

Professor Nika Elder
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 5pm-6pm and by appt.
Office: 121, Fine Arts Building C
nelder@arts.ufl.edu

Lectures: T – Period 3 & 4
Th – Period 3
Location: FAC 201

**ARH 3631 African-American Art: 1600 to the Present
Spring 2017**



Kara Walker, *Gone: An Historical Romance of a Civil War as It Occurred b'tween the Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and Her Heart*, 1994

Course Description

In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), sociologist W.E.B. DuBois urged his fellow African-American to be a “co-worker in the kingdom of culture.” According to DuBois, artistic activity was as critical to racial equality as was institutional change. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, many artists have heeded the thinker’s call, but so, too, did many artists working in the 18th and 19th centuries anticipate it. This course examines how and why black artists have used painting, sculpture, photography, print, and mixed media to assert and question personal, racial, and national identity. Spanning the 18th century through the present, topics addressed include quilts by Harriet Powers and Faith Ringgold, portraits commissioned by Frederick Douglass and photographs executed by Lorna Simpson, the sculptures of Edmonia Lewis and David Hammons, the collage aesthetic deployed by Jacob Lawrence and Romare Bearden, and installations by Kara Walker and Fred Wilson. In addition to lectures and discussions, the course includes guest speakers and site visits.

Course Requirements:

The course has three requirements: engagement, writing assignments, and exams.

1. ENGAGEMENT

The engagement requirement has four components:

1) Attendance

Attendance is required at every class session. Students are expected to arrive on time. Absences and/or continued lateness will adversely affect your engagement grade.

The University attendance policy can be found here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx#absences>

In cases of religious observance, please notify me in advance of your absence and arrange to get notes from someone else in the class.

2) Reading

a. The course textbook is:

Lisa Farrington, *African-American Art: A Visual and Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017)

It is required and can be purchased at the UF bookstore or online.

The textbook provides critical background information for lecture, which will presume familiarity with names and dates mentioned therein. Readings from the textbook should be completed in advance of the dates for which they are assigned.

b. All other required readings are available in the "Course Reserves" section on Canvas.

Bring hardcopies of all readings to class. 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.

3) Participation

Participation is an integral component of the course and will be graded. Participating means:

1. **Taking productive notes on lecture.** Lectures go well beyond the textbook and will be the basis of all exams, so it is to your benefit to be as thorough in your note-taking as possible. See Appendix A for some helpful note-taking tips.

2. **Responding to the discussion questions on Canvas.** In order to help guide your reading of “outside sources,” i.e. non-textbook reading, discussion questions will be posted on Canvas. Responses are due by 12 am (midnight) the night before class. Late posts will not be counted.

3. **Engaging in class discussions on readings and artworks.** Engaging in class discussion can take several different forms: answering questions, posing questions, agreeing or disagreeing with other students’ comments.

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.

4) Policies

Please adhere to all course policies.

Electronics Policy

Cell phones should be placed on silent and, along with other electronic devices, including laptops, put away for the duration of lecture and section. Notes can and should be taken with pen/pencil on paper rather than by laptop.

Research has proven that taking notes by hand benefits comprehension, retention, and the overall classroom experience. See, for example, the following article from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* <http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/taking-notes-by-hand-benefits-recall-researchers-find/51411> and the journal article on which that piece was based http://www.academia.edu/6273095/The_Pen_Is_Mightier_Than_The_Keyboard_Advantages_of_Longh_and_Over_Laptop_Note_Taking

With documentation from the Dean of Students Office, a waiver will be made to the laptop policy.

Email Policy

Please check your UF email and Canvas regularly. Important information about assignments, meeting locations, etc. will be disseminated via section list-servs. You are automatically subscribed to the list-serv with your UF email. In most cases, I respond to emails within 24-48 hours.

Conduct Policy

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>

2. WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

There are two response papers for this course and a research paper, which is divided into three components.

