((Big ups & mad props to Brother Mike of the Digital Youth Network for the pics!))

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course surveys social theories, research methods as well as activist strategies that focus and depend on black community presences on the Internet. Through readings, discussion and “hands on” experience, students will explore the various ways that the Internet impacts black communities with both virtual and visceral effects.

Consider your teacher as a cyberguide to the Black Online course. Together you will travel through cyberspace and learn about race and representation there. You will explore current issues in cybertculture and how they relate to age-old trends concerning injustice and inequality. You will also explore how online networking activity is used to combat and provide solutions to these problems. Your teacher will guide you through relevant social theory and research methods that should help you to understand the complexities of communities in cyberspace. This course is a journey: it will entail some difficult readings and challenging topics, but it should also be fun. It should contribute to your overall success as a researcher and soon to be college graduate. That is, the goal is to learn a lot about life and technology as well as helpful tools for completing a successful research agenda in your individual course of study here at San Francisco State University.

The aims of this course, personal as well as professional growth and well-being, reflect some of the founding philosophies of Africana Studies in that the discipline was established with social justice and community well-being as central to learning objectives. Understanding how race, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic class identities are unequally represented on the Internet and other digital media marks an important aspect of future studies and activist strategies that work for justice and peace. Documenting how those who are underrepresented in digital media are utilizing that very media to organize and transgress

*subject to change—D.E.Fischer*
structures that seek to alienate is also an important next step concerning Africana Studies agendas.

You are taking this course at a key point in history. We are reflecting on the 40th Anniversary of the student strike that led to the founding of the FIRST Department of Black Studies. We are also counting down to a presidential election, where online presences and digital media are increasingly used to sway voters and encourage participation. Youth digital media use on social networking sites and all of the surrounding issues, ranging from safety to sexualization are common topics of news reports. Your perspective and participation in this unique learning experience might make its own history as well.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

**In this course, students will:**
1. Learn key concepts and key terms associated with studies in cyberculture
2. Become familiar with research design used to study communities in cyberspace
3. Explore social theory in cultural studies and media studies that frame studies of race and representation
4. Experience using different forms of digital media online and elucidate the issues associated with personal and professional representation online

**COURSE MATERIALS**

**Required Readings**
2. All other required reading for the course are available on iLearn ([https://ilearn.sfsu.edu/login/index.php](https://ilearn.sfsu.edu/login/index.php)).

**Suggested Books**

**Course Websites**
- iLearn site: [https://ilearn.sfsu.edu/login/index.php](https://ilearn.sfsu.edu/login/index.php)
- Dr. Dawn-Elissa Fischer faculty page: [http://userwww.sfsu.edu/~def](http://userwww.sfsu.edu/~def)
- Dr. Marcyclenia Morgan’s Hiphop Archive: [http://hiphoparchive.org](http://hiphoparchive.org)
- eBlack Studies & NCBS IT Collaborative Research Network: [www.eblackstudies.org](http://www.eblackstudies.org)

*subject to change—D.E.Fischer*
COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GUIDELINES

Class Participation
Class participation grades are based upon attendance, the quality of your class presentation(s) and your regular participation in class.

Attendance
Attendance is expected and essential. Attendance is considered part of class participation and will be monitored with a sign-in system. An absence motivated by severe illness or extreme emergency will be counted as an excused absence. Students will be asked to provide documentation. Students missing class should notify the TAs via e-mail or by submitting a paper notice to Instructor mailboxes (E/P, Room 103).

Class Conduct Guidelines

• Class discussion is essential. The “R.O.P.E.S.” (Respect, Openness, Participation, Enthusiasm, Sensitivity) will serve as a guideline for all class discussion. The “R” for RESPECT includes TURNING OFF CELL PHONE RINGERS while class is in session. Also, I expect you to refrain from leaving class to answer phone cell phone calls. The “S” for SENSITIVITY includes being able to work cooperatively in groups as well as being sensitive to the diverse life experiences represented by fellow students.
• Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Therefore, all submitted work during the course shall be the student's original work, with credit being given to any sources used. Violating this premise will affect evaluations of work submitted, and if necessary, adjudication will be processed by procedures according to San Francisco State University guidelines.
• There may be periodic “pop” quizzes concerning assigned readings and films. Students are encouraged to complete readings prior to class meeting times. The evaluation of these “pop” quizzes will be computed into students’ final class participation grades.
• Students requesting classroom accommodations or disability resources are encouraged to contact the instructor about appropriate accommodations. Please do not hesitate to approach your Instructor concerning these matters.
• The Instructor reserves the right to adjust course material as needed.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

A. Weekly Reading Response Blog Postings
Students will submit a reading response in the form of a blog using their course Myspace page. These blogs must be uploaded by the following Tuesday at 9am after a reading was assigned. That is, each Tuesday students will post a response blog concerning the readings form the previous week. These blogs must be at least 200 words, but no more than 400 words. The following Thursday by 9am, students must post at least 3 comments on 3 different classmates' pages. Students should demonstrate that they have read the blog and...
comment with critical, professional feedback. The Blogs and the three comments will consist of 30% of your grade. Blog postings and comments will be graded on whether or not it is clear that the student has read the reading and provided critical feedback. That is, students should assess the readings’ strengths and weaknesses and share that online. Relating the works’ usefulness to one’s own research agenda is encouraged and rewarded. Check the Course Schedule on the syllabus to see when blogs are due. The first blog is due on September 8 at 9am.

