English 66f: “The Weary Blues” — Mourning and Loss in African American Literature and Culture

As a population generally familiar with the facts of living too hard and dying too soon, how have African Americans used their literary and cultural traditions to memorialize—to articulate and often to work through conditions of pain and loss? Using a variety of literary and cultural texts, including RIP murals, poetry, and music, we will look at the various ways African Americans express and aestheticize loss; how mourning often works as a foundation for militancy; and, most importantly, how loss is often recuperated through ideologies of art, love, and memory.

Books are available at Amherst books.
We will also be working with a wide range of cultural texts: songs, poems, and public art. These texts are online and in a multilith that will be available in the English office as of 9/14. You will be billed mid-semester.

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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Baldwin, James</td>
<td>Another Country</td>
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<td>Dixon, Melvin</td>
<td>Love’s Instruments</td>
<td>Tia Chucha Press</td>
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<td>Holloway, Karla F.C.</td>
<td>Passed On</td>
<td>Duke UP</td>
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<td>Keenan, Randall</td>
<td>A Visitation of Spirits</td>
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Workload & Grading
The greatest requirement of this class is that you pay close attention—in class as well as while reading, listening, or viewing. You will also complete three short (max. 3 pp) essays, the focus of each you will choose. These papers will be submitted as a final portfolio, along with one additional 5p paper. Productive participation, which includes a fair amount of online writing, will also count toward your final grade.

Because this class is discussion-based, attendance is vital. I will not, however, detract from your final grade until you have 3 absences, after which you will lose 1/3 of a point for every subsequent absence (so, for instance, an A would become an A- and so on down the line). This logic of threes does have an end: 6 absences will mean automatic failure. As well, 3 tardies = 1 absence.

Films
When the Levees Broke, Spike Lee
Killer of Sheep, Charles Burnett
The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till, Keith Beauchamp

Professor Marisa Parham : 10 Johnson Chapel : office hours - T & Th 2-3 : mparham@amherst.edu
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Work, Text, or Performance</th>
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<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>Spirituals</td>
<td>&quot;Without Sanctuary&quot; (selections)</td>
<td>Jacqueline Goldsby</td>
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<td>&quot;Passed On&quot; (ch. 4)</td>
<td>&quot;Remorse: The 14 Stories of Eric Jones&quot;</td>
<td>Newman and Jones (NPR)</td>
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<td>Killer of Sheep</td>
<td>&quot;Inner City Blues (Make me wanna holler)&quot;</td>
<td>Marvin Gaye</td>
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<td>Sheep, cont'd</td>
<td>…Sheep will be at screened at the Amherst Cinema.</td>
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<td>Poetry</td>
<td>&quot;My Mind’s Playin’ Tricks on Me&quot;</td>
<td>Aretha Franklin, Parchman Farm Inmates, Unknown/ Emmylou Harris, et al.</td>
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<td>&quot;Mourning and Melancholia&quot;</td>
<td>Sigmund Freud</td>
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<td>&quot;Like a Winding Sheet&quot;</td>
<td>Ann Petry</td>
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<td>&quot;I've Been to the Mountaintop&quot;</td>
<td>Martin Luther King Jr.</td>
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<td>&quot;Sign o’ the Times&quot;</td>
<td>Prince</td>
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<td>Adrienne Kennedy</td>
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