The first response paper (1-3 pages) will address the Guerrilla Girls lecture on Thursday, February 9th. The second response paper (1-3 pages) will address the film *Downtown 81*, which you will watch in advance of class on Thursday, March 30th. Detailed instructions will be provided in advance of both assignments.

The research paper (7-10 pages) will focus on a single work of African-American art produced between the 16th century and the present. It can be on a work in any medium (painting, film, sculpture, or photography, etc.). I strongly encourage you to choose a topic that you can analyze and study in person. Among other forums, it can be selected from the collection of the Harn Museum of Art or Special Collections. The research paper is divided into three components. Detailed instructions will be provided for each one:

- * a paragraph-long proposal of a topic is due on Tuesday, February 21st
- * the research proposal (approx. 3 pages) is due on Tuesday, March 14th
- * the paper is due on Tuesday, April 25th

3. Exams

There is a midterm exam and a final exam for this course. They will consist of a combination of ID's/discussions, comparisons, short answer questions, and essays. The exams draw upon the material covered in course lectures, discussions, and readings. The midterm will be in class on Tuesday, February 28th. A midterm review will take place in class on Tuesday, February 21st. The end-of-semester exam will be on Tuesday, April 18th and will be preceded by an in-class review session on April 11th.

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, 5pm-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
15% Participation
10% Response Papers (5% each)

5% Paper Topic Proposal
10% Research Proposal
20% Research Paper

15% Midterm Exam
15% Final Exam

All exams and assignments will be assigned letter grades and input into Canvas, which will calculate the final course grade. Grading rubrics for each component of the course can be found in the appendices to this syllabus. Following are the UF grade definitions:

A: 94-100
A-: 90-93
B+: 87-89
B: 84-86
B-: 80-83
C+: 77-79
C: 74-76
C-: 70-73
D+: 67-69
D: 64-66
D-: 61-63
F: 0-60

In order to pass this course, all assignments must be completed. No exceptions. To receive full credit, assignments must be turned in on time. Extensions will only be granted under special or extreme circumstances with valid documentation and, unless impossible, 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.

Important Dates at a Glance

Tues. Feb. 21	Paper topic due
Tues. Mar. 14	Research Proposal due
Tues. Apr. 25	Research Paper due
Tues. Feb. 28	Midterm
Tues. Apr. 18	End-of-semester exam

Projected Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction

Thurs., Jan. 5 Introduction

Week 2: The 19th Century P. 1

Tues., Jan.10 Craft and Identity

Reading:

Farrington, *African-American Art*, pgs. 15-16, 23-24 (drums), 40-43, 46-50

Thurs. Jan. 12 Painting and Politics

Reading:

Farrington, *African-American Art*, pgs. 67-69, 83-87

Week 3: The 19th Century P. 2

Tues., Jan. 17 Photography and Freedom I

Reading:

Frederick Douglass, "Age of Pictures" (1862), in *Picturing Frederick Douglass* (2015)

Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman" (1851)

Thurs., Jan. 19 Photography and Freedom II

Reading:

Farrington, *African-American Art*, pgs. 100-103

Week 4: The 19th Century P. 3

Tues., Jan. 24 African-American Artists Abroad

Reading:

Farrington, *African-American Art*, pgs. 57-62, 94-98

Kristen Buick, "The 'Problem' of Art History's Black Subject," in *Child of the Fire: Mary Edmonia Lewis and the Problem of Art History's Black and Indian Subject*

Thurs., Jan. 26 Blackness on Display

W.E.B. DuBois, "The American Negro at Paris," *The American Monthly Review of Reviews*, vol. XXII, no. 5 (November 1900): 575-577
Hubert H. Bancroft, "Preface" and "The Midway Plaisance," in *The Book of the Fair: An Historical and Descriptive Presentation of the World's Science, Art, and Industry, as viewed through the Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893* (1893)

Week 5: The Early 20th Century

Tues., Jan. 31 Harlem Renaissance – A People United

Reading:
Farrington, *African-American Art*, pgs. 117-121, 134-135
Alain Locke, "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts," *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (1925)

