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| JamesBaldwin001Engl/Semn 491-01Building the Archive:Baldwin and his LegacyDr. Bruce MillsOffice: 208 Humphrey House Office Hours: 11-12 M, 3-4 TTh,  and by appointment |

History, as nearly no one seems to know, is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities, and our aspirations. (James Baldwin)

In November of 1960, James Baldwin delivered an address, “In Search of a Majority,” at Kalamazoo College; he later included the talk in his collection of essays, *Nobody Knows My Name*. This seminar will approach Baldwin’s visit, his writings, and the recent (and extensive) return to his legacy as sites for analysis and reflection. Concerning the visit, the occasion left a record to be rediscovered (*Index* article, published essay). His talk and much of his work can also be read within the history of other civil rights era visitors to the college, including Charles V. Hamilton (who co-authored *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*). Moreover, as a writer who addressed national and international identity, racial politics, and sexuality, Baldwin’s various publications remain relevant even as they are situated within a past historical milieu. Through a close reading of Baldwin, then, this course will invite us to engage critically in what we carry within us. To deepen our understanding of Baldwin and address other course work, we will do research in local archives in relation to an ongoing racial healing initiative directed by Kalamazoo’s Society for History and Racial Equity or SHARE (Engaging the Wisdom Oral History Project). We will also begin involvement in research being conducted on the experiences of Kalamazoo College alumni of color.

**Goals**

* to develop a close understanding of Baldwin’s writings, his contribution to the civil rights period, and his ongoing relevance to questions concerning personal and cultural identity,
* to examine the archival record directly and indirectly associated with Baldwin’s visit as a means to generate a thick description of his influence and the politics of race and representation,
* to seek, further contextualize, and reflect upon archival material as a means to engage directly in the dialogue on race, sexuality, and social justice, and
* to deepen an understanding of Baldwin’s work by exploring scholarship on the author, his milieu, and contemporary responses to his literary legacy.

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**Texts** (Available at the Kalamazoo College Bookstore)

*James Baldwin: Early Novels & Stories* (which includes)

*Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel*, 1953)

*Giovanni’s Room* (novel, 1956)

*Going to Meet the Man* (short story collection, 1965)

*James Baldwin: Collected Essays* (which includes)

*Notes from a Native Son* (essay collection, 1955)

*Nobody Knows My Name* (essay collection, 1961)

*The Fire Next Time* (essay, 1963)

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness* (2012)

Jesmyn Ward, *The Fire This Time: A New Generation Speaks about Race* (2016)

**Course Requirements and Grading**

30 pts Reflective/Analytical You will be required to write two essays (4-5 pages each).

Essays (2 @ 15 points) These writings will call for an analysis of a selected reading

(novel, short story, essay). Topics will also invite the option

of integrating personal narrative alongside close critical

examination of the text(s).

20 pts Project Presentation Groups of 5 students will be assigned an interviewee from

a past digital archive of oral histories. In addition to

preparing interviews for uploading on the Oral History in

the Liberal Arts website, groups will do archival work to

locate photos, web links, newspaper articles, etc. relevant to

the interviews. Materials will eventually be linked within the

oral histories. Groups will present on the interviews and

archival research.

40 pts Final Project For this final project, you will need to synthesize reading

Prospectus (10 pts) and research associated with Baldwin, the civil rights

Final Project (30 pts) movement, and oral histories. This synthesis may take

the form of a research essay, creative nonfiction (which

includes the integration of research), or documentary film.

This project may be individual or collaborative. (Given the

need for technical skills and access to necessary hardware

and/or software, the film option is only open to those who

have done such work supervised in past courses, work

settings, etc.)

10 pts Participation At the end of the term, I will also assess contributions in the

course through a consideration of your engagement in small

and large group discussion, informal written responses to the

readings, and the oral histories.

B+ 88-89.75 C+ 78-79.75

A 93-100 B 83-87.75 C 73-77.75

A- 90-92.75 B- 80-82.75 C- 70-72.75 and so forth

I reserve the right to lower final grades for poor attendance and/or consistent lateness (being late for class more than twice). I also reserve the right to raise grades one third for any combination of the following: consistently constructive participation, consistently high level of preparation, and constructive leadership in group activities.

#### Class Policies

*Participation, Attendance, and Promptness:*

The success of a discussion-based class relies on an ability to listen attentively, contribute appropriately, and challenge ideas with grace and respect. Building a successful classroom also depends on prompt and regular attendance. You may miss up to two classes for any reason, but for each additional absence your final grade may be reduced by one third (e.g., A- to B+, B to B-, etc.). In other words, while attendance is expected for each class, this policy acknowledges the possibility of absences due to college-sanctioned events, major family concerns, and/or medical emergencies. Missing five or more class sessions will most likely result in a D or F evaluation. It is your responsibility to get notes or assignments if you have missed a class.

*Deadlines*:

Unless I have revised assignment due dates during the term or you have negotiated an extension of a final draft with me, I expect written work to be handed in by 5 pm on the dates assigned. *Reflective/analytical essays and the final project prospectus will be dropped 1 point for each day late; final projects will be deducted 2 points. (Saturdays and Sundays count, and any late paper reduction will also “follow” an essay score should you decide to take up the option of revising one of the two assignments.)* Extensions must be requested at least two days in advance of the deadline unless I have been officially notified of a medical or family emergency. *All work must be completed to pass the class*.

