

# Alain Locke: Philosopher of the Harlem Renaissance

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Spring 2023 — T/Th 1:00-2:15pm — Winningham 107

## Office Hours

By appointment in Winningham 103C.

## Description

This course is a deep dive into the work and thought of Alain LeRoy Locke (1885–1954), most famous as editor of *The New Negro* (1925), which collected the work of writers and other artists associated with the Harlem Renaissance. Despite having been one of the first African Americans to earn a PhD in Philosophy and having taught philosophy at Howard University for most of his career, Locke is still neglected by historians of philosophy—to the point that the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. does not even identify him as a philosopher. After spending the first third of the class learning about Locke’s intellectual background—from W. E. B. Du Bois to Franz Boas—we will read most of his philosophical work, starting in 1916 with a series of Howard University lectures on “the theory and practice of race” and ending in 1943 with Locke’s lectures in Haiti and his participation in an important symposium on “Approaches to World Peace.”

## Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students should . . .

1. Understand the intellectual context within which Locke’s philosophy emerged.
2. Appreciate Locke’s role as a public intellectual in the 1920s and ’30s.
3. Understand and be able to apply Locke’s idea of “unity through diversity”

## Required Texts

All texts will be linked from the course website on [Canvas](#).

## Evaluation of Undergraduate Students

- 30% Summaries
- 35% Paper 1 (1500 ± 200 words) — **Due on February 23**
- 35% Paper 2 (2000 ± 200 words) — **Due on May 10**

## Evaluation of Graduate Students

- 30% Summaries
- 14% Paper Prospectus — **Due on March 31**
- 56% Final Paper (4250 ± 750 words) — **Due on May 10**

Prior to each class session, you must submit—via the course website on [Canvas](#)—a summary of one of the readings for that session, which must include (a) the author’s overall claim or thesis and (b) a summary of the arguments or evidence given in support of this claim or thesis. At the end of each class session, you will be assigned a specific reading to summarize for next time. Note that these are summaries rather than critical evaluations. Your summary should be no more than two double-spaced pages (one-inch margins, 12-point font). In preparing your summaries, use only the assigned readings. Late summaries will not be accepted. Summaries submitted via e-mail will not be accepted. Absence from class is not a valid excuse for not turning in a summary unless you receive an accommodation from [Student Assistance and Support Services](#). The lowest two summary grades will be automatically dropped.

Undergraduate students will write two papers: the midterm paper will be based on one of a set of instructor prompts; the final paper will be on a topic of the student’s choosing. Graduate students will write one longer term paper on a topic of their choosing, with a prospectus due partway through the semester.

## Class Policies

The standards and requirements set forth in this syllabus may be modified at any time by the course instructor. Notice of such changes will be by announcement in class or by e-mail notice.

All students are required to read and abide by the [Code of Student Academic Integrity](#). Violations of the Code, including plagiarism, will result in disciplinary action as provided in the Code. Definitions and examples of plagiarism are set forth in the Code.

I will conduct this class in an atmosphere of mutual respect. I encourage your active participation in class discussions. Each of us may have strongly differing opinions on the various topics of class discussions. The conflict of ideas is encouraged and welcome. The orderly questioning of the ideas of others, including mine, is similarly welcome. However,

I will exercise my responsibility to manage the discussions so that ideas and argument can proceed in an orderly fashion. You should expect that if your conduct during class discussions seriously disrupts the atmosphere of mutual respect I expect in this class, you will not be permitted to participate further.

All students and the instructor are expected to engage with each other respectfully. Unwelcome conduct directed toward another person based upon that person's actual or perceived race, actual or perceived gender, color, religion, age, national origin, ethnicity, disability, or veteran status, or for any other reason, may constitute a violation of University Policy 406, the [Code of Student Responsibility](#). Any student suspected of engaging in such conduct will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

UNC Charlotte is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Please be aware that all faculty members are required to relay any information or reports of sexual misconduct they receive. This means that if you tell me about a situation involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, I must report the information to the university [Office of Civil Rights and Title IX](#). If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, there are several on-campus resources that are not subject to this mandatory reporting requirement, e.g., the [Center for Counseling and Psychological Services](#).

This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is indicated on the class roster, please let me know. Feel free to correct me on your preferred gender pronoun. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Students who miss classes, examinations, or other assignments because of a religious practice or belief must provide reasonable notice of the dates of religious observances on which they will be absent by submitting a [Request for Religious Accommodation Form](#) to the instructor prior to January 23, 2023.

Students in this course seeking accommodations to disabilities must first consult with the [Office of Disability Services](#) and follow the instructions of that office.

## Reading Schedule

### Philosophical Background

- Jan 10** No reading
- Jan 12** W. E. B. Du Bois. "Strivings of the Negro People." *Atlantic Monthly* 80 (August 1897): 194–198.
- W. E. B. Du Bois. *The Conservation of Races*. American Negro Academy, Occasional Papers, no. 2. Washington, D.C.: American Negro Academy, 1897.
- Jan 17** W. E. B. Du Bois. "Of the Sorrow Songs." In *The Souls of Black Folk*, 250–264. Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1903.
- W. E. B. Du Bois. *Heredity and the Public Schools*. Washington, D.C.: R. L. Pendleton, 1904.
- Jan 19** John Dewey. "The Moral Situation" and "Problems of Moral Theory." In *Ethics*, by John Dewey and James Tufts, 201–223. New York: Henry Holt, 1908.
- Horace Kallen. "Radical Empiricism and the Philosophic Tradition." *Philosophical Review* 22 (March 1913): 151–164.
- Jan 24** Horace Kallen. "Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot." *Nation* 100 (1915): 190–194, 217–220.
- Ralph Barton Perry. "The American Tradition and the American Ideal." In *The Present Conflict of Ideals: A Study of the Philosophical Background of the World War*, 529–545. New York: Longmans, Green, 1918.

### Scientific Background

- Jan 26** Gabriel Tarde. "Imitation of the Superior by the Inferior." In *The Laws of Imitation*, translated by Elsie Clews Parsons, 213–243. New York: Henry Holt, 1903. First published in French in 1890.
- Franklin Henry Giddings. "The Principles of Social Theory" and "The Fact and