

Syllabus
Fall 09

The Philosophy of Cornel West
MWF 12:00-12:50

AFAM-3600/PHIL-4800
Dr. Ari Santas

Course Description:

This course will be a study of the philosophy of Cornel West, a contemporary African American philosopher who is currently Professor of religion and culture criticism and former (1988 -94) director of African American Studies at Princeton University. He can be described as both an American Pragmatist and a Black Existentialist.

Go to the online version of this syllabus at: <http://www.valdosta.edu/~asantas/Syllabus/Fall/4800f09.doc>

Course Learning Outcomes¹ (Objectives):

- to get an in-depth understanding of the philosophy of Cornel West in the context of American Pragmatism (D1; U6)
- to exercise skills of argument analysis and evaluation (D2; U4, U7)
- to develop skills oral and written presentations (D2; U4, U7)
- to understand the connection between philosophy and social issues in West's Thought (D3; U1, U8)

Required Texts:

- West, Cornel, *Race Matters*--Vintage (ISBN: 0-679-74986-1)
- West, Cornel, *The Cornel West Reader* (ISBN: 0-465-09110-5)
- West, Cornel, *Democracy Matters* (ISBN: 0-14-303583-5)

All texts are required and are available at the VSU Bookstore:

** there will also be supplementary web materials supplied throughout the term.

Office Hours:

My office is located in 148 Farber Hall (the old Student Health Center). The times you may find me there are M-F 11:00-12:00. You can reach me there or leave a message at 333-5949. You can also reach me through e-mail at asantas@valdosta.edu

Special Needs:

Students requesting classroom accommodations or modifications because of a documented disability must contact the Access Office for Students with Disabilities located in Farber Hall. The phone numbers are 245-2498 (voice) and 219-1348 (tty).

Grades:

Final grades will be determined on the following basis:

Short Essays	(25%)
Presentations	(25%)
Term Project	(25%)
Class Participation	(25%)

Participation and Attendance:

Attendance is required. **I will be taking roll *every day* and assign *part of your grade* on the basis of *how many days missed*.** The rest of your participation grade will be determined by your classroom discussion and (ostensible) engagement with the material. What I'll be looking for, besides regular attendance, and encourage each of you to look for as well, are the following:

conscientious class presentations	contribution to discussion
effort to improve and grow	attentiveness to the course materials and to each other
responsible attitude towards learning	respectful treatment of your peers

1 Corresponding Departmental and University Outcomes are indicated with letters 'D' and 'U' respectively.

Short Essays and Presentations:

During the term you will be required to write *several short essays* and **oral reports** to the class. Essays will be 3-5 pages long and will be graded using the following criteria:

Clarity and Development (grammar, structure, style)

Command of Material (completeness, accuracy)

Critical Reasoning (originality, logic, imagination)

You'll also be asked to give oral presentations on some of the assigned sections of the material. Unless otherwise approved by the class, all presentations of assigned material should follow this format:

- (1) **Overview**-- a summary of the main points of the article(s) or section(s) assigned;
- (2) **Focus**-- an in depth analysis, interpretation, and/or criticism of one component of the covered material.

Your **overview** should last roughly 8-10 mins. There is no need to cover everything, but your audience will need to know about all of the components essential to understanding the material. Your **focus** can be a further elaboration on one of the author's positions (e.g., an application to something that interests you); it could be a comparison to some other thinker that you are familiar with; or it could be a criticism on your part of what the author is proposing. The use of diagrams and/or handouts is encouraged. Total length of the oral presentations should be around 15-20 minutes.

See class "Schedule" for deadlines: [http://www.valdosta.edu/~asantas/Syllabus/Fall/4800 Schedule F09.doc](http://www.valdosta.edu/~asantas/Syllabus/Fall/4800%20Schedule%20F09.doc)

See "Guidelines" Web Page for more details on reading, writing and doing oral reports in philosophy:

<http://www.valdosta.edu/~asantas/Study/guide.html>

Final Projects:

During the third and final unit of the course, everyone will be working on a final project. You will elect to work individually, in small groups, or in a large group—details will be worked out as the class develops. All topics and deadlines will be approved of by the instructor before the final product is completed.

Two Options:

Option I: Term Paper: Term papers will have an oral and a written component. The date of the oral component will be assigned several weeks prior to the end of the course and will take place sometime during the last few weeks of class.

- **Abstracts and Drafts:** As part of the term project assignment, I require you to submit an abstract of your paper (or project) for approval before conducting the bulk of your research. I do this to help you get started and to give future direction to your work. I also will require those writing papers to submit rough drafts before the final draft is due. The reason for this is again to help you get going early, but also to impress upon you the idea that projects are to be completed in stages and not at one or two work sessions.
- **Undergraduate Research Symposium:** As you may already know, the College of Arts and Sciences conducts every year a symposium, which showcases undergraduate student research. If you are considering writing a term paper, consider working with me on getting a paper accepted for presentation at the symposium. If you're interested in doing this, please come see me for details. For more information on the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR), visit the CUR Website: <http://www.valdosta.edu/cur/>

Option II: Westview Productions: Another option is for the final project of the class will involve a public presentation of the materials we have discussed and learned during our course of study. This idea, called *Westview Productions*, a concept born of experiences of students who have taken this class and others like it. More information can be found at the following Web Site: <http://www.valdosta.edu/~asantas/Westview/Westview.htm>