Popular culture has played a large role in constructing and promulgating ideas about blackness. Runaway advertisements issued when the enslaved escaped from bondage characterized them as property rather than people, and select media coverage of the recent, racially inflected murders in Florida, Maryland, Michigan, and New York has framed black men as inherently dangerous. This course explores how and why artists of African descent working within the boundaries of the continental United States have employed the visual arts as a means to explore and define ethnicity and race on their own terms. How did artists seek to relate, or distinguish, their work from traditional African art and/or modern Western art? What was the relationship between their work in the visual arts and other practices, like music and philosophy? Why have artists appropriated derogatory images and reintroduced them into the cultural consciousness? Spanning the seventeenth century through the present, this course looks at artists like David Drake (a.k.a. “Dave the Potter”), Edmonia Lewis, Aaron Douglas, Jacob Lawrence, Romare Bearden, Faith Ringgold, and Kara Walker in order to understand the ways in which craft, painting, sculpture, photography, and new media have been mobilized to address what it means to be black in America.
Course Requirements:

1) Communication

A. Attendance and Participation
Attendance is required at every lecture. Students are expected to arrive on time. In cases of religious observance, please notify me in advance of your absence and arrange to get notes from someone else in the class. More than one unexcused absence or continued lateness will adversely affect the attendance and participation grade. The University attendance policy can be found here: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx#absences

In addition to the two weekly lectures, students are required to attend 1 of the 4 “Events of Interest” listed on the syllabus. They fall on Wednesday, Sept. 2; Monday, Sept. 14; Wednesday, Sept. 16; and Wednesday, Oct. 28. These lectures are by scholars of African art or African-American art and take place at the Harn Museum of Art at 6pm. Come up with 1-3 substantive questions (i.e. questions that push or challenge the speaker’s ideas rather than yes/no questions or questions with answers that can be looked up) based on the lecture and be prepared to share them at the following class meeting.

Additionally, participation is an integral component of the course. Students are expected to take notes on lectures and engage in class discussions on the assigned readings and works at hand. Engaging in class discussion can take many forms: responding to the images, the readings, classmates, and questions posed in lecture. Feel free to draw connections to contemporary events and issues, personal experience, other classes, and material covered at any point in the semester. Offering opinions that differ from those presented in lecture or in comments by classmates is encouraged. Pose questions on the lectures, statements made by other students, etc. These contributions will enrich the classroom experience for all involved.

B. Electronics Policy
Cell phones and other electronic devices, including laptops, should be placed on silent and put away for the duration of lecture and section. Notes can and should be taken with pen/pencil on paper, which has been proven to be a more effective means of learning than taking notes by computer. With documentation from the Dean of Students Office, a waiver will be made to the laptop policy.

C. Email Policy
Please check your UF email regularly. Important information about assignments, meeting locations, etc. will be disseminated via section list-serves. You are automatically subscribed to the list-serve with your UFL email. In most cases, I respond to emails within 24-48 hours.

2) Reading

a. The required course textbook is:


It is required and can be purchased at the UF bookstore or online (be sure to buy the correct edition).

b. All other required readings are available through Ares.
All readings should be completed in advance of the dates for which they are assigned. Bring hardcopies of all readings to section. If your printing budget permits, I strongly encourage you to print the texts prior to reading them so you can underline, highlight, and jot down notes, thoughts, and questions with abandon.

c. Required videos are available at the links provided on the syllabus.

3) **WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**: there are four writing assignments for this course: two looking/writing exercises (approx. 1 pg. each); a research proposal (approx. 3-5 pgs.), and a research paper (approx. 7-10 pgs.).

The looking/writing exercises will be based on works of art selected from two different resources online. Detailed instructions and expectations for the assignment will be provided in class. They will be due in class on Monday, September 14 and Wednesday, September 30 in preparation for the class discussions on those days.

The research proposal and research paper will be on the same work of art, which should be chosen and analyzed in person. The work can be of any medium and should have been made by an African-American artist between 1600 and the present. Amongst other forums, it can be selected from the collection of the Harn Museum of Art or the Special & Area Studies Collections at Smathers Library. Detailed prompts will be distributed in advance of both assignments. The research proposal is due on Friday, November 7. The research paper is due on Monday, December 8.

4) **Exams**: there will be a midterm exam and a final exam for this course. Both will consist of identifications, comparisons, and essays. They will draw upon the material covered in course lectures, discussion sections, and readings. The midterm will be in class on Wednesday, October 15. A midterm review will take place in class on Monday, October 13. The final will be on Thursday, December 17th and will be preceded by a final review on Wednesday, December 9.

**Accommodations**

Every effort will be made to accommodate students with disabilities. Students in need of disability accommodations should schedule an appointment with me as soon as possible. All accommodations requests must be accompanied by necessary documentation from the Dean of Students Office.

**Course Resources**

1) **Canvas** – slide lists and any other documents distributed in class will be posted on the course page.

2) **Office Hours**: I’m happy to meet with you during my office hours Wednesdays, 4pm-6pm in my office, FAC 121, to discuss any questions pertaining to the course content, reading assignments, writing assignments, or exams. Office hours don’t require an appointment; feel free to just drop by. If you’re unavailable at the designated time, just ask or email me, and we can arrange another time to meet.

