

FLK377/AFAM377: AFRICAN AMERICAN FOLKLORE/FOLKLIFE

Spring 2024

M/W/F – 10:20 AM – 11:15 AM FAC 249

Lamont Jack Pearley

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Office Hours:

Tuesday 3:30 – 4:30 Wednesday & Friday 2 – 3 & By Appointment - Room 240

Course Objectives:

Students will

- Examine the traditions, traditional beliefs, cultural context, geographical locations, music, and vernaculars that make African American Folklore and Folklife.
- Unraveling the various genres and the documentation methods in which these selected folk practices build upon earlier forms and their function within the communities of origin.
- Through close analysis, gain a better understanding of contemporary African-American folklore and folklife's dynamic and multi-faceted nature.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

*******All assignments and links will be found on the Black Board.*******

******* Student’s Final Project Proposal are Due WEEK 10*******

Course Requirements (you will be given details about all requirements)

Reading quizzes (2)	15%
Short papers (2)	20%
Midterm Exam.	10%
Final Project	20%
Final Exam	20%
Participation and attendance	15%

ABOUT EXAMS & QUIZZES

The **midterm and final exam** will both consist of a combination of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, and essay questions. You must be prepared to demonstrate an understanding of the basic terms and concepts related to the readings, class discussions, films, and other course activities. This means that to do well on these exams, you must keep up with the readings, attend class, and take notes. The final exam will be cumulative.

Quizzes will be “mini” versions of exams, evaluating your comprehension of the course while also giving you practice for the midterm and final exam.

Attendance

You cannot expect to do well in this course without regular attendance in terms of your

preparation for quizzes, exams, and papers and your participation grade. If you must miss class for any reason, please visit my office hours or make an appointment with me, and/or ask a classmate for notes or to discuss what you've missed. If illness or emergencies arise, please communicate with me.

Five points will be deducted from your participation grade for each unexcused absence beyond three. "Excused" absences include medical and family emergencies and unique circumstances in which you and I make a prior agreement; proper documentation is required. Being late for class may result in an absence for the day. If you are absent, you are responsible for consulting with your classmates about what you've missed and/or meeting with me during my office hours.

Academic Integrity

"The maintenance of academic integrity is of fundamental importance to the University. Thus, it should be clearly understood that acts of plagiarism or any other form of cheating will not be tolerated and that anyone committing such acts risks punishment of a serious nature" (WKU 2015-2016 Undergraduate Catalog, p. 33).

Regarding cheating, "no student shall receive or give assistance not authorized by the instructor in taking an examination or in the preparation of an essay, laboratory report, problem assignment or other project that is submitted for purposes of grade determination" (WKU 2015-2016 Undergraduate Catalog, p. 34). Cheating includes the use of assignments completed by other students in this class during current or previous semesters.

"To represent written work taken from another source [book, journal, website, lecture, lab, or other source whether it is prepared by the instructor, a guest speaker, or a classmate] as one's own is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense. The academic work of a student must be his/her own. One must give any author credit for source material borrowed from him/her. To lift content directly from a source without giving credit is a flagrant act. To present a borrowed passage without reference to the source after having changed a few words is also plagiarism" (WKU 2015-2016 Undergraduate Catalog, p. 33).

Please be aware that assignments (including discussion posts, quizzes, exams, and papers) are regularly checked with plagiarism detection software. Evidence of plagiarism or cheating may result in a failing grade for the class and will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct, which is empowered to impose additional sanctions.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

AI tools are *not* permitted for any type of written work in this class. If you choose to use these tools, your actions will be considered academically dishonest and a violation of the WKU Student Code of Conduct.

Electronic Devices

Please silence all cell phones and other electronic devices before coming to class. Obviously, you may not use such devices during class AT ALL. The use of laptops for note taking is permissible; however, students using laptops for other purposes during class will lose this privilege.

Recording

Class meetings may not be recorded (audio, video) under any circumstances.

Communications

You are responsible for checking your WKU email address and the course Blackboard site on a regular basis. Please note that I may or may not be able to respond right away to evening and weekend email messages; otherwise, in general, I do commit to responding within 24 hours (usually less).

Resources

Folklore Minor

Undergraduates at WKU have a rare opportunity to take a variety of folklore courses and also to minor in Folklore. A Folklore Minor is fun, challenging, and gives a unique perspective on contemporary American life. It also helps develop important critical and problem-solving skills for use in the complex personal, social, occupational, and political environments in which we live and work. These skills will make you a better candidate for employment, for admission into graduate programs in many fields, and for advancement on just about any career path. For more information, talk to me and the Minor Advisor, Dr. Ann Ferrell (ann.ferrell@wku.edu); visit: <https://www.wku.edu/fsa/folkstudies/minor.php>.

