

**“Making A Way Out of No Way: Resilience in the Black Experience” (Black Resilience)  
1-Credit Course (2020 Fall Term)**

In this one-credit course, we will explore themes and practices of resistance, resilience in the Black experience.

Consider the following: The ongoing murders of Black people in America, often at the hands of the very police expected to protect life, the emboldening of white supremacist-*cum*-racist movements, and the disproportionate infection as well as loss of life among Black people in the wake of COVID-19 are but a few reminders of America’s racist history. Yet, that is not the whole story. As the late Black historian Vincent Harding (1931-2014) reminded us in the book, There Is a River, African American history is also the story of resistance and resilience, indeed an aspect of the larger story that frequently fades into oblivion untold.

That is why an intentional focus of the course is to learn about the diverse experiences of Black people by listening directly to Black people in America and the diaspora. Through this 1-credit course, the instructor and students will explore ways in which Black people in America and the Diaspora have been resilient in the face of transparent oppression. An equally important goal of the course is to assist students to understand what resilience looks and feels like in the lives of contemporary Blacks, as a way of enabling, building and/or honing our individual as well as collective stories of resistance and resilience, toward the vision of a creating a better way.

To be organized around the African American Workshop and Speaker Series, this course will draw heavily on the themes explored in the series: racial identity, racial justice, activism among Black youth; the changing nature of Black diasporic relationships and the role of Blacks in higher education. The course will draw on articles and books written by the speakers as well as other essays and other supporting materials, all of which focus on the broad themes of the course. We will utilize the LACE (Love, Authenticity, Courage and Empathy = L.A.C.E) methodology to guide the way that instructor and students together navigate the course. The acronym, LACE, stands for a system of engagement that raises awareness and builds connections in learning communities as well as organizations. As part of the framework, the class will explore how love, authenticity, courage and empathy, as ingredients of civility and humanism, factor into the resilience of the Black community. L.A.C.E also provides an opportunity for the participants of the course to explore the varied roles of LACE in their own lives; it will be dovetailed with such queries as (i) What role does self-love play in learning? (ii) What are my values and what does it mean live authentically in alignment them? What does it mean for me to, personally, move through fear to be all that I want to be and also do all that I need to do? and (iii) What does it look like for me to hold space for the emotions and experiences that I do not quite understand or disagree with?

**Learning Goals:**

Demonstrate an ability to use different disciplinary methods to explore the Black experience.

Comprehend and practice analysis of contemporary issues and link them to historical systems and structures.

Honed research and public-speaking as well as critical analysis-cum-writing skills.

Ability to engage comfortably in a learning community, with a commitment to interact across difference.

Students will complete the class more connected to themselves as well as other students and a lot more informed about the complexity of black experience.

**Grading:**

- Reading, Engagement and Participation in Series Lectures: 20%
- Journal Reflection: 30%
- Group Project based on a theme from one of the selected readings below: 50%

Reading as well as class discussion, journal reflections, and group projects will serve as the basis for the final course grade.

**Essays and Selected Reading from the text below will serve as the basis for class discussion and group projects:**

Racial Formation in the United States by Michael Omi and Howard Winant (Selected Chapters)  
The Social Life of DNA: Race, Reparations and Reconciliation after the Genome (Selected Chapters)

“Beyond Just a Cells Unit: What My Science Students Learned from the Story of Henrietta Lacks” by Gretchen Kraig-Turner, pp. 114-121.

Black Stats: Black Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century By The Numbers, Monique Morris and Khalil Muhammad (Selected Chapters)

“Plotting Inequalities: Building Resistance” by Adam Renner, Bridget Brew and Crystal Proctor  
Whistling Vivaldi by Claude Steele (Selected Chapters)

“Queering Black History and Getting Free” by Dominique Hazzard, pp. 325-330

The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime and the Making of Modern Urban America by Khalil Muhammad (Selected Chapters)

Confederates in the Attic by Tony Horwitz (Selected Chapters)

“Rethinking Identity: Afromexican History” by Michelle Nicola, pp. 340-348

“When Black Lives Mattered” by Adam Sanchez, pp. 198-203.

Democracy Remixed: Black Youth and the Future of American Politics by Cathy Cohen (Selected Chapters)

Biased: The Unseen Prejudice that Shapes What We See, Think and Do (Selected Chapters)

“Ode to the Only Black Kid in the Class” by Clint Smith, pp. 319-

Slavery and Justice: Report on the Brown University Committee on Slavery and Justice  
[https://www.brown.edu/Research/Slavery\\_Justice/documents/SlaveryAndJustice.pdf](https://www.brown.edu/Research/Slavery_Justice/documents/SlaveryAndJustice.pdf)