

**New York City College of Technology  
Interdisciplinary Committee**

**Application for Interdisciplinary Course Designation**

**Date** November 19, 2013

**Submitted by** Marta Effinger-Crichlow

**Department(s)** African American Studies

1. Identify the course type and title:

☒ An existing course AFR 3000: Black New York

☐ A new course \_\_\_\_\_

☐ A course under development \_\_\_\_\_

2. Provide a course description Using history, literature, the arts, politics, and sociology, this interdisciplinary course seeks to trace the Africana presence in New York City from the 1600s to the present. This localized course will enable students to examine the varied ways in which people of African descent in the Diaspora have helped to shape the complex identity of New York City over time.

3. How many credits will the course comprise? 3 How many hours? 3

4. What prerequisite(s) would students need to complete before registering for the course? Co-requisite(s)?

ENG 1101 and any AFR 1000 or 2000 level-course

5. Explain briefly why this is an interdisciplinary course. Multimedia and literary texts as well as guest lecturers and field research visits will be used to encourage students to consider the ways in which a geographic locale like New York City helps to tell the story of Africana people in America. Scholars, educators, and practitioners of history, literature, the arts, politics, and sociology will help students analyze how Africana people have helped to shape neighborhoods within Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, The Bronx, and Staten Island.

6. What is the proposed theme of the course? What complex central problem or question will it address? What disciplinary methods will be evoked and applied?

The theme and central question for the course are inherently linked. Students will be asked throughout the semester to consider how a range of voices from varied disciplines address the question: What is Black New York? Ultimately, students will be asked to consider why do settings like New York City matter? Through their field research visits and field journals, students will also be expected to consider how their lived experiences in the city shape their responses to these course

questions. African American Studies courses are traditionally interdisciplinary. AFR 3000 further illuminates AFR's desire to sustain our interdisciplinary perspective, which enables students to grasp and appreciate multiple points of view from varying disciplines.

City Tech faculty will serve as guest lecturers for this course. They include, but are not limited to:

- Professor Susan Phillip teaches Urban Tourism in Hospitality Management. Her course examines tourism's role as a vehicle for urban renewal and economic regeneration within New York City.
- Professor Anne Leonard is an instruction and reference librarian. She explores areas of critical information literacy in library instruction and the use of geospatial approaches in place-based education in urban settings.
- Dr. Christine Thorpe is Chair of Human Services. Her teaching and research interests include health disparities among communities of color. Her most recent projects include exploring how the work of Victoria Earle Matthews, an early black feminist and social reform activist in New York, helped to shape contemporary approaches to Human Services in the city.
- Dr. Monique Ferrell teaches introductory courses in Fiction, Creative Writing and Literature in the English Department. She is a well published poet and has extensively explored the New York City landscape in her creative writing.

In addition to one or more of the aforementioned faculty from outside the department, faculty from African American Studies may serve as guest lecturers for this course.

- Dr. Dionne Bennett teaches Hip-Hop Worldview and Blacks in Science, Technology and Business in African American Studies. Her research interests in African American Studies include urban anthropology and media and cultural studies. Her research on Black Los Angeles also helps to highlight her expertise in ethnographic research.
- Dr. Kofi Barima teaches Afro-Caribbean History and African Folklore in African American Studies. His extensive knowledge of social protest in Jamaica's African spaces in the eighteenth and nineteenth century also includes an understanding of the architect of Pan-Africanism Marcus Garvey.

Topics for exploration include: (a) How did slavery, resistance, and emancipation shape colonial New York; (b) how have institutions like churches, clubs, and media outlets addressed race, gender and class issues; (c) how have women and men used unique approaches to articulate concerns about gender and sexuality in the city; (d) how have immigrants and migrants of African descent (re)articulated home in the city; (e) how have cultural movements like the Harlem Renaissance influenced black youth of the past and present; (f) how have fights for social justice in the city mirrored other national and global movements; (g) how have black artists dissected the city through varied forms of creative expression and popular culture; (h) how and why have communities of African descent been perceived as policed neighborhoods; and (i) how does the growth of gentrification impact predominantly black neighborhoods?

7. Which general learning outcomes of an interdisciplinary course does this course address?  
Please explain how the course will fulfill the bolded mandatory learning outcome below. In addition, select and explain at least three additional outcomes.