Student Disability Services

In compliance with University policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in Downing Student Union, 1074. SARC can be reached by phone number at 270-745-5004 [270-745-3030 TTY] or via email at sarc.connect@wku.edu. Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a faculty notification letter (FNL) from The Student Accessibility Resource Center.

WKU Counseling Center

The Counseling Center is open throughout the calendar year and closed during holidays and other specified dates found in the WKU Academic Calendar. The Counseling Center is located in Potter Hall, Room 409. 270-745-3159; counseling.center@wku.edu.
<https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/>

Writing Center Assistance

The Writing Center on the Bowling Green campus will have writing tutors available to offer advice to current WKU students on any stage of their writing projects. In-person tutoring is available in Cherry Hall 123 from 10-4 Monday through Friday and in the Cravens Commons (at the horseshoe-shaped reference desk) from 5-9 on Sunday through Thursday evenings. WKU students may also request feedback on their writing via email or arrange a real-time Zoom conference to discuss a paper. See instructions and how-to videos on the website (www.wku.edu/writingcenter) for making appointments. Walk-in feedback is available unless we are booked up. Students may also get short writing questions answered via email; just put "Quick question" in the subject line to (writingcenter@wku.edu).

The WKU START Centers will be offering writing tutoring sessions via Zoom as well as in person in their Glasgow and Elizabethtown locations. More information on how to make appointments and what to expect from your appointment will continue to be posted at (<https://www.wku.edu/startcenter/>).

WKU's Title IX Sexual Misconduct/Assault Policy

Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to supporting faculty, staff and students by upholding WKU's Title IX Sexual Misconduct/Assault Policy (#0.2070) at

<https://wku.edu/eoo/documents/titleix/wkutitleixpolicyandgrievanceprocedure.pdf> and

Discrimination and Harassment Policy (#0.2040) at

https://wku.edu/policies/hr_policies/2040_discrimination_harassment_policy.pdf.

Under these policies, discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct based on sex/gender are prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator, Andrea Anderson, 270-745-5398 or Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe, 270-745-5429 or Joshua Hayes, 270-745-5121.

Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a faculty member, WKU faculty are "Responsible Employees" of the

University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator. If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center at 270-745-3159.

REPEAT:

*******All assignments and links will be found on the Black Board.*******

***** Student's Final Project Proposal is Due WEEK 10*****

WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING

UNIT ONE: AFRICAN AMERICAN FOLKLORE/FOLKLIFE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

WEEK 1 – INTRODUCTION

Wednesday, January 17th

Introduction to the Course and Syllabus Overview

Friday, January 19th

<https://whatisfolklore.org/>

WEEK 2 AFRICAN AMERICAN FOLKLORE, FOODWAYS, & FAMILY

Monday, January 22nd

Prahlad, Anand (2019). "African American Folklore, Folklife and, Race" The Oxford Handbook of American Folklore and Folklife Studies 1-23. Oxford University Press

Roberts, John. 1993. African American Diversity and the Study of Folklore. Theorizing Folklore. Special Issue. The Journal of American Folklore. 52(2/4): 157-171

Wednesday, January 24th

Ogunleye, Tolagbe. 1997. African American Folklore: Its Role in Reconstructing African American History. *The Journal of Black Studies*. 27(4): 435-455

Brewer, Mason J. 1947. Afro-American Folklore. *The Journal of American Folklore*. 60(238): 377-382

Friday, January 26th

Poe, N. Tracey. 2002. The Origins of Soul Food in Black Urban Identity: Chicago, 1915–1947. Food in the USA. Publisher Routledge

Watch in Class: Gullah Geechee Food Traditions, Soul Food Movie Scene – Discussion

WEEK 3 BLACK FOLK BELIEF & SPIRITUALITY

PICK a Reading Topic from Week 3 for the 1st short paper assignment. DUE WK 7

Monday, January 29th

Kail, Tony. 2019. Stories of Root Workers & Hoodoo in the Mid-South. The History Press. Charleston, NC. Chapter One

Wednesday, January 31st

Haskins, Jim. 1990 "Voodoo and hoodoo: The craft as revealed by traditional practitioners." Chelsea, MI: Scarborough House Publishers. Read Introduction

Chireau, Yvonne P. 2003. Black magic: Religion and the African American conjuring tradition. University of California Press. Berkley, Los Angeles, London – Read Introduction

Friday, February 2nd

Henry Lewis Gates Jr.'s Black Church episode in class.