3) **Academic Support**

UF Teaching Center
https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/
UF Writing Studio
http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/

University Counseling & Wellness Center
http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/

Grading

The final course grade is calculated as follows:

10% Attendance/Participation
20% Looking/Writing Exercises (10% each)
20% Midterm Exam
10% Research Proposal
20% Research Paper
20% Final Exam

To receive full credit, assignments must be turned in on time. Late assignments will only be accepted under special or extreme circumstances with valid documentation and, unless impossible, extensions must be arranged in advance. Without an approved extension, late assignments will be marked down 1/3 of a grade per day. No make-up exams will be given without documentation demonstrating that the scheduled exam date is impossible. In order to pass this course, all assignments must be completed. No exceptions.

All exams and assignments will be assigned letter grades. For letter grade definitions, see: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx

As a matter of course, students are expected to abide by the University’s policies regarding academic honesty, the honor code, and student conduct related to the honor code. Full information regarding these policies is available at the following sites:

Academic Honesty: http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html#honesty
Honor Code: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php
Student Conduct: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/conductcode.php

Important Dates at a Glance

Mon. Sept. 14 Looking/Writing Exercise 1 due
Weds. Sept. 30 Looking/Writing Exercise 2 due
Weds. Oct. 14 Midterm
Weds. Oct. 28 Bring 1-3 potential paper topics to class
Weds. Nov. 4 Research Proposal due
Weds. Dec. 9 Research Paper due
Thurs., Dec. 17 Final Exam
Course Schedule

Week 1: Beginnings

Mon., Aug. 24  
Introduction

Wed., August 26 
Craft and Identity

Reading:

Week 2: The 19th Century

Mon., Aug. 31  
Painting and Politics

Reading:

Wed., Sept. 2  
Photography and Freedom

Reading:

Event of Interest: Christine Mullen Kreamer, Deputy Director and Chief Curator, the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, “Rethinking How You Think about Africa,” Harn Museum of Art, 6pm

Discussion:  
Picturing Slavery

Week 3: The 19th Century P. 2

Mon., Sept. 7  
Holiday

Wed., Sept. 9  
Art Worlds

Reading:

Discussion:  
Biography and Biology

Week 4: On Display

Mon., Sept. 14  
Exhibiting Blackness

* Looking/Writing Exercise due today *

Event of Interest: John Bowles, Associate Professor of African-American Art, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, [topic TBD], Harn Museum of Art, 6pm

Wed., Sept. 16  
Meet at the Harn Museum of Art (African Collection)

Reading:

**Week 5: The Harlem Renaissance**

Mon., Sept. 21  Harlem Renaissance – A People United
Reading:

Wed., Sept. 23  Harlem Renaissance – A Self Divided
Reading:

Discussion:  The Uses and Abuses of African art
Reading:

**Week 6: (Re)producing History**

Mon., Sept. 28  Crossing Borders
Reading:

Wed., Sept. 30  Meet at Smathers Library: Special & Area Studies Collections
* Looking/Writing Exercise Due Today *

**Week 7: Modernism and Its Discontents**

Mon., Oct. 5  The Rise of Abstraction
Reading:

Wed., Oct. 7  The Persistence of Figuration
Reading:

Discussion:  The Politics of Abstraction

**Week 8: Midterm**

Mon., Oct. 12  Midterm review

Wed., Oct. 14  Midterm

**Week 9: The Power of Images**
Mon., Oct. 19  The Civil Rights Movement

Reading:

Oct. 21  Meet at the Harn Museum of Art

Readings:

Week 10:  The Politics of Representation

Oct. 26  Women Who Will

Reading:

Oct. 28  Writing Art History

Reading:

* Bring 1-3 potential paper topics to class *

Event of Interest: Leslie King-Hammond, Founding Director of the Center for Race and Culture at the Maryland Institute College of Art, “The Global Africa Project: Maker Culture and the Economies of the Creative Community,” Harn Museum of Art, 6pm

Week 11:  The Politics of Representation 2

Nov. 2  Aunt Jemima

Reading:

Nov. 4  Library Session: Library West

* Research Proposal Due Today *

Week 12:  Medium is the Message

Nov. 9  Quilting: Fabricating Art

Nov. 11:  Holiday

Week 13:  Medium is the Message 2

Nov. 16  Painting: The Past, Remixed

Reading:

Nov. 18  Library Session: Architecture & Fine Arts Library
Reading:

**Week 14:**  Medium is the Message 3
Nov. 23  Performance: Our Bodies, Our “Selves”

Reading:

Nov. 25:  Happy Thanksgiving!

**Week 15:**  Medium is the Message 4
Nov. 30  Sculpture: Craft Revisited

Reading:

Dec. 2  Meet at the Harn Museum of Art
Return of the Real

Reading:

**Week 16:**  Revisiting the Past
Dec. 7  Return of the Repressed

Reading:

Dec. 9  Final Review

Dec. 17  Final Exam