**☒ Purposefully connect and integrate across-discipline knowledge and skills to solve problems**

This course will integrate theoretical perspectives and methods from both humanities and social science disciplines that will enable students to approach the subject of Black New York from

multiple frameworks and to research the subject using diverse methodologies. A unit on the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements in New York City will certainly include how media representations, such as films, photographs and newspaper articles have contributed to discourses on the fight for social justice. It will also address how the social justice labor performed by Black New Yorkers influenced the Civil Rights Movement and the socio-political and moral identity of the United States in historical and global contexts. Students will assess how the cultural and political labor of Black New Yorkers have informed relationships between diverse cultural, racial, national, gender, and class communities. Additionally, in order to dissect the historical and literary trajectory of Civil Rights and Black Power in the city, non-fiction and fiction will be studied by students. A unit on finding home in New York city over time will include a study of ever changing topics and issues, such as *gentrification, district zoning, immigration, migration, and white flight*. For instance, to raise questions about these evolving topics and issues, a unit may include, but may not be limited to, a study of interactive demographic maps and the novel *Brown Girl, Brownstones* by Paule Marshall. Ultimately, the disciplines applied to the course and the methods students learn will help them to develop transferable skills in: observation-based research, public speaking, and reading and writing within and across multiple disciplines.

**☒ Synthesize and transfer knowledge across disciplinary boundaries**

Students enrolled in AFR 3000 must successfully complete ENG 1101, which is the College's English Composition I course, as well as any AFR 1000 or 2000 level-course. Both courses should provide students with the critical thinking and writing skills needed for entry into AFR 3000. Furthermore, students enrolled in AFR 3000 will acquire knowledge that can be transferred to other disciplines within and beyond CityTech, including but not limited to, Advertising Design and Graphic Arts, Entertainment Technology, Health Services Administration, Hospitality Management, Humanities, Health & Human Services, Law and Paralegal Studies, Nursing, and Social Sciences. The concepts, theories, questions, and methods will prepare students from the varied disciplines for their careers and for lifelong learning.

☐ Comprehend factors inherent in complex problems

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☐ Apply integrative thinking to problem solving in ethically and socially responsible ways

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**☒ Recognize varied perspectives**

The guest lectures will give students enrolled in this course an opportunity to study with a variety of City Tech faculty. Using African American Studies as the core foundation for their lectures, all faculty will also use their expertise in the varied disciplines to explore the questions: What is Black New York? Why do settings like New York City matter when exploring the experiences of people of African descent? How does understanding Black New York elucidate a range of perspectives about the American experience? Students will be expected to recognize how the different faculty bring varied perspectives to the questions. In addition, this course recognizes and values the fact that City Tech students also experience New York in different ways. Therefore, students will be encouraged to share their lived experiences in the city.

☐ Gain comfort with complexity and uncertainty

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☒ Think critically, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively

Throughout the semester, students will be encouraged to recognize the significance of thoughtful questions for lifelong learning. During the class discussions, students will work together to explore the process of question construction. This process is essential because students will design analytical questions for their visits to local cultural and research institutions. They will attempt to address these questions when they record their findings and reflections in a field journal. Periodically, students will share these findings and reflections during class in order to engage with the instructor and other students about their process. Through these discussions, which will be combined with required readings, students will develop critical thinking and public speaking skills as they identify their final research topics. These field research visits, field journal entries, and class discussions are designed to prepare students for their final research presentations. These exercises are also designed help students understand the importance of process, particularly as it relates to individual and collaborative work.

☐ Become flexible thinkers

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☒ Other

This course values experiential learning. For instance, learning will take place in the physical classroom setting. However, the actual city also serves as a critical setting where students will acquire knowledge and skills. For instance, their visits to particular neighborhoods and institutions throughout the five boroughs will certainly provide students with the opportunity to explore complex questions about the varied experiences of people of African descent from the 1600s to the present.

### General Education Learning Goals for City Tech Students

- **Knowledge:** Develop knowledge from a range of disciplinary perspectives, and hone the ability to deepen and continue learning.
- **Skills:** Acquire and use the tools needed for communication, inquiry, creativity, analysis, and productive work.
- **Integration:** Work productively within and across disciplines.
- **Values, Ethics, and Relationships:** Understand and apply values, ethics, and diverse perspectives in personal, professional, civic, and cultural/global domains.