Tues., Jan 31 **Lecture of Interest—strongly encouraged to attend!**
"Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America"
Ibram Kendi, Assistant Professor of History at UF and winner of the 2016 National Book Award
Bob Graham Center, 6pm

Thurs., Feb. 2 Harlem Renaissance – A Self Divided

Reading:
Farrington, *African-American Art*, pgs. 132-133, 139-142
W.E.B. DuBois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)

Week 6: The Art World

Tues., Feb. 7 Race and the Museum
A Conversation with Eric Segal, Curator of Education and Director of Public Programs at the Harn Museum of Art
* Class meets at the Harn *

Reading:
Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists," *ARTNews* (1971)

Thurs., Feb. 9 In lieu of class, attend the following lecture and write a paper in response to the prompt distributed in class on 2/7:

A Lecture by "Frida Kahlo"
Harn Museum of Art
Time TBD (evening)

Fri., Feb. 10 ***Response Paper due on Canvas by 11:59pm***

Week 7: Mid-20th Century P. 1

Tues., Feb. 14 Right-ing History

Reading:
Farrington, *African-American Art*, pgs. 151-152, 170, 180-184, 188-190

Thurs., Feb. 16 Class Canceled (CAA)

Instead: explore paper topics (see p. 16 of this syllabus for resources)

Week 8: Mid-20th Century P. 2

Tues., Feb. 21 Midterm review

Writing:
Paper Topic Due on Canvas by 5pm

Thurs., Feb. 23 The Everyday

Reading
Farrington, *African-American Art*, pgs. 207-211
Gordon Parks, "The Restraints: Open and Hidden," in *Life* (September 1956)

Sun., Feb. 26 Event of Interest
"In/visible: Women and Gender in Art"
Roundtable in conjunction with the exhibition, "Intra-Action: Women Artists from the Harn Collection"
Harn Museum of Art, Time TBD (afternoon)

Week 9: Mid-20th Century P. 3

Tues., Feb. 28 Midterm

Thurs., Mar. 2 Writing Art History

Reading:
Alex Nemerov, "Ground Swell: Edward Hopper in 1939," *American Art* Vol. 22, No. 3 (fall 2008), pp. 50-71

Week 10: Spring Break

Week 11: Late-20th Century P. 1

Tues., Mar. 14 The Rise of Abstraction

Reading:

Farrington, *African-American Art*, pgs. 217-225

Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting" (1960)

Harold Rosenberg, "American Action Painters" (1952), p. 25-32

Writing:

Research Proposal Due on Canvas by 5pm

Thurs., Mar. 16 The Civil Rights Movement

Reading:

Farrington, *African-American Art*, pgs. 245-247, 250-252, 260-264, 239-242, 186-188

Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream," speech delivered at the March on Washington (1963)

Text: <http://www.archives.gov/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0yP4aLyq1g>

Malcolm X, "By Any Means Necessary," speech delivered at the founding rally of the Organization of Afro-American Unity (1964)

Text: <http://www.blackpast.org/1964-malcolm-x-s-speech-founding-rally-organization-afro-american-unity#sthash.VUWi9z1B.dpuf>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhg6LxyTnY8>

Week 12: Late-20th Century P. 2

Tues., Mar. 21 Library Session: Architecture & Fine Arts Library

Reading:

Wayne Booth, et al. "From Problems to Sources" in *The Craft of Research* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pgs. 68-82

Gordon Harvey, "Integrating Sources into a Paper," *Writing with Sources: A Guide for Harvard Students* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1998), pgs. 3-13

Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual* [skim]

Optional Reading:

Joseph Harris, "Forwarding," *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts* (Logan: Utah State University, 2006), pgs. 34-53

Thurs., Mar. 23 Faith Ringgold and Politics

Reading
Farrington, *African-American Art*, pgs. 279-281, 285-288

Week 13: Late-20th Century P. 3

Tues., Mar. 28 Video Art on Racism

Reading
Farrington, *African-American Art*, pgs. 306-307, 315-317
Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation" (1989) and bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators" (1992) in *Film and Theory: An Anthology*
Writing Studio @ Duke University, "Visual Rhetoric/Visual Literacy: Writing About Film" <https://twp.duke.edu/uploads/assets/film.pdf>