B. Mid-Term
As participants in AFRS 266 you are required to do 13 weeks of critical reading, thinking, and writing. The process of critical inquiry will culminate in an in-class mid-term exam. The midterm examination will consist of a variety of multiple choice questions, and possibly one or two short essay questions.

C. Final Presentation or Paper
All students will conduct their own research on a topic related to cyberculture. Students may choose to present the findings of their work in a final presentation or a final paper format. Those choosing final presentations may work in groups that are cleared by the professor. Ethical considerations must be adhered to in this research. All study topics must be cleared by the professor.

Final Presentation Option

The FINAL PRESENTATION option is a presentation that reflects research in an online community conducted during the course. All topics must be cleared by the professor by November 20. Students must meet in person with the professor during office hours to discuss details of research project and presentation.

1. The presentation should have the following sections:

   A) Introduction of argument
   B) Historical situation or necessary context of research topic
   C) Literature review of texts that support one’s theoretical framework
   D) Explanation of methods used to gather data
   E) Data Analysis
   F) Concluding remarks

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2. **FINAL PRESENTATIONS will be presented to the class on December 2, December 4, December 9 and December 11th.** Presenters not ready to present during their assigned time will receive a zero grade.

3. Support materials, such as power point presentation files, must be turned into the professor. Students are encouraged to be creative and incorporate aspects of video technology, audio, visual, or digital storytelling, power point, photographs, and/or performance.

**Final Paper Option**

The **FINAL PAPER** option is a research composition that reflects research in an online community conducted during the course. All topics must be cleared by the professor by **November 20.** Students wishing to write papers must meet in person with the professor during office hours to discuss details of paper and research project.

4. The paper should have the following sections:

   A) Introduction of argument  
   B) Historical situation or necessary context of research topic  
   C) Literature review of texts that support one's theoretical framework  
   D) Explanation of methods used to gather data  
   E) Data Analysis  
   F) Concluding remarks

5. **The FINAL PAPER is due in class on Thursday, December 11th.** Late papers will be marked down and will not be accepted a week after the deadline is past. Email submissions will not be accepted. Be sure to keep a copy for yourself.

6. The paper should be 8-10 double-spaced pages in length, follow standard academic guidelines regarding font and margin sizes, and include references cited according to academic style guides (e.g., AAA, APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.).

**D. Quizzes and Other Assignments**

Periodic quizzes and assignments will be given to help prepare students for the midterm and final project/paper. The quizzes will take place in “pop quiz” format, and will generally consist of one or two short answer questions during the class meeting period. Assignment guidelines will be posted on iLearn during the course. These assignments are designed to help students prepare and complete necessary work for optimal performance on the midterm and final project/paper. These items will be graded on a pass/fail basis and the points will be added to the final class participation grade.

The classes are divided into “Technical Tuesdays” and “Theoretical Thursdays.” That means that generally, although not always, Tuesdays will be spent learning and practicing a technical skill, and Thursdays will be spent discussing and dissecting theoretical trends illuminated in the course readings. The course is designed in this matter to assist each
student with optimal performance on all graded assignments. Since blogs are due on Tuesdays, the Thursday before will be spent discussing those readings. Since the final project requires the use of a digital technology in research design and presentation, Tuesdays will be spent mastering these skills. Both days will cover terms and concepts that students will be tested on during the midterm examination.

****Students are required to print ALL course readings from ilearn by the second week of class. Students experiencing financial hardship may contact the course TAs and Instructor for support in completing this assignment. Students are expected to bring ALL readings in a binder with the course syllabus by September 4.***

**Grading Policy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Reading Response Blog Postings</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-Term</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project or Paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
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</tbody>
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**Grading Scale**

- 94-100 A
- 90-93 A-
- 87-89 B+
- 84-86 B
- 80-83 B-
- 77-79 C+
- 74-76 C
- 70-73 C-
- 67-69 D+
- 64-66 D
- 60-63 D-
- 59-below F

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**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week One** _Introduction to the Course: What is 'Black'? What is 'Online'? What does it mean to be "Black Online"?_

➔ Tuesday, August 26 & Thursday, August 28:

**Assignment**

Construct a personal page at a social networking site

**Required Reading**

2. "African-Americans Create Online Identity" by Robyn Greenspan
3. Digital Youth Network: Interview with “Brother Mike” Hawkins
4. Hiphop Archive’s About & Hiphop University Pages by Marcyliena Morgan
Week Two _ Taking Black Technology Use Seriously

→ Tuesday, September 2:

Assignment
Post an answer to the forum on iLearn. (See, Forum: How serious is black technology use?) Posting a duplicate as “comment” MySpace is optional; however, those who do post an answer will receive 2 extra credit points.

