

Race and Disability in American History and Literature

Drs. Steve Noll and Delia Steverson



AML 4685/AMH 3930/AFA 4931
MWF Period 3 (9:35- 10:25)

Turlington 2305
Spring 2019

Course Overview

This course will examine the intersection of race and disability in American history and literature by allowing students to understand the shifting meanings of these terms throughout American history and how American literature both reflected and shaped those changes. We will examine the very meanings of “race” and “disability” and how they change (or do not change) over time. We will examine the institution of slavery as itself a disabling construct, the history of eugenic sterilization in America, and finally end by discussing contemporary issues located at the intersections between race and disability.

This is a team-taught course by Dr. Delia Steverson of the English Department and Dr. Steve Noll of the History Department. The course was established through a grant provided by the Center for the Study of Race & Race Relations (CSRRL) here at UF’s Levin College of Law. Dr. Noll will lecture on Mondays; Dr. Steverson on Fridays; and both professors will lead class discussion on Wednesdays.

Contact Information

Dr. Delia Steverson

Email: dsteverson@ufl.edu

Office Location: Turlington 4354

Office Hours: Tuesdays 10am-12pm and by appointment

Office Phone: 352-294-2854

Dr. Steven Noll

Email: nolls@ufl.edu

Office Location and Hours- Keene-Flint Hall 217- M- 12-1 PM; T- 12-1 PM; Th 1-2 PM & by appointment

Office Phone # **352-273-3380** (go through the automated menu & you will be able to reach me LIVE during office hours- You can also leave a message & I will get back to you)

History Department- 392-0271 (You can reach me when I am not in my office hours by leaving at message on my machine)

E-Mail- this is a good way to get in touch with me as I check e-mails more than once a day.

Required Texts

- Douglass Baynton—*Defectives in the Land: Disability and Immigration in the Age of Eugenics* (2016)
- Suzan Lori Parks—*Venus* (1996)
- Susan Birch and Hannah Joyner—*Unspeakable: The Story of Junius Wilson* (2015)
- Pamela Newkirk—*Spectacle: The Astonishing Life of Ota Benga* (2016)
- Meri Nana-Ama Danquah—*Willow Weep for Me: A Black Woman's Journey Through Depression* (1998)
- Alondra Nelson—*The Social Life of DNA- Race, Reparations, & Reconciliation After the Genome* (2016)
- There will also be some course reserve readings as well.

Course Requirements and Grade Distribution

Discussion Groups—(30%)

- On the Wednesdays where Drs. Noll and Steverson will not be leading discussion (every other week) you will bring a two-page double-spaced analysis of both the historical and literary texts we have been discussing.

Leading Discussion Group (20%)

- Once throughout the semester you will be charged with being the discussion leader for your group. You will be responsible for bringing in 2-3 outside sources and 4-5 discussion questions for your group to respond.

Reading Journals (30%)

- You will write on everything you read. For each reading assignment, please include:
 - A synopsis of what you read
 - An analysis of the reading
 - Personal comments and observations on the readings

Place them in a notebook or journal (but if you write the journal entries in longhand, please make them readable). You may also type the journals to turn in.

- We will be available throughout the beginning of the semester to look at your journals to see if they are what we are looking for and to help you produce a good finished product.
- These reading journals should demonstrate and improve your ability to read and write critically.
- **Twice** throughout the semester we will collect reading journals.

Attendance and Participation (20%)

- Your attendance and participation is crucial to your success in the class and to having a wonderful semester. Strive to be on time and prepared as lateness is disruptive and distracting to a positive learning environment. There are no excused or unexcused absences—rather, you are allowed **THREE** absences throughout the semester. On the fourth and fifth absence, we will subtract **TWO** points per absence from your final grade. Six or more absences will result in an automatic failure of the course.

- Understand that there are No Exams or Major Papers—Therefore, it is CRUCIAL that you take all of the above assignments seriously!

Cell Phones

Please turn off all of these electronic devices before coming to class, as they are disruptive to the learning environment and distracting to other students. The only calls allowed during class will be for Dr. Noll from the plumbers and/or roofers who basically live in his house. Thank you!!

Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the UF Disability Resource Center (352.392.8565) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodations. We are more than willing to do whatever is necessary to ensure an optimum learning environment for all students. Please get that information to us early in the semester.

Plagiarism

Be aware of the University's policy on plagiarism. It can be found at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.php>. The Internet has made this situation more problematic but understand that plagiarists will be caught. Any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please do not hesitate to ask. All plagiarism will be reported on a Faculty Adjudication Form and forwarded to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs.

