
9. Provide a separate link to and a separate three to four (3-4) sentence summary of two (2) sources that exemplify colorism in communities/ethnicities other than the Black communities in the US and Brazil.
10. What is the estimated global sales of skin lightening products in today's economy? (Source must be included)
11. Provide the complete publication information (author, publication year, title of the article, name of the journal, volume and issue numbers, pagination) and abstract for the following journal article:
[doi: 10.1080/01419870.2013.788200](https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2013.788200)
12. Locate two (2) scholarly articles that discuss colorism in any two (2) of the following areas: education, health care, criminal justice/law enforcement, school discipline, income. (Include the author, publication year (between 2010-2022), title of the article, name of the journal, volume and issue numbers, pagination, the doi if available, along with the **abstract** for each article.
13. Provide the publication information (year of publication, title, publisher) for Elizabeth Hordge Freedman's book about colorism in Brazil.
14. Locate two book reviews published in scholarly journals about Elizabeth Hordge Freedman's book. Provide the year of publication, name of the journal, volume and issue numbers, and pagination; include the doi if available.

15. *Colorism is tied to racism.** What does this mean?

**Note to educators: the final item is subjective; however this item is required as it serves as a foundation for future discussions, particularly, outgroup colorism and colorism in the media that is tied to racism.*

WEEK 3

Day 1

DISCUSSION: Scavenger Hunt review

Day 2

DISCUSSION: The impact of outgroup colorism {PowerPoint}

This presentation is a synthesis of the following sources:*

- Desmond-Harris, J. (2015). Study: Lighter-Skinned Black and Hispanic people look smarter to white people/white colorism. *Social Currents*, 2(1). pp. 13-21. doi: [10.1177/2329496514558628](https://doi.org/10.1177/2329496514558628)
- Dhillon-Jamerson, K. K. (2019). Euro-Americans favoring people of color: Covert racism and economies of white colorism. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 62(14). pp. 2087–2100. doi: [10.1177/0002764218810754](https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764218810754)
- Hannon, L. Keith, V.M., DeFina, R.H., & Campbell, M.E. (2020). Do white people see variation in black skin tones? Reexamining a purported outgroup homogeneity effect. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 84(1). doi: [10.1177/0190272520961408](https://doi.org/10.1177/0190272520961408)
- Hannon, L. (2015). White colorism. *Social Currents*, 2(1). 13-21. doi: [10.1177/2329496514558628](https://doi.org/10.1177/2329496514558628)

**Educators may select their own sources for this component.*

HOMEWORK & ASSESSMENT

STUDY GUIDE: A study guide is a teaching aid to be used by the student to assist the student in developing reading skills for the purpose of enhancing comprehension of textual material. The guide represents a plan or strategy to be followed by the learner to enhance comprehension. **Assignment:** Create a study guide for the following journal article:

- Monk, E. P. (2016). The consequences of "race and color" in Brazil. *Social Problems*, 63(3), 413-430. doi:[10.1093/socpro/spw014](https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spw014)

Your study guide must include:

- vocabulary/definitions.
- text-based discussion questions.
- open-ended/subjective and textual analysis (discussion) questions.

The attached rubric will be used to assess your study guide.

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PROF. DONYEL HOBBS WILLIAMS		STUDY GUIDE RUBRIC			AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES 101
CATEGORY	10 PTS.	5 PTS.	0 PTS.	STUDENT PTS.	
HEADING: <input type="checkbox"/> TITLE OF TEXT <input type="checkbox"/> AUTHOR	Includes both title and author of text	Includes either title or author of text	Includes neither title nor author of text		
CATEGORY	90-70 PTS.	60-45 PTS.	40-25 PTS.		
APPEARANCE/ORGANIZATION	Study guide uses numerous headings, subheadings, numbers, letters, etc., to visually organize the material.	Study guide uses at least one heading and/or subheading to visually organize the material.	Study guide formatting does not help visually organize the material.		
REQUIRED COMPONENTS: <input type="checkbox"/> VOCABULARY/DEFINITIONS <input type="checkbox"/> TEXT-BASED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS <input type="checkbox"/> SUBJECTIVE/ANALYSIS QUESTIONS	All required components included; at least fifteen (15) items from each category.	One/Two required component(s) not included; insufficient or inadequate number of items from any category.	Required components not included. Study guide is a "summary" of the text.		
CRITICAL THINKING: INTEGRATES SPECIFIC AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE FROM THE TEXT TO DEMONSTRATE CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND KNOWLEDGE/ COMPREHENSION OF THE TEXT <i>**This component is assessed primarily on the "required components" category; however, creativity, depth, examples, etc., are also assessed.</i>	Study guide includes substantial and compelling supporting evidence; demonstrates thorough comprehension, explanation and analysis of the text. Demonstrates exceptional creativity, depth of explanation, concrete examples, etc.	Study guide includes some/limited, supporting evidence which is vague or inappropriate; demonstrates adequate but limited comprehension, explanation and/or analysis of the text. Demonstrates some/minimal creativity, depth of explanation, concrete examples, etc.	Study guide includes inadequate, inaccurate, and/or irrelevant evidence; demonstrates insufficient comprehension, explanation and analysis of the text. Demonstrates little to no creativity, depth of explanation, concrete examples, etc.		
SYNTAX (SENTENCE STRUCTURE), GRAMMAR, DICTION (WORD CHOICE/USE), & USAGE (SPELLING, PUNCTUATION)	No serious errors in syntax, grammar, diction, and/or usage that prohibit comprehension.	Some serious errors in syntax, grammar, diction, and/or usage that may prohibit comprehension.	Serious errors in syntax, grammar, diction, and/or usage prohibit comprehension.		
COMMENTS & TOTAL					