Required Reading

→ Thursday, September 4: BINDER REVIEW DAY!!! BRING YOUR READINGS!!!!

Required Reading
1. “Black Secret Technology: Detroit Techno and the Information Age” by Ben Williams

Week Three _ Digital Divide: Tallying the Gaps

→ Tuesday, September 9:

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post Blog to Myspace page. This is a 200-400 word response to the prior week’s Required Readings (Banks & Williams)

Assignment
Post at least three comments to classmates’ blogs. Due Thursday, February 7 @9am

Required Reading
1. “Oakland, the Word, and the Divide: How We All Missed the Moment” by Adam J. Banks

→ Thursday, September 11:

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post at least three comments to classmates’ blogs.

Required Reading
1. “Cultural Paths to Computing: African American Women in a Community Technology Center” by Samuel M. Hampton

Week Four _ Digital Divide: Izzit Treal?

→ Tuesday, September 16:

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post Blog to Myspace page. This is a 200-400 word response to the prior week’s Required Readings (Banks & Hampton)

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Required Reading
1. “Beyond Access: Race, Technology, Community” by Logan Hill

→ Thursday, September 18:

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post at least three comments to classmates’ blogs.

Required Reading
1. “Accessing the Machine” by Andrew F. Wood & Matthew J. Smith

Week Five_Race and Representation (Part One): Theorizing Cyberculture
→ Tuesday, September 23:

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post Blog to Myspace page. This is a 200-400 word response to the prior week’s Required Readings (Hill & Wood/Smith)

Required Reading
1. “Encoding, Decoding” by Stuart Hall

→ Thursday, September 25:

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post at least three comments to classmates’ blogs.

Required Reading

Week Six_Race and Representation (Part Two): Key Terms
→ Tuesday, September 30:

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post Blog to Myspace page. This is a 200-400 word response to the prior week’s Required Readings (Hall & Hines/Nelson/Tu)

Required Reading

→ Thursday, October 2:
**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post at least three comments to classmates’ blogs.**

Required Reading
1. “The Work of Representation” by Stuart Hall (continued)

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**Week Seven_Preparing for Researching Race Online: Key Concepts**

→ *Tuesday, October 7:*

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post Blog to Myspace page. This is a 200-400 word response to the prior week’s Required Readings (Hall)*

Required Reading
1. Selections from “Understanding How New Communication Technologies Work” by Andrew F. Wood and Matthew J. Smith
2. “Introduction: Examining the Blog-Media Relationship” by Marl Tremayne

→ *Thursday, October 9:*

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post at least three comments to classmates’ blogs.**

Required Reading
1. “Race in Cyberspace” by Beth Kolko, Lisa Nakamura and Gilbert B. Rodman

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**Week Eight_Case Study #1: How to Rent-a-Negro Online**

→ *Tuesday, October 14:*

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post Blog to Myspace page. This is a 200-400 word response to the prior week’s Required Readings (Wood/ Smith, Tremayne & Kolko/ Nakamura/ Rodman)*

Required Reading
1. ‘How Do I Rent a Negro?’ Racialized Subjectivities and Digital Performance Art” by Brandi Wilkins Cantanese

→ *Thursday, October 16:*

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post at least three comments to classmates’ blogs.**

Required Reading
1. ‘How Do I Rent a Negro?’ Racialized Subjectivities and Digital Performance Art” by Brandi Wilkins Cantanese (continued)
**Week Nine_Midterm and Mid-Course Review**

→ **Tuesday, October 21:**

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post Blog to Myspace page. This is a 200-400 word response to the prior week’s Required Readings (Cantanese)**

Required Reading: None new. Review for Midterm

→ **Thursday, October 23****** IN-CLASS MIDTERM*************

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post at least three comments to classmates’ blogs.**

Required Reading: None

**Week Ten_Case Study #2: Analysis of an Online Social Networking Site**

→ **Tuesday, October 28:**

Required Reading

→ **Thursday, October 30:**

Required Reading

**Week Eleven_Case Study #3: Exploring Intersectionality in Online Identities**

→ **Tuesday, November 4:**

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post Blog to Myspace page. This is a 200-400 word response to the prior week’s Required Readings (Stokes)**

Required Reading
1. “Homothugdragsterism” by Joel Barraquiel Tan
2. “Cyberorganizing US Constituencies for Africa” by Jill Humphries

→ **Thursday, November 6:**

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post at least three comments to classmates’ blogs.**

Required Reading
1. “Toward a Sociology of Information Technology” by Saskia Sassen
Week Twelve_Virtual Methods: Studying Online Identities
→Tuesday, November 11: NO CLASS—PREPARE REPORT!!!

