



Black Men, Black Boys and the Psychology of Modern Media

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Required Text: *Entertaining Race: Performing Blackness in America* (Dyson, 2021)

Course Description:

Black Men, Black Boys and the Psychology of Modern Media is a personality psychology-rooted course that will look at the varied positioning of Black boys and men within media spaces. The course will explore how these framings inform identity assumption and behaviors across cultures. This exploration will be done through deconstructing contexts and human behavior paradigms relative to social norms, stereotype and less widely considered realities. Emphasis will be placed on fundamentals of human behavior, media history, pop culture critique and content analysis. While cinema, television, recorded music and periodicals are considered for much of the course, new media streams will also be examined for behavioral and social influence on Black male identification. *Black Boys, Black Men and the Psychology of Modern Media* is based across the personality psychology levels of dispositional traits, characteristic adaptation and life story tellings (McAdams, 2004). This general structure is dynamic in a way that allows for shifting popular culture norms and for additional grounding in the media critique of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1998). Prerequisite: Psychology 102 or Sociology 102 and/or with instructor's approval. Three hours.

Entry Level Expectations

- Concepts and issues of student mastery should include critical reading where the student is able extract content and meaning from a sample, while also identifying knowns and unknowns within a journal article or book chapter, and locate the essential properties of the underlying “problem” presented in said article or chapter.
- Students must have a firm understanding of moderate-level critical thinking, reading and writing and when to use them as informed by the successful completion of PSYC 102 or SOC 102.
- Students must demonstrate English 101/3-level writing proficiency with an ability to clearly articulate a thesis statement and associated supporting statements with a logical progression of thought.
- Students must successfully complete Math 130 or a departmental equivalent that contributes to student ability to list and define the steps of Scientific Method, identify and write scientific notation, calculate and recognize summary and descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode, frequency, standard deviation).

Instructional Goals:

- Extend student’s core concepts of psychological theory and media studies with a scientific approach to the presence of Black men and boys within popular culture.
- Increase conceptual knowledge of research methods, design and strategies by building upon prior knowledge.
- Create a learning environment that evokes independent thinking and creative applications of new knowledge to real-world situations of and relating to psychology and modern media.
- Contribute to the progress and the advancement of critical thinking, reading, writing, research, and learning skills within the context of a psychology curriculum that provides measured treatment of stereotypical and affirming images of Black men and boys within mass culture.
- Prepare students for graduate-level study and research.

Student Learning Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

Black Men, Black Boys and the Psychology of Modern Media is an upper level, analytical course that should greatly enhance the cultural literacy and psychology acumen of majors by engaging them with material that is of interest and profound relevance. Student objectives are designed so that upon course completion students will be prepared for advanced undergraduate and graduate level courses that demand the application of theory to practice. For students entering careers that incorporate themes or subject matter from this course (i.e. CTEMS students) immediately after college it is anticipated that application(s) will be enhanced by students having had this course as a proving ground for the substantive scaffolding and reframing of ideas.

Student learning objectives anticipate that, students will:

- understand broad issues and definitions concerning personality psychology theory through critical reading, writing and class projects;
- work toward a dynamic understanding of research by identifying, defining and drafting arguments anchored in the four major knowledge claims that govern modern scientific inquiry;

- be aware of complex and nuanced explanations of Black maleness as informed by the application of logical progression of thought in discerning (through identification and writing) the difference between affirming and deficit models of Black identity;
- develop a working knowledge of modern media history and the documenting and/or establishment of popular culture as informed by seminal works across recorded, sculpted, filmed, painted and written genres; and
- adopt a perspective (a position) relative to Black men and Black boys across media scapes as demonstrated through achievement on exams, multi-media assignments and in-class discussion and exercises.

Learning outcomes for Black Men, Black Boys and the Psychology of Modern Media are informed by six of the nine (9) Psychology Department-specific learning outcomes. In order to successfully complete the present course, students will:

- respond to several tasks that require their use of critical thinking skills, and the scientific approach to problem solving related behavior and mental processes;
- demonstrate familiarity with major concepts theoretical perspective, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology;
- be able to demonstrate their understanding of psychological theories, skills and approaches to a variety of professional and non-professional settings with particular emphasis on working and community environments;
- be able to understand and critique professional and popular publications, in the area of psychology, without prejudice toward various approaches used to interpret behavior in an ethical and respectful manner;
- will be required to find original articles in the scientific literature using current information retrieval procedures and will be able to critically identify and distinguish between sources of information in print and electronic form;
- will be able to identify the major contribution of African–American psychologists in the area of theory and research and understand the significance of these contributions for the discipline of psychology in general.

Student Responsibilities:

This course is positioned such that the instructor provides opportunities for each student to learn via exposure to skill sets, tools and techniques that the student applies in an effort to further their understanding of the intersection between personality psychology and expressions of modern media. As such, it is the instructor's responsibility to facilitate the opportunity and environment within which to learn, and the student's responsibility to exploit the opportunity and environment to expand his and her knowledge base.

