

# *Moravian College*

## **SOC 370 - Seminar: Of Bigger Thomas, Biggie Smalls, and Small's Paradise: Investigating the 20<sup>th</sup> Century African-American Experience**

**Dr. Joel Nathan Rosen, Assistant Professor in Sociology  
PPHAC 311**

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**Office Hours: T & Th 1:00p – 2:00p & 3:30p-4p, W 3p-4p, or By  
Appointment**

### **Course Description:**

This seminar will explore various aspects of 20<sup>th</sup> century African-American culture beginning with the start of Northern migration to the dawning of the 1960's era Civil Right movements through a critical examination of period literature, film, music, sport, and stage production as well as through other forms of popular media. Along the way, we will engage with several aspects of this material through guided tours of traditional African-American cultural centers in both New York and Philadelphia as we seek to uncover both the vibrancy and the significance of a culture in flux.

### **Course Objectives:**

The specific objectives of this course, thus, are as follows:

- To allow students to form their own assessments and investigations of the nature of African-American cultural life
- To offer students the opportunity to engage in directed critical research regarding specific elements of the African-American experience
- To have students continue to hone their own sociological imaginations in both written as well as oral presentation

### **Required Texts (available in bookstore):**

- **Drake & Cayton's *Black Metropolis***
- **Wright's *Native Son***

## Recommended Text:

- Locke's *The New Negro*

## Course Requirements:

Students will be required to review two books, construct an annotated bibliography, write a negotiated 13-15 page paper, and, generally, perform other tasks as befitting a 300 level course (see below).

The breakdown of tasks is as follows:

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|--|-----|
| • Book Review I ( <i>Native Son</i> )        | 20% |
| • Book Review II (TBD)                       | 20% |
| • Annotated Bibliography                     | 20% |
| • Research Project (includes oral component) | 20% |
| • Participation and Other Misc. Tasks        | 20% |

As I typically employ letter grades on written assignments, I offer the below list of how each letter translates numerically:

- A+=100/A= 96/A-=93
- B+=89/B=86/B-=83
- C+=79/C=76/C-=73
- D+=69/D=66/D-=63
- F=55-50 [actual score depends on the severity of the error(s)/student will be notified]
- Failure to turn in work translates into a *ZERO*

## Grade Scale:

- A=100-94/A-=93-90
- B+=89-88/B=87-84/B-=83-80
- C+=79-78/C=77-74/C-=73-70
- D+=69-68/D=67-64/D-=63-60
- F=59...

**Grade Advisory** – While I respect that students have to be grade conscious, it is imperative that students understand that:

***I treat evaluations as professional—not personal!***

Do not ask from me anything that steps outside the boundaries, and do not wait until *Zero Hour* to inquire as to your status. Moreover, it is your responsibility

to keep abreast of your own grade calculations, and unless the circumstances are unique, I'll leave you to your own devices on that matter. Lastly, to save us all needless heartache, and in the interest of propriety and mental health, I also have to insist on a twenty-four hour grace period before I will speak to you about any returned work. You may find that this cooling off period is exactly what we both need to come together rationally and in the spirit of liberal learning.

## **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 may also be met with a lowered mark for participation.

- 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 your earliest convenience.

**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. Therefore, once the door has been shut, you will not be permitted to enter.

**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
- Do not expect me to have to chase you down in order to turn in assignments!

**Participation** – Classroom discussions are a big part of the learning process. Your participation is not requested—it is required. Failure to do so 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 be tolerated. Learning is an active process, and failure to actively engage not only threatens the individual's ability to learn but also affects others.

**Academic Honesty** – You are all responsible for knowing and adhering to the code of academic honesty here at Moravian College. For those of you unfamiliar with this code, it can be found on pages fifty-two through fifty-seven in your student handbook.

**Please Note:** 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 as well.

### **Out of Class Submission Expectations:**

- a title page with a suitable title, your name, the course, section, and my name all spelled correctly
- 12 font (in black) with default margins and spacing set at 1.5 to double
- page numbers
- a *References* section (if necessary) at the end of the work done in the most recent citation form of your choice (depends on your major and other factors)<sup>1</sup>
- for every unedited internet site there must be at least ***two*** published sources
- with few exceptions, single & two-digit numbers (*zero through ninety-nine*) are to be spelled out; three digits are to be written numerically
- be wary of overuse of abbreviations and/or contractions
- a staple in the upper left hand corner (no frilly covers)

\*\*Please Note that all in-class work must be done in blue or black ink\*\*

### **On Writing and Research:**

As this instructor is particularly driven by written expression, you should expect that there will be an emphasis placed on written expression in this course. I should also like you to know from the start that I spend a great deal of time pouring over your writing and expect that you will read and explore my commentary on all things ranging from content to grammar, punctuation, and syntax. Please try to check your ego at the doors and realize that this is a learning experience while convincing yourself that blips and missteps are all part of the process.

You should also note that where applicable, this instructor expects his students to deal directly with all matters relating to the citation process. Failure to do so will be dealt with harshly with penalties ranging from a zero on work not properly documented to a formal report to the proper academic disciplinary committee.

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<sup>1</sup> Work not properly cited will not be graded and could be brought to the Academic Standards Committee under a charge of plagiarism. If you have questions, please seek me out. Also, *Wikipedia* and other types of non-academic encyclopedias will under no circumstances be considered legitimate sources!

### **A Note on Individual Accommodations:**

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

*My motto, as I live and learn,  
Is dig and be dug in return.*

—Langston Hughes from “Montage of a Dream Deferred”

## **Course Outline (Subject to Change):**

### **Unit I – *Native Son***

#### **Topics Include:**

- The Sociology of the Black Working Class
- Psycho-Social Awareness of Difference and Discrimination
- Bigger Thomas as Metaphor
- Philanthropy and Rage – When DIY Takes on a More Sinister Hue
- Wright’s Rhythm of Life at the Bottom
- The Black Body v The Black Mind – in retrospect
- The Relationship between Civil Rights and the Communist Party

### **Unit II – *Black Metropolis***

- Reshuffling the Racial Environment
- The Great Migration North
- Exploring and Explaining Ethnic Business Cycles
- The Demography of the African-American Community
- (Re)Interpreting the Colorline
- The Black Press and the Black Church—Heralds of a New Age
- The Urban Middle Class
- Gender in an Emergent African America

### **Unit III – Self-Directed Research**

- Annotated Bibliography Due (11 March)
- Source Review Due (1 April)
- Oral Presentation Day (22 April)
- Final Drafts Due (22 April)