*Academic Dishonesty*:

We all will be held accountable to the College Honor System, including the need to “safeguard the integrity of academic work and research.” One violation of the honor system, plagiarism, is defined as “presenting another person’s ideas or words as if they are your own” (Kirszner & Mandell, *The Brief Handbook* 169). Thus, you need to acknowledge the use of another’s ideas or words when you draw from them. Talk with me if you have questions about how to cite a source properly. For useful websites in relation to plagiarism, see the following: <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml> or <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>. I will forward evidence of plagiarism to the Office of Student Development. Depending on the nature of the academic dishonesty or plagiarism, consequences will range from failure on the specific assignment, failure in the class, and/or possible suspension from Kalamazoo College.

*Accommodations:*

If you require special accommodation or other assistance, please make an appointment with me within the first week of the term. I am committed to making those accommodations that will help you do your best.

**Reading and Assignment Schedule**

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| Weeks | Readings | Assignment Schedule |
| 1 1.8  1.10      1.11  1.12 | *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket* (Doc. Film, 1990, 87 min)  <http://kzoo.kanopystreaming.com/video/james-baldwin-price-ticket>  Discuss Course Expectations and Assigned Readings  from *Notes of a Native Son* (In *Collected Essays*)  “Autobiographical Notes” (*CE* 5-9)  from *Nobody Knows My Name* (In *Collected Essays*)  “In Search of the Majority” (*CE* 215-221)  from *Going to Meet the Man* (In *Early Novels and Stories*)  “Sonny’s Blues” (*EN&S* 831-64)  Arcus Center Film: *I Am Not Your Negro*  *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (*EN&S* 7-58)  Part I: The Seventh Day |  |
| 2 1.15  1.17    1.19 | MLK, Jr. Day – NO CLASS  *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (*EN&S* 59-183)  Part 2: Florence’s Prayer, Gabriel’s Prayer, and Elizabeth’s Prayer  *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (185-215)  Part 3: The Threshing-Floor |  |
| 3 1.22  1.24  1.26 | *Giovanni’s Room* (217-79)  *Giovanni’s Room* (279-360)  “Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood” (*CE* 814-29)  Visit to Kalamazoo College Archives (UL 329)  Engaging the Wisdom Oral History Project  Read/View: Engaging the Wisdom Oral History Project  <http://ohla.info/engaging-the-wisdom-oral-history-project/>  Read/View: Linda Shopes, “Making Sense of Oral History”  <http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/08/making-sense-of-oral-history/> | Essay 1  Due by 5 pm, January 22 |
| 4 1.29  1.31  2.2 | from *Notes of a Native Son*  “Everybody’s Protest Novel” (*CE* 11-18)  “Many Thousand Gone” (19-34)  from *Notes of a Native Son*  “Journey to Atlanta” (54-62)  “Notes of a Native Son” (63-84)  from *Notes of a Native Son*  “Equal in Paris” (101-116)  “Stranger in the Village” (117-129) | Assign Oral History Groups |
| 5 2.5  2.7    2.9 | from *Nobody Knows My Name*  “The Discovery of What It Means to Be an American” (*CE* 137-142)  “Fifth Avenue, Uptown: A Letter from Harlem” (170-179)  “East River, Downtown: Postscript to a Letter from Harlem” (180-86)  “A Fly in Buttermilk” (187-96)  Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (Intro-Chap. 1, pp. 1-58)  MIDTERM BREAK | View Interviews |

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| 6 2.12  2.14    2.16 | Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (Chap. 6, pp. 221-61)  *The Fire Next Time* (287-314)  *The Fire Next Time* (314-347) | Essay 2  Due by 5 pm, February 12  Meet with Groups |
| 7 2.19  2.21  2.23 | From *The Fire This Time*  Jesmyn Ward, “Introduction” (3-11)  Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah, “The Weight” (19-32)  From *The Fire This Time*  Carol Anderson, “White Rage” (83-88)  Jesmyn Ward, “Cracking the Code” (89-95)  Claudine Rankine, “The Condition of Black Life is One of  Mourning” (145-55)  From *The Fire This Time*  Natasha Trethewey, “Theories of Time and Space” (195-96)  Daniel José Older, “This Far: Notes on Love and Revolution”  (197-204)  Edwidge Danticat, “Message to My Daughters” (205-15) | Final Project: Prospectus  Due by 5 PM, February 19  Archival Work |
| 8 2.26  2.28  3.2 | Archival Work  Archival Work  Archival Work | Archival Work  (visit local archives) |
| 9 3.5  3.7    3.9 | Engaging the Wisdom: Group Presentations  Engaging the Wisdom: Group Presentations  Engaging the Wisdom: Group Presentations | Presentations |
| 10 3.12  3.14  3.16 | To be determined  To be determined  Final Reflections: “The Price of the Ticket” (*CE* 830-44)  Course Evaluations |  |
| Finals  Week | Final Gathering: To Be Determined | Final Project  Due by 5 pm,  Monday, March 19 |