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post Blog to Myspace page. This is a 200-400 word response to the prior week’s Required Readings (Tan, Humphries & Sassen)

Required Reading
1. Selections from Alkalimat (each group is assigned a section) TBA

→Thursday, November 13:

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post at least three comments to classmates’ blogs. PRESENT ALKALIMAT

Required Reading
1. Selections from Alkalimat (each group is assigned a section) TBA

Week Thirteen_Virtual Methods: Research Design in Cyberspace
→Tuesday, November 18:

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post Blog to Myspace page. This is a 200-400 word response to the prior week’s Required Readings (Hine)

Required Reading
1. Selections from Virtual Methods by Christine Hine
   ****Review of Course in Class. Preparation for Final Projects/ Papers.

→Thursday, November 20**********PROJECT/ PAPER TOPICS DUE************

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post at least three comments to classmates’ blogs.

Required Reading
1. Selections from Virtual Methods by Christine Hine
   ****Review of Course in Class. Preparation for Final Projects/ Papers.

Week Fourteen_Black Online: Individual Research Projects
→Tuesday, November 25: *********NO CLASS MEETING****************

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post Blog to Myspace page. This is a 200-400 word response to the prior week’s Required Readings (Hine)

→Thursday, November 27:*********NO CLASS MEETING****************

**Assignment Due @ 9am: Post at least three comments to classmates’ blogs.
Assignment
By now you have read enough social theory, methodology and case studies to have an idea of how to design a research project studying online communities. Use this day to peruse the net and finish what is necessary to present or write about your own case study concerning Black Online experiences.

*Week Fifteen_Final Project Presentations*

→ *Tuesday, December 2:*

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→ *Thursday, December 4:*

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**Week Sixteen_Final Project Presentations**

→ *Tuesday, December 9:*

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→ *Thursday, December 11:**********FINAL PAPERS DUE IN CLASS**********

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SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

University Policies and Resources

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<th>Learning Environment and Academic Integrity</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Advising Center</th>
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<tr>
<td>“Academic integrity is a fundamental principle of the University. Academic dishonesty, cheating or plagiarism, represents an attempt to gain an unfair advantage and it is expressly prohibited by the SFSU Student code of Conduct. Penalties for cheating and/or representing the works of others as your own range from a grade of 0 on a particular assignment through an F for the course to expulsion from the university. Please familiarize yourself with the policy at <a href="http://www.sfsu.edu/%7Ehelpdesk/docs/rules/conduct.htm">http://www.sfsu.edu/%7Ehelpdesk/docs/rules/conduct.htm</a>”</td>
<td>“The University is committed to providing reasonable academic accommodation to students with special need/disabilities. The Disability Programs and Resources Center provides University academic support services and specialized assistance. Individuals with physical, perceptual, or learning special needs/disabilities as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Center at (415) 338-2472 or in SSB 110.” <a href="http://www.sfsu.edu/~dprc/">http://www.sfsu.edu/~dprc/</a></td>
<td>The College of Ethnic Studies Resource Center is located in Ethnic Studies/Psychology 103. You are enthusiastically invited to participate in their programs of academic support. Please note a few essential deadlines: Last Day to Add: 9/9/08 Last Day to Drop: 9/23/08</td>
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</table>

Ethnic Studies Student Resource and Empowerment Center -- located at EP 110B and open Monday through Friday --we provide information and referral for all students taking classes in the College of Ethnic Studies including: tutoring, scholarships, financial aid, job opportunities, health care and psychological counseling, legal referral, academic counseling, graduate school application, community resources and social networks on campus.

All services are free and we consider each student as a valued client. Drop-in or contact Phil Klasky at pklasky@sfsu.edu or (415) 405-0775. Web site: [www.sfsu.edu/ethnicst/studentcenter](http://www.sfsu.edu/ethnicst/studentcenter)

**Your Instructor is available and here to assist in all ways possible.**

Course TAs:
Chasiti Effort: [chasiti@browninamerica.org](mailto:chasiti@browninamerica.org)
Imani Williams: [imani2b@yahoo.com](mailto:imani2b@yahoo.com)
Warren Sells: [warrensells@hotmail.com](mailto:warrensells@hotmail.com)
Max Treuscorff-Gerhardt [macks44@comcast.net](mailto:macks44@comcast.net)