

Moravian College

SOC 266 – Sociology of the Blues

PPHAC 233 on Thursdays from 6:30-9:30 PM

**Dr. Joel Nathan Rosen, Assistant Professor in Sociology
PPHAC 317**

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Office Hours: T/W 3:30-4:30pm; Th 4-6pm

****Check Black Board (Bb) Site Daily****

Text:

- Lyric Transcriptions (will be distributed)
- Handouts to be Distributed throughout the Semester.

Recommended Text

- Palmer, Robert. Deep Blues. (please acquire on your own)
- Levine, Lawrence. Black Culture, Black Consciousness.
- Davis, Francis. The History of the Blues

Course Objectives:

Students will be asked to identify styles, artists, and various periods in the blues idiom based on both sound and lyrical content as well as sociological, anthropological, psychological, and historical impact in the development of 20th century American culture.

Course Requirements:

Students will be required to take two midterm exams, review a book related to course material, take a final exam, which will be cumulative, and perform other tasks, including unannounced quizzes, etc., as befitting this type of course. The midterms will be spaced at approximately one-third of the way through the course—fair warning will precede both exams. The final exam **must** be taken at the assigned period as outlined in the college schedule.

The breakdown of grades is as follows:

Misc. Work, Reviews, Quizzes, Participation etc. 25%

Midterm Exam Grades (Combined)	25%
Book Review	25%
Final Exam Grade	25%

The grade scale is as follows:

- 93-100 = A / 90-92 = A-
- 87-89 = B+ / 83-86 = B / 80-82 = B-
- 77-79 = C+ / 73-76 = C / 70-72 = C-
- 67-69 = D+ / 63-66 = D / 60-62 = D- / 59-0 = F

Please Note: For most written work, I will be using a letter grade system in which the above letters will correspond to numbers ranging from 13 (A+) through 1 (F but different from a zero). Your final tally for these works will be drawn from the high end of each letter grade, i.e. a C+ will be marked as 79 pts, etc. I will be happy to explain this more completely upon request. Also, all outside work must be typed using a 12-sized font in black with default margins and in hard copy (in-class work is to be done in blue or black ink only). The term paper will not be returned, but you will receive a fully detailed rubric as explanation for your final grade.

Classroom Decorum and Expectations:

- **Attendance** – Class attendance is mandatory and vitally important to your success. Failure to attend on a regular basis not only puts your grade in jeopardy but will also be met with significant grade reductions.

****Remember – there are no excused absences. If you have a legitimate emergency, it is your responsibility to bring it to the attention of your instructor at the earliest possible opportunity convenience. Communication (and hard work) are ultimately the keys to success at this level (forgive the fortune cookie tone!).**

- **Tardiness** – Tardiness to class is not only detrimental to the learning process but quite disruptive and unfair to those who make it to class on time regularly. Recurring tardiness shows a lack of respect for the classroom, the instructor, and one's fellow students and will not be tolerated. Please arrive to class in a timely fashion
- **Deadlines** – Assignment deadlines are exactly that. Students are expected to comply with deadlines in accordance with all rules, guidelines, and expectations of each assignment proffered. Failure to do so will result in a tendering of no-grade for work not done to expectation or submitted on time. The policy for late papers is as follows:
 - On minor assignments, you will be allowed to turn in one late assignment as long as it is within twenty-four hours for a ten point deduction. After your one exception, you will no longer enjoy this luxury.

- On major assignments, there will be no grace period. Failure to contact the instructor prior to a deadline (or missed exam) will result in a zero.
- **Participation** – Classroom discussions are a big part of the learning process and will be factored into your final grade. In the best tradition of many West African communities, your participation is not requested—it is required. Failure to contribute regularly is both in bad taste and could conceivably be detrimental to your ability to learn effectively.
- **Disruptions** – Disruptive behavior, including talking, unengaged behavior, i.e. reading a book, magazine, or newspaper, sleeping, chronic tardiness alongside loud entrances, and any other unfortunate breach will not, and should not, be tolerated. Learning is an active process, and failure to actively engage not only threatens the individual’s ability to learn but also affects those around him or her.
- **Academic Honesty** – You are all responsible for knowing and adhering to the code of academic honesty as established here at Moravian College. For those of you unfamiliar with this code, it can be found in its entirety on pages 52 through 57 on your student handbook. And to add further emphasis on this point, any paper turned in without proper citations will be subject to charges of academic dishonesty and any and all applicable penalties.

It is your responsibility to see to it that these expectations and guidelines are met satisfactorily and consistently. I take the classroom quite seriously, and I expect all of you to do the same.

A Note on Writing in This Course:

In the interest of full disclosure, you should be aware that this instructor is extraordinarily devoted to the development of proper written expression in his students. Therefore, in terms of all written assignments, I will weigh what you say against the backdrop of how you say it in my evaluation of your work. It is, thus, up to each of you to explore the most expedient means to improve your writing through attention to editing and, if necessary, trips to the college writing center as a means of fully realizing your scholarly potential.

Please Note:

There will be no class on Thursday, 14 September. On Thursday, 26 October, you will be required to attend a lecture on Mandinka culture in Room 103 PPHAC.

Schedule of Classes:

Unit I:

- Introduction - "Why a course in the blues?"
 - Film: from *Martin Scorsese's The Blues*
- Beginnings - The Politics of Race, Religion, and *Musical Tributaries*

- The Nameless, the Faceless, and Charlie Patton

- The Blues Divas and the City
 - Films: *Alberta Hunter in NY; The Ladies Sing the Blues*
- Mississippi Players - Music in Isolation
 - Film: *Good Morning Blues* (with B.B. King)
- East Texas and the Convict Lease System - Slavery in Redoux

- East Coast Blues - The Traditions of Georgia and the Carolinas

Exam #1

Unit II:

- White Country Music - The Transculturation Process at Work

- Stars of the 1930's and 1940's

- Blues in Transition - The Life and Times of Robert Johnson

- *Little Chicago* - Helena, Arkansas
 - Film: from *The Promised Land*, Pt. 1

Exam #2

Unit III:

- The Bluebird Beat – (Honey) It's T(r)ite Like That...

- Deep Blues Comes North
 - Film: *Record Row*
- Harmonica Blowers & Guitar Heroes

- The Blues Revival
 - Film: *Bluesland*

Final Exam (Check College Schedule)