Thurs., Mar. 30 Basquiat and the City

Reading
Farrington, *African-American Art*, pgs. 339-340, 347-349
Watch *Downtown 81* (available for free through the UF library using Kanopy)

Writing
Response Paper due on Canvas by 7am

Week 14: Late-20th Century P. 4

Tues., Apr. 4 Sculpture and Craft

Reading
Farrington, *African-American Art*, pgs. 275-276, 304-306

Optional Viewing:
Art21.org, "Martin Puryear: Time,"
<http://www.art21.org/videos/episode-time>

Thurs., Apr. 6 Photography and Fictions

Reading
Farrington, *African-American Art*, pgs. 329-332, 334-335

Optional Viewing:
Art21.org, "Carrie Mae Weems: Compassion,"
<http://www.art21.org/videos/segment-carrie-mae-weems-in-compassion>

Week 15: Late-20th Century P. 5

Tues., Apr. 11 Exam Review

Writing:
Work on Research Paper

Thurs., Apr. 13 The Racial Politics of the Museum

Reading
Farrington, *African-American Art*, pgs. 318-320, 343-347

Optional Viewing:
Art21.org, "Kara Walker: Stories,"
<http://www.art21.org/videos/segment-kara-walker-in-stories>
Art21.org, "Fred Wilson: Structures,"
<http://www.art21.org/videos/segment-fred-wilson-in-structures>

Week 16

Tues. Apr. 18 Exam

Tues. Apr. 25 Final Paper due on Canvas by 5pm

Appendix A

Note-Taking Strategies

In listening to lectures, keep track of two things:

1. the trajectory of African-American art

The course traces a narrative about the development of African-American art from the 18th century through the present as artists respond to the world around them and to one another. At the start of every lecture, I will outline the key themes and contributions of the artist, movement, or time period under discussion as well as how they fit into the trajectory of African-American art.

2. the meaning of individual works of art

Lectures will offer historically situated interpretations of individual works of art. That is to say, they will explain what a given work of art says about its subject and why. Things to listen for include:

- * the subject of a work of art
 - * reasons why an artist took up a given subject
- * how the artist depicted that subject
 - * what decisions did she or he make?
- * the pictorial or cultural circumstances that informed those decisions
- * finally, what those decisions mean for the work of art: what the work says about its subject and why

You will also be asked to address these topics (often referred to in class as the “what,” “how,” and “why”) on the midterm and end-of-semester exam.

The discussion and interpretation of individual works of art in class can also serve as a model for the research paper. Visual analysis is the first step in developing an interpretation of a work of art. It yields an hypothesis about what a work of art says about its subject, which is then tested and tweaked through recourse to contextual information.

Appendix B

Engagement: Grading Rubric

A: student has gone above and beyond in achieving the course goals—has really tried to learn and understand the meaning and significance of African-American art. The student read and processed the readings, was prepared for class, consistently offered thoughtful and insightful responses to discussion posts on Canvas, and truly advanced conversations in section by posing probing questions, making deep insights into the readings, offering alternative viewpoints, or noting complicating factors. It goes without saying that this student has attended all lectures and sections, always arrived on time, and adhered to other course policies.

A-: great, but falls just short of the above.

B+: a very good effort. Usually did and processed the readings; offered some insightful discussion posts on Canvas; regularly contributed to conversations by answering questions, but also introducing new points, questions, etc.

B: a good effort. Student did the reading, posted responses to discussion questions on Canvas, and regularly answered questions in class. This student has attended almost all class sessions, generally arrived on time, and adhered to other course policies.

B-: an okay effort. Student usually did the reading, responded to discussion posts on Canvas, and answered questions on occasion.