8. How does this course address the general education learning goals for City Tech students?

- **Knowledge:** To develop an understanding of key concepts and theories in African American Studies as well as events in African American history in order to grasp more fully the varied questions and topics within and beyond this course.
- **Skills:** To obtain the analytical, communicative, and research skills that broaden ones lens about the experiences of people of African descent within and beyond this course.
- **Integration:** To acquire and/or strengthen the skills to more thoroughly engage in varied forms of inquiry and analyses both individually and collaboratively.

- **Values, Ethics, and Relationships:** To address the ethical content and consequences of social justice concepts and intersections in terms of how they have historically impacted Black New York and how they continue to influence contemporary Black New York.

9. Which department would house this course<sup>1</sup>? African American Studies

Would all sections of the course be interdisciplinary? ☐ No ☒ Yes

- a) Would the course be cross-listed in two or more departments? ☒ No ☐ Yes  
Explain.

- b) How will the course be team-taught<sup>2</sup>? ☐ Co-taught ☒ Guest lecturers ☐ Learning community

If co-taught, what is the proposed workload hour distribution? \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Shared credits ☐ Trading credits

If guest lecturers, for what approximate percentage of the course? ☐ Minimum 20%<sup>3</sup> ☒ other: 40%

Please attach the evaluation framework used to assess the interdisciplinarity of the course.<sup>4</sup>

- **Written Assignments:** Students will be expected to share their analyses of lectures as well as other course materials through class discussions and written assignments. These written assignments will include “low-stakes” in-class exercises, Blackboard and Open Lab discussions, and analytical response papers. For example, students may be asked in the middle of the semester to analyze social and political movements in New York during the twentieth century. In a response paper, they will be expected to draw upon their understanding of acts of resistance in earlier centuries to offer analytical responses. Student writing will also be assessed when they submit their field journals and exams.
- **Group Exercises:** Students will be expected to complete a series of collaborative projects in-class. These assignments may include working together and devising varied approaches and questions in order to dissect the course materials. Students will be expected to present their shared answers before the class.
- **Field Research Visits, Field Journals, and Research Project/Presentation:** In order to recognize the importance of New York City as a classroom, students will be expected to visit cultural and research institutions. During these field research visits, students will record their experiences and findings in field journals that will be assessed. In addition, students will also be expected to document their experiences prior to and following the visits to the institutions. These field research visits are designed to help students organize projects on a particular research topic/issue. At the end of the semester, students will be expected to combine their field experience with their analyses of the lectures and course materials.

<sup>1</sup> An interdisciplinary course for the College Option requirement may be housed in a department that is not liberal arts.

<sup>2</sup> Attach evidence of consultation with all affected departments.

<sup>3</sup> While an interdisciplinary course must be team-taught, there is no formal percentage requirement, but this minimum is a guideline.

<sup>4</sup> In the case that a course is equally taught, include proposed plans for faculty classroom observation and student evaluation of teaching.

- **Midterm and Final Examinations:** The exams will include a series of short-answer questions that pertain to the lectures and course materials. Students will be expected to display how the varied disciplines may be used to address analytical questions. For example, students may be asked to use the different course materials to compare and contrast how early black institutions, like churches, the press, clubs and/or theaters attempted to articulate their identities within Black communities in New York City.

c) What strategies/resources would be implemented to facilitate students' ability to make connections across the respective academic disciplines?

- Varying disciplines will be explored during a course unit. For example, the required course materials, such as readings and films supplied by the lecturers will cross disciplines.
- The course questions encourage students to consider how varying disciplines have dissected the experiences of people of African descent in New York City. For example, a discussion on slavery, resistance, and emancipation in Colonial New York requires an understanding of the African societies that found themselves confronted by a New World during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. However, this discussion must also include an examination of the global and economic impact of enslavement in Colonial New York. Readings, films, databases and a visit to New York's African Burial Ground in Lower Manhattan are designed to instigate discussions among students and their lecturers.

10. Would the course be designated as:

☒ a College Option requirement<sup>5</sup>? ☒ an elective? ☒ a Capstone course<sup>6</sup>? ☐ other? Explain.

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<sup>5</sup> To qualify for the College Option, such a course must also meet the New York State definition of a liberal arts and sciences course. <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/ocue/lrp/liberalarts.htm>

<sup>6</sup> A course proposed as a Capstone course must be separately approved by the Capstone Experience Committee.