Schedule of Readings

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| Week 1 M 1/7 | Introductions; Syllabus |
| W 1/9 | #wordsmatter- What is race?? What is disability? |
| F 1/11 | Continuation of Wednesday's discussion #wordsmatter- What is race?? What is disability? |
| Week 2 M 1/14 | Slavery and Disability Is slavery a disability in & of itself? Read- "Racial Theory & The Pre-Civil War Census" https://multiracial.com/index.php/2000/10/01/racial-theory-the-pre-civil-war-census/ Read- "Worse Than Useless" https://escholarship.org/content/qt79r782m7/qt79r782m7.pdf (Read Chapter 3) |

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| W 1/16 | Instructor-led Discussion |
| F 1/18 | Read <i>The Autobiography of James L. Smith</i> Preface and pages 1-55 (or beginning through chapter IV) https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/smithj/smithj.html#jsmith106 |
| Week 3 M 1/21 | No Class—Holiday |
| W 1/23 | Read – “Unfit for Ordinary Purposes”- in course reserves Read- “Disability, Race, and Gender on the Stage in Antebellum America”- in course reserves Read- “Battered Bodies, Enfeebled Minds”- in course reserves |
| F 1/25 | Read <i>The Autobiography of James L. Smith</i> pages 56-112 (or chapter V through Conclusion) https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/smithj/smithj.html#jsmith106 |
| Week 4 M 1/28 | Eugenics and Immigration Read Baynton- <i>Defectives in the Land</i> - pages 1-78 |
| W 1/30 | Student Discussion Groups |
| F 2/1 | Read Burch and Joyner-- <i>Unspeakable: The Story of Junius Wilson</i> Introduction and Chapters 1-3 |
| Week 5 M 2/4 | Read- <i>Defectives in the Land</i> - pages 79-139 |
| W 2/6 | Instructor-led Discussion |
| F 2/8 | Read <i>Unspeakable: The Story of Junius Wilson</i> Chapters 6, 8, 11 |

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| Week 6 M 2/11 | Race & Insanity in the Era of Reconstruction & Jim Crow Read- "Race, Apology, and Public Memory at Maryland's Hospital for the 'Negro' Insane" http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/5392/4547 Read- "Labeling and Treating Black Mental Illness in Alabama, 1861-1910"- in course reserves |
| W 2/13 | Student Discussion Groups |
| F 2/15 | Read W.E.B Du Bois—"On Being Crazy" on Canvas Read Frank Yerby—"The Homecoming" on Canvas |
| Week 7 M 2/18 | Freak Shows Read Pamela Newkirk-- <i>Spectacle- The Astonishing Life of Ota Benga-</i> pages 1-127 |
| W 2/20 | Instructor-led discussion |
| F 2/22 | Read Suzan-Lori Parks— <i>Venus</i> Overture and Scenes 31-20 (pages 1-79) |
| Week 8 M 2/25 | Read <i>Spectacle- The Astonishing Life of Ota Benga-</i> pages 128-254 |
| W 2/27 | Student Discussion Groups |
| F 3/1 | Read <i>Venus</i> Scenes 19-end (pages 80-162) Turn In Reading Journals |
| Week 9 | SPRING BREAK |
| Week 10 M 3/11 | Civil Rights/Disability Rights Read- "Uncle Tom & Tiny Tim: Some Reflections on the Cripple as Negro"- in course reserves |
| W 3/13 | Instructor-led Discussion |
| F 3/15 | In Class: Watch <i>Lives Worth Living</i> |

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| Week 11 M 3/18 | Read- "The Best and Worst of all that God and Man Can Do"- https://stars.library.ucf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=5694&context=etd this is ONE URL- please copy & paste the previous two lines into your browser |
| W 3/20 | Student Discussion Groups |
| F 3/22 | Read <i>Willow Weep for Me: A Black Woman's Journey Through Depression</i> Beginning—page 95 (or through the section called <i>Home</i>) |
| Week 12 M 3/25 | Read- "Mental Disability & the Right to Vote" Chapter 4- "Citizens, Voters, Idiots" pages 263-323 |
| W 3/27 | Instructor-led Discussion |
| F 3/29 | Read <i>Willow Weep for Me</i> Pages 101-185 |
| Week 13 M 4/1 | Read- "A Living Burial': Inside the Hiawatha Asylum for Insane Indians" https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/a-living-burial-inside-the-hiawatha-asylum-for-insane-indians-7NZ2CDyrf02QuQZxUZBKgg/ Read- "Lomax's Matrix: Disability, Solidarity, and the Black Power of 504" http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/1371/1539 |
| W 4/3 | Student Discussion Groups |
| F 4/5 | Read <i>Willow Weep for Me</i> Read pages 186—end |
| Week 14 M 4/8 | Genetic Testing/State Sanctioned Violence Read- <i>The Social Life of DNA- Race, Reparations, & Reconciliation After the Genome-</i> pages 1-106 |
| W 4/10 | Instructor-led Discussion |
| F 4/12 | <i>Dr. Dee will be out of town. Dr. Noll will teach.</i> |
| Week 15 M 4/15 | Read- <i>The Social Life of DNA- Race, Reparations, & Reconciliation After the Genome-</i> pages 107-166 |

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| W 4/17 | Student Discussion Groups |
| F 4/19 | In Class: Watch “In His Own Home” Turn In Reading Journals |
| Week 16 M 4/22 | Final discussion— What does it all mean? |
| W 4/24 | Continuation of discussion- What does it all mean? |