WEEK 4 BLACK MUSIC AND GROUP REPRESENTATION

Monday, February 5th

Watch Talking Bout The Blues with Guy Davis & Leo Bud Welch
McGregory, Jerrilyn. 2010. Ev'ry Day'll be Sunday: Burial Sodalities. Downhome Gospel. Oxford. Univ. of Mississippi Press

Wednesday, February 7th

Work III, Wesley John. 1998. American Negro Songs: 230 Folk Songs and Spirituals, Religious and Secular. Dover Publications. Mineola, New York. Chapter One – Origins, Chapter Two – The Spirituals

Friday, February 9th

Work III, Wesley John. 1998. American Negro Songs: 230 Folk Songs and Spirituals, Religious and Secular. Dover Publications. Mineola, New York. Chapter Three – The Blues, Chapter Four – Work Songs

Watch - Fight the Power: How Hip Hop Changed the World
Discussion of the first assignment and Review for the first quiz.

**UNIT TWO: AFRICAN AMERICAN TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE CULTURE
PICK one from the following list of African American Storytellers (Dolomite, Son House, or Scarface) for your 2nd Short Paper Due WK 9**

**WEEK 5 BLACK FOLK NARRATIVE, LITERATURE, & STORYTELLING
MONDAY FEBRUARY 19th - PRESIDENTS DAY**

Wednesday, February 14st

Quiz One

Bailey, Ebony. 2021. (Re) Making the Folk: Black Representation and the Folk in Early American Folklore Studies. Special Issue. The Journal of American Folklore. 34 (534): 385–417

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_telling_our_own_story_is_so_powerful_for_black_americans

Friday, February 16th

Roberts, John. 2009. African American Belief Narratives and the African Cultural Tradition. *Research in African Literature Oral Literature and Identity Formation in Africa and the Diaspora*. 40(1): 112-126

Prahlad, Anand. 1999. Guess Who's Coming to Dinner: Folklore, Folkloristics, and African American Literary Criticism. *African American Review*. 33(4): 565-575

N'Diaya, Baird Diana. 2021. Telling Our Own Stories: Reciprocal Autoethnography at the Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender. *The Journal Of American Folklore*. 134 (533): 252–257.

WEEK 6 COMMODIFICATION

Monday, February 19th

Wilkins, Collin, Langston. 2023. “Welcome 2 Houston: Hip Hop Heritage in Hustle Town” *University Of Illinois Press*. Chicago Read the Introduction

Wednesday, February 21st

Weekes, E. Melinda. 2005. This House, This Music: Exploring the Interdependent Interpretive Relationship between the Contemporary Black Church and Contemporary Gospel Music. *Black Music Research Journal*. 25(1): 43-72

Friday, February 23rd

Cherid, Ikram Maha. 2021. “Ain’t Got Enough Money to Pay Me Respect”:
Blackfishing, Cultural Appropriation, and the Commodification of Blackness
journals.sagepub.com. 21(5): 359 –364

WEEK 7 BLACK FOLK ART

Monday, February 26th

Introduce students to the works of Lavon Williamson & Willie Roscoe.

Hartigan, Roscoe Lynda. 2000. Going Urban: American Folk Art and the Great Migration. *American Art*. 14(2): 26-51

Wednesday, February 28th

Baraka, Amiri. 1987. Black Art. *The Black Scholar*. 18(1): 23-30

Metcalf, W. Eugene. 1983. Black Art, Folk Art, and Social Control. *Winterthur Portfolio*. 18(4): 271-289

Friday, March 1st

First Short Paper Due

Freeman Vines Hanging Tree Guitars

WEEK 8 CONSERVATION OF BLACK SPACES

Monday, March 4th & Wednesday, March 6th

Glave, D. Dianne. 2010. *Rooted In The Earth: Reclaiming The African American Environmental Heritage*. Lawrence Hill Books. Chicago Review Press. Chicago, Il.

Discussion of Midterm & Final Project Proposal(DUE WEEK 10)

Friday, March 8th

Midterm Exam on Units I & II AT HOME

UNIT THREE: AFRICAN AMERICAN FOLKLORE/FOLKLIFE & IDENTITY

WEEK 9 RACE GENDER FOLK GROUP

Monday, March 11th

Allan, Quaylan. Metcalf, Santos Henry. 2019. "Up to No Good": The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Fear of Black Men in US Society. *Historicizing Fear: Ignorance, Vilification, and Othering*. P 19-34

Cornyetz, Nina. 1994. Fetishized Blackness: Hip Hop and Racial Desire in Contemporary Japan. *Social Text* 41: 113-139

Wednesday, March 13th

Sullivan, M Jas. PlatenBurg, N. Gheni. 2017. From Black-ish to Blackness: An Analysis of Black Information Sources' Influence on Black Identity Development. *Journal of Black Studies*. 48(3): 215-234

Friday, March 15th

Davis, Angela. 1998. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude 'Ma' Rainy, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*. First Vintage Books. New York, Read Introduction

WEEK 10 LANGUAGE POLITICS AND SCHISMS

Final Project Proposal Due

Monday, March 18th

Lane, Nikki. (2015) "All the Lesbians are White, All the Villages are Gay, but Some of Us are Brave! Intersectionality, Belonging, and Black Queer Women's Scene Space in Washington DC," pp. 219-242.

