



## Seminar on Angela Davis

Professor John Drabinski  
([jdrab@umd.edu](mailto:jdrab@umd.edu))

Tu/Th - 12:30-1:45

Zoom: [https://umd.zoom.us/my/#\\$%](https://umd.zoom.us/my/#$%)

Online: <https://bfroysszzern.com/ayd>

### Books:

Angela Davis, *Autobiography*  
\_\_\_\_\_, *Women, Race, Class*  
\_\_\_\_\_, *Women, Culture, Politics*  
\_\_\_\_\_, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*  
\_\_\_\_\_, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*  
\_\_\_\_\_, *Freedom is a Constant Struggle*

### Semester work summary:

**30%** . 7/7 original posts/comments (200-400 words)  
**15%** . weekly response to prompts  
**15%** . 2 weekly comments on prompt responses  
**20%** . midterm examination (mid-October)  
**20%** . final project (17 December @ 11:59pm)

**The aim** of this course is simple: explore the meaning and significance of Angela Davis' work for thinking through issues of race, nation, class, gender, carceral culture, and transnational solidarity.

Davis emerged as a cultural and political phenomenon at the peak of the Black Power and the Black Panther movements. Her life and work has long been set between theorizing the histories of race, racism, class, and gender and political organizing and public intellectual work. We will examine all of these aspects by reading her work from its beginning and up through contemporary commentary on incarceration, Palestine, and related issues. The centerpiece of this course will be her study of African-American music in its Black feminist iteration, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*.

Out of this course will emerge an understanding of the complexities of theorizing the crossroads of race, gender, class, and nation, as well as the power of critical thought for transforming our political imagination

**Flow of the course:** short lecture video posted on Mondays (**me**), response to prompt and comments on Tuesdays (**you**), group discussion on Thursdays via Zoom (**us**).

**Your required work** in the course is fairly straightforward: weekly writing in short form on the class blog located at <https://afropostmodern.com/ayd>. I will send instructions for this work under separate cover. This writing is comprised of both responses to weekly prompts and original posts and comments. The aim of the blog is to facilitate open, creative engagement with the course material. As such, I expect thoughtful reflections and encourage you to explore openly in that format

As well, attendance is mandatory in Zoom sessions (every Thursday) for the course. Please do not miss these sessions unless you have a health or family/friend emergency. Part of my structuring of this course relies on your initiative and creative work. But it also relies on a sense of class community, which, in this COVID-19 remote semester means attentive presence on the class blog *and* presence at our discussion sessions on Thursdays. For this reason, I grant two unexcused absences, but after that each subsequent absence will incur a 1/3 reduction in your final grade. This isn't my policy because I'm uptight about attendance. It's my policy because I believe in the community of the classroom and we all have to be present for that to work. Also: Davis is a complicated thinker, so explanation and discussion is key!

**Course reading** sequence below. The reading due on Tuesdays (first date listed) will be the topic of the short video *and* the material for prompt and comment on the blog. The reading due on Thursdays (second date listed) will be additional material for Zoom discussions.

Please ALWAYS read the material before class. I have purposely made a syllabus with short readings so that we can focus on depth and detail. That is only possible if you read closely. Plus: this is fascinating and important stuff. You'll want to read and understand it, I promise!

**01 September**

Intro to course

**03 September**

"Lecture on Liberation" (PDF)

**08 September**

*Autobiography*, Chs. 1-3

**10 September**

*Autobiography*, Chs. 4-5

**15 September**

*Autobiography*, Ch. 6

**17 September**

"Afro Images," PDF

**22 September**

Discussion of *Black Power Mixtape*

**24 September**

"Black Nationalism: The Sixties and Nineties," PDF

**29 September**

"The Legacy of Slavery" and "Racism in the Woman Suffrage Movement," in *WRC*

**01 October**

"The Meaning of Emancipation" and "Education and Liberation," in *WRC*

**06 October**

"Rape, Racism, and the Myth of the Black Rapist," in *WRC*

**08 October**

"Racism, Birth Control, and Reproductive Rights," in *WRC*

**13 October**

"Approaching the Obsolescence of Housework," in *WRC*

**15 October**

\*open discussion/smush day\*

**20 October**

"Let Us All Rise Together" and "Facing Our Common Foe," in *WCP*

**22 October**

"We Do Not Consent" and "Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired," in *WCP*

**27 October**

"Slaying the Dream," in *WCP*

**29 October**

\*discussion day\*

**03 November**

"I Used to be Your Sweet Mama," *Blues Legacies*

**05 November**

"Here Come My Train," *Blues Legacies*

**10 November**

"Blame It on the Blues," *Blues Legacies*

**12 November**

"Preaching the Blues," *Blues Legacies*

**17 November**

"Up in Harlem," *Blues Legacies*

**19 November**

"When a Woman Loves a Man," *Blues Legacies*

**24 November**

\*discussion day\*

**26 November**

Thanksgiving Break

**01 December**

"Strange Fruit," *Blues Legacies*

**03 December**

*Are Prisons Obsolete?*

**08 December**

*Freedom is a Constant Struggle*

**10 December**

*Freedom is a Constant Struggle*