C+: almost there. Student usually shows up for class, mostly on time, but has yet to really make her or his presence known by participating in the conversation; unclear whether or not the readings have been done; intermittently posts responses to discussion questions on Canvas.

C: falls short of the above in some way.

C-: falls short of a C+ in more than one way.

D: something that makes the grade not an F.

F: student is disengaged from the class—does not attend class regularly and, therefore, has not put herself or himself in a position to fulfill the engagement requirement.

Appendix C

Exams: Grading Rubric

A = has a firm grasp on the course content (meaning: what each work is about, what it means, and its significance within the history of art) as well as solid understanding of visual analysis, the goals of art history, and the ability to apply these skills to known and unknown works as well as individual pieces and pairings.

A- = the exam falls just short of the above. It's great, but misses a couple of key points here and there or offers a less than compelling thesis for the compare and contrast.

B+ = a very good effort, but misses a several key points here and there or consistently leaves out an element of each question (the "how" or the "why," for example) but does everything else very well.

B = a solid effort, but inconsistent—gets some questions, but not others. Demonstrates a burgeoning understanding that works of art have meaning and a relationship to broader socio-cultural concerns, but has not yet internalized how all these things connect.

B- = an okay effort; the student is certainly trying (the ID's are there, for example) and there's attention to material delivered in lecture, but answers to questions are quite spotty, vague, or lack a clear point or focus.

C+ = on the way to getting there; ID's might be spotty; it's not totally clear that the student has studied, perhaps she or he remembers things from lecture, but, at the same time as answers may seem to have been pulled out of nowhere, they demonstrate some awareness/understanding of visual analysis and/or how art history works.

C = the exam falls short of the above. The ID's are even spottier, and the answers more vague; key terms are not mentioned or used.

C- = the exam shows some effort, but the student doesn't seem to understand art history, visual analysis, etc.

D = something that makes the exam not an F—some ID's are on point, or at least a couple of answers are semi-acceptable

F = a couple of ID's, no content from lecture or the textbook, unable to even read the paintings by sight

Appendix D

Papers: Grading Rubric

A = meets and exceeds assignment goals. There's something about the paper that's truly exciting and fresh and revelatory—it really captures your attention. The argument is insightful and well supported by the evidence provided (i.e. the student's descriptions and analysis of the work of art and published sources); the structure serves the argument, and the paper is, as a whole, convincing and a pleasure to read.

A- = the paper falls just short of the above. It's great, but misses some key aspect of the work or offers an insightful thesis, but not necessarily a surprising or unexpected one.

B+ = a very good effort, but the argument could be better executed; some aspects of the work or context might go unaddressed, the analysis could be deeper, the research more thorough or original, the interpretation/thesis could be clearer.

B = a solid effort. There's a sense of a thesis/interpretation, but it's a bit vague or general. The structural logic behind these papers tends to be a bit unclear. The paper may address some key aspects of the work and offer analyses of some descriptions, but not others.

B- = meets the basic criteria for the assignment in some way shape or form. It moves beyond description, but not by very much.

C+ = on the way to getting the basics of art history: lots of description of the work and its context, but little analysis and no clear point/thesis, though there are glimmers of hope and promise.

C = all description all the time

C- = the paper puts forward some effort, but it's unclear to what end; the student doesn't seem to understand the assignment, formal analysis, etc.

D = something that makes the paper not an F

F = the paper lacks an awareness of the assignment, art history, etc. These papers are often significantly shorter than the stipulated length.

Appendix E

Potential Paper Topics

Below is a list of artists whose work you might consider writing on for the final paper. The list is by no means exhaustive or comprehensive and largely includes contemporary artists who—due to time constraints—could not be addressed in lecture. Additional artists can be found in the course textbook.

Glenn Ligon
Kehinde Wiley
Mickalene Thomas
Nick Cave
Hank Willis Thomas
Kerry James Marshall
Horace Pippin
Martin Puryear
Laylah Ali
Ellen Gallagher
Mark Bradford
Theaster Gates
Paul Pfeiffer