Course: African American Studies

Course Description: This course focuses on the history of African Americans from African origins to the present; beginning with societies in West and West Central Africa, slavery and freedom in colonial America, Civil War and Reconstruction, freedom and struggles in a globalizing America-Reconstruction, civil rights movement and beyond to the 21st century. In this course, we will pay particular attention to the cultural bases of African American experiences; in other words, the ways by which black Americans explained their lives and societies to themselves and to their contemporaries. To that end, the course moves between the “roots” and “routes” of modern black life. The search for a sense of “rootedness”— in an African heritage, an indigenous American identity has shaped black life in the United States.

Essential Questions: The questions that we will address in this class include the following:

1. How did religion, the arts, and technology shape the civilizations of early Africa? How did change occur within and among these early civilizations?
2. What patterns developed as civilizations met the needs of their people?
3. In what ways did place, region, and the interaction of humans and their environments affect cultures?
4. How have African Americans remembered the Middle Passage and the trauma of being sold as chattel (i.e. property) into slavery? Why has the experience of this trauma lived on in black American life?
5. How does African American culture reflect and critique the idea of movement as a form of freedom? Can we see this simply in the act of picking up one’s things and one’s family and going somewhere else? Can we also see this search for freedom in African American language, songs, dances, games and other cultural forms?
6. What were the effects of the system of segregation/Jim Crow? How did the patterns of segregation influence human behavior and society?
7. How can citizens in a democratic society effect change? How does this period relate to the American ideal of equality?
8. What is the role of dissent in a democratic society?
9. How did/do humans resolve conflict?
10. What are the differences between civil rights and human rights?

Core Competencies
BLS identified eight essential competencies that span all content areas and grade levels. Students will engage with subject matter and reach proficiency in their coursework by practicing the following skills and by living out the listed values.

- **Reading:** Students will utilize higher order thinking skills as they read authentic material from a variety of perspectives, cultures, and disciplines.
- **Writing:** Students will write competently and creatively, having mastered language conventions including rhetorical, stylistic, and grammatical structures.
- **Speaking and Presenting:** Students will communicate clearly and effectively in prepared and extemporaneous speech.
- **Researching:** Students will generate questions and use informed research and technological methodologies to evaluate information and synthesize new and innovative ideas.
- **Problem Solving:** Students will develop and exercise sound diagnostic and creative skills in addressing complex challenges.
- **Social Responsibility:** Students will be open-minded, respectful, responsible and engaged members of the school community.
- **Civic Engagement:** Students will utilize leadership skills through active community involvement and advocacy.
- **Global Awareness:** Students will demonstrate their global understanding and growth as engaged global citizens.


Supplemental Readings:

**Articles:**
- Beverly Daniel Tatum, “Defining Racism: Can We Talk?” [from Readings for Diversity and Social Justice (Adams, et al., eds.)]
- Manning Marable, “Racism and Sexism” [from Race, Class, and Gender in the U.S., Rothenberg, ed.)
- Patricia Hills Collins, “Toward A New Vision: Race, Class, and Gender” [from Adams, et al., eds.)

**Books:**
- *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander
- *African American Literature* by Prentice Hall Publishing Library
- *Talk that Talk: An Anthology of African American Storytelling* edited by Linda Goss and Marian E. Barnes
GRADING:
Type of Assessments:
Class Participation, Classwork/Homework, Reading/Discussion Responses, Projects/Presentations – 40%
Quizzes, Tests, Critical Lecture/Event/Performance Review (once a term), Research paper, Final Exam (end of Term 4) – 60 %

Final Grade: 1st term 25%  2nd term 25%  3rd term 25%  4th term 25% (Final Exam included in Term 4 Grade)
Note: End of term grades and final grades are NOT rounded. Students may be able to apply earned Pinchem Pennies to tests grades only before each term grade closes.

Plagiarism:
Plagiarism and cheating are violations of Honor Code Pledge. Therefore, as a student at Boston Latin School, students will not participate in any form of cheating on any type of assignment—either by copying another student’s answer(s), by having a cheat sheet, or by allowing others to copy my work. Plagiarism is also a form of cheating and will not be tolerated. The first offense will result in a zero on that assignment; if there is a second offense, parents will be notified, and a report will be made to the Floor master or Assistant Headmaster. This grade cannot be made up. Taking another person’s ideas, work, or writings and presenting them as your own without proper referencing is also considered plagiarism which falls into three major categories:

● Verbatim plagiarism: using a source’s language without quoting
● Paraphrasing without citation: using information from a source without attribution
● Inadequate paraphrasing: using ideas from a source in a form that stays too close to the original

Office Hours:
Thursdays from 2:30-3:30 and by appointment

Supplies List:
● 1- or 2-inch binder (w/ a window for class calendar) notebook paper, pens or pencils
● Note cards (for vocabulary flash cards)
● Google drive access
● Tissue or hand sanitizer (as needed, for staying healthy)

Students and Parents:
Please read the above information for (course) together and indicate by your signatures on the copy of this syllabus that you understand the purpose, format, and expectations of this course. Please feel free to see, call, or email me with any questions or concerns you might have.

Student: I have read, and I understand the course description and classroom expectations for African American Studies. I also understand that I will be held accountable for the return of my textbook(s) in June.

Student name (print): ____________________________________________
Student signature: ____________________________________________
Date __________________________

Parent: I have reviewed the course description and classroom expectations for African American Studies with my son or daughter.

Parent signature: ____________________________________________
Date: __________________________

Parent name/s: ____________________________________________
Home phone: __________________________
Parent 1 cell: __________________________
Parent 2 cell: __________________________
Parent 1 email: _______________________________________________________________________
Parent 2 email: _______________________________________________________________________