Niles (1984) "Rhetorical Characteristics of Traditional Black Preaching," pp. 41-52

Wednesday, March 20th

Leverfer (1981) "The Dozens: A Mechanism for Social Control," pp 73-85.

Smitherman, Geneva. (2006) "African American Language: So Good It's Bad," pp. 1-19

Friday, March 22nd

Lippi-Green, Rosina. 1997. What We Talk About When We Talk About Ebonics: Why Definitions Matter. *The Black Scholar*. 27(2): 7-11

Lyne, Bill. 2010. God's Black Revolutionary Mouth: James Baldwin's Black Radicalism. *Science & Society*. 74(1): 12-36

WEEK 11 STREET LORE STREET WEAR STREET CODE

Short Paper Assignment 2 due – African American Storytellers

Monday, March 25th

Elia, Arielle (2021). "Dapper Dan: The Original Streetwear Designer and Influence," pp. 168-187.

Wilkins, Langston (2018) "Black Folklife Matters: Slabs and the Social Importance of Contemporary African American Folklife," pp.55-69.

Wednesday, March 27th

Anderson, Elijah. 2000. *Code Of The Streets: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. Norton Paperback. New York
The Conscious Community, Five Percenter, and the 'Corna' Classrooms

Friday, March 29th

CLASS REMOTE – HOME PROJECT

WEEK 12 THE OTHER BLACK

Monday, April 1st

<https://www.blerd.com/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/24/t-magazine/black-nerds-culture.html>

<https://www.parents.com/blerd-s-paradise-7636696>

<https://afropunk.com/2022/02/oh-to-be-a-blerd-and-all-the-complexities/>

Wednesday, April 3rd

We will Watch the Afro Samurai.

<https://theafricanamericanfolklorist.com/articles/the-portrayal-of-black-in-cartoons-and-anime>

<https://blackgamerscommunity.com/>

<https://afropunk.com/2022/02/strictly-for-the-black-gamers-the-squads-you-need-to-join-now/>

<https://www.theblackgirlgamers.com/>

Friday, April 5th

<https://theblackheroesmovement.world/black-comic-expos>

<https://blacknerdsexpo.com/>

<https://www.nypl.org/spotlight/schomburg/black-comic-book-festival-2023>
<https://www.schomcom.org/>

UNIT FOUR: POPULAR CULTURE, MEDIA, FILM

WEEK 13 BLACK FOLKLORE ON TELEVISION

Monday, April 8th

Quiz on Unit Three

Breaking Down the Television Program “The Wire” and its use of Folklore, Folk Traditions, Occupational Folklore and Legend

Wednesday, April 10th

The Wire Continues

Friday, April 12th

Discussion on African American Folklore on The Wire culminates.

WEEK 14 POPULAR CULTURE & AFRICAN AMERICAN FOLKLORE

Monday, April 15th

Hamlet, D. Janice. 2011. Word! The African American Oral Tradition and its Rhetorical Impact on American Popular Culture. *Black History Bulletin*. Theme: "The Influence of African Americans on Popular Culture" 74(1): 27-31

Flynn, E. Joseph. 2011. Afterthought: Who Leads This Dance: Reflecting on the Influence of African Americans on Popular Culture. *Black History Bulletin*. 74(1): 32-33

Wednesday, April 17th

Marlo Barnett, Joseph E. Flynn. 2014. A Century of Celebration: Disrupting Stereotypes and Portrayals of African Americans in the Media. *Black History Bulletin*. 72(2): 28-33

Valerie N. Adams-Bass, Howard C. Stevenson, Diana Slaughter Kotzin. 2014. Measuring the Meaning of Black Media Stereotypes and Their Relationship to the Racial Identity, Black History Knowledge, and Racial Socialization of African American Youth. *Journal of Black Studies*. 45(5): 367-395

Friday, April 19th

Van Deburg, William L. *Slavery & race in American popular culture*. Univ of Wisconsin Press, 1984.(read Introduction)

WEEK 15 PROJECT PRESENTATION

Monday, April 22nd

Final Project due and presentation given in front of the Class

Wednesday, April 24th

If necessary, the final presentations.
Reflexive, Reflection discussion on the semester.

Friday, April 26th

Review for the Final Exam

WEEK 16 FINAL EXAM