WEEK 4

Day 1

Discussion: Media's Impact on Colorism

Red Table Talk; S3: e9

Colorism: Why Black People Discriminate Against Each Other

https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=search&v=2191961487615665&external_log_id=afa01766-af67-4ce7-b039-ade82606de0a&q=red%20table%20talk%20colorism

- approximation to whiteness valued around the world
- skin-bleaching creams {cause liver and kidney damage}
- *Straight Outta Compton* casting call

Day 2

Colorism is the Brazilian media

*Sources for discussion:

Candido, M. R. (2019). Representation and stereotypes of Black women in Brazilian

Film. *Revista Estudos Feministas*, 27(2), 1–13. doi: 10.1590/1806-9584-2019v27n254549

Carter, E. (2018). Representing blackness in Brazil's changing television landscape: The

cases of *Mister Brau* and *O Grande Gonzalez*. *Latin American Research Review*, 53(2), 344-357. doi:10.25222/larr.330

Cowie, S. (2018, May 18). Bahia is Brazil's blackest state – but you'd never guess it from latest TV soap. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/18/brazil-segundo-sol-telenovela-white-black-cast-race>

Plaza Pinto, J., & Pinto, J. P. (2015). Trajectories of the black female body in Brazil:

Circulations of racist and antiracist representations on a TV show. *Pragmatics and Society*, 6(2), 197–216. doi:10.1075/PS.6.2.03PIN

Silva, P.V. (2010). Racial inequalities in the symbolic realm: The Brazilian context. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 29, 259-279. doi:10.1080/02255189.2010.9669258

Travae, M. & Gonçalves, B. (2015, February 23). “Exotic morenas”: A debate on colorism, blackness and feminine archetypes of the ideology of racial mixture. *Black Brazil Today*. <https://blackbraziltoday.com/a-debate-on-colorism-blackness-and-feminine/>

*These are suggested sources. Educators may select their own sources for this topic.

** The website Black Brazil Today contains numerous articles covering colorism in Brazil.

REFERENCES

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- Burch, T. (2015). Skin color and the criminal justice system: Beyond black-white disparities in sentencing. *Journal of Empirical Studies*, 12(3), 395-420. doi: 10.1111/jells.12077
- De Vos, S. (2017). [Review of the book *The Color of Love: Racial Features, Stigma, and Socialization in Black Brazilian Families* by Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman]. *Social Forces*, 95(4), 1–2. <https://doi-org.chipublib.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/sf/sow059>
- French, J. H. (2016). [Review of the book *The Color of Love: Racial Features, Stigma, and Socialization in Black Brazilian Families* by Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman]. *American Journal of Sociology*, 122(3), 993-995. doi: 10.1086/688473
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marriage: The influence of skin shade on marriage for Black females. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 72(1), 30-50. doi: [10.1016/j.jebo.2009.05.024](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2009.05.024)

- Hannon, L., DeFina, R., & Bruch, S. (2013). The relationship between skin tone and school suspension for African Americans. *Race, Social Problem*, (5), 281-295. doi: [10.1007/s12552-013-9104-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-013-9104-z)
- Hunter, M. (2007). The persistent problem of colorism: Skin tone, status, and inequality. *Sociological Compass*, 1(1), 237-254. doi: [10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00006x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00006x)
- Monk, E.P. (2014). Skin tone stratification among Black Americans. *Social Forces*, 92(4), 1313-1337. doi: [10.1093/sf/sou007](https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sou007)
- Thompson, M.S. & McDonald, S. (2016). "Race, skin tone, and educational achievement." *Sociological Perspectives*, 59(1), 91-11. doi: [10.1177/0731121415580026](https://doi.org/10.1177/0731121415580026)
- Viglione, J., Hannon, L., & DeFina, R. (2011). The impact of light skin on prison time for Black female offenders." *The Social Science Journal*, (48), 250-258. doi: [10.1016/j.soscij.2010.08.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2010.08.003)