Course Overview/Expectations:

Black Men, Black Boys and the Psychology of Modern Media is a multi-media course that will engage the multi-modal expressions of popular culture within contemporary society. This course is where students are afforded the opportunity to carefully consider mass culture experienced daily through the levels of personality psychology, a New Big Five (McAdams & Pals, 2006) and sociological critique extending from Bourdieu (1998). Here is where one develops an analytical core around issues of media that will influence how s/he comes to

understand race and gender across media outlets through a psycho-social treatment of Black men and Black boys. The intent is to ensure that this analytical core is well built and future-proof. Accordingly, it is important to note that in this course considerable time will be required to: 1) read and study book chapters, supplementary materials and published research articles; 2) prepare for periodic in class assignments on presented material; 3) write and consider popular media in and out of class; and 4) collaborate with classmates in and out of class in order to complete assignments and to advance personal understanding of course concepts. Given these general expectations students are encouraged to weigh other academic and non-academic commitments for the semester before committing to take this course. Because this course involves subjects and media types that are often familiar, students are typically highly engaged. It is important to integrate this expected high involvement with scholarly attention. Failure to spend appropriate time on task and attention to scholarly components of the material presented in this course will likely be negatively reflected in your final grade.

Class Execution:

- Traditional lecture. Interactive discussions with media references. Traditional board and discussion with periodic Keynote presentations.
- Integration of a semester long "problem" across the course with foundational peer-reviewed pieces.
- Significant portions of the course will incorporate Internet assignments and activity.
- Deconstruction of at least one documentary, one piece of art work, one LP and one movie/television episode through content analysis, narrative and/or discourse analysis.

Grading:

- Exam, Individual Project and Course Project (100 points each). The project will be a multimedia presentation. Projects will incorporate the major themes, concepts and perspectives of the course.
- Attendance - Attend class. Be on time. Understand that school policy stipulates that more than 3 unexcused absences in this three-credit hour course allow the instructor latitude to fail the student in question.

Final Grade (Assessment Sum/3):

A+	96 – 100	B+	86 – 89	C+	76 – 79	D+	66 – 69
A	93 – 95	B	83 – 85	C	73 – 75	D	63 – 65
A-	90 – 92	B-	80 – 82	C-	70 – 72	D-	60 – 62

Please Note: A syllabus is not a contract.

- I reserve the right to alter the course requirements and/or assignments based on new materials, class discussions, or other legitimate pedagogical objectives.
- Morehouse College is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students, including those with documented disabilities. Students with disabilities or those who suspect they have a disability must register with the Office of Disability Services ("ODS") in order to receive accommodations. Students currently registered with the ODS are required to present their Disability Services Accommodation Letter to faculty immediately upon receiving the accommodation. If you have any questions, contact the Office of Disability Services, 104 Sale Hall Annex, Morehouse College, 830 Westview Dr. S.W., Atlanta, GA 30314, (404) 215-2636, FAX: (404) 215-2749.

Selections, Readings and Media Materials (a working guide)

1		Interrogating Assumptions	Toni Morrison, “Racism . . . leave me out of it;” The Power of Poitier; Jay-Z In Conversation; The Moynihan Report; Kobe: The Revisionist
2		Interrogating Assumptions	The Moynihan Report; Bandura’s Agency; The Scorch at the Bottom of the Melting Pot
3		The Life Story as Central	Rakim, Ice Cube then Watch the Throne; The Life Story; The White Mind; Telling Tales Out of School; bell hooks (in brief)
4		Synthesizing Assumptions and The Life Story	Rakim, Ice Cube then Watch the Throne; The Moynihan Report; The Scorch at the Bottom of the Melting Pot; The White Mind; Telling Tales Out of School
		Assessment 1	Traditional Exam
5		Black Lives Matter and Black Super Heroes [Black Panther & Spiderman]	Black Panther extended trailer; Into the Spider-verse extended trailer . . . and the soundtracks BP & IS Configurations of Blackness (3)
6		Psychology, Sport and Social Impact	Kaepernick Explains the Knee; 1968 Olympics; Jemele Hill on Kaep; The Players Coalition; The Outsized Life of Muhammad Ali; Trials of Muhammad Ali (trailer)
7		What’s Going On . . . Everything is Love	What’s Going On; Lemonade; 4:44 Footnotes; Everything is Love

8		The Art of Protest, Social Commentary and Self-definition: Charles White, Gordon Parks, Basquiat, Sanford Biggers and Saul Williams	Charles White & Professor Gordon; Gordon Parks Remains Relevant; Basquiat; Black Like Basquiat; Sanford Biggers; Saul Williams; The Foreigner's Home (6)
		Assessment 2	Project-based [personal narrative via Your Dynamic Timeline]
9		Review and Prep for Final Exam
		Finals Week	Final Exam

All in class should be signed up to the class GroupMe for supplementary materials. Throughout the course you should be listening to the playlist, [Between Love Jones and Back to Mine\(s\) and Queen & Slim](#) and should watch [at least season one of] [This is Us](#) and all of [Don't F#@k this Up](#). Also, you must watch the entire seasons of [Raising Dion](#) on NETFLIX. Executive Producer and Director [Seith Mann](#) will come to class to discuss Tasing Dion and other popular content that he has directed.

In accord with the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*, any student with a disability who requires classroom accommodations will be provided said accommodations after contacting the Morehouse Counseling and Learning Center to receive an accommodations letter to be given to the course instructor. Once in receipt of the letter arrangements will be made to ensure the most optimal learning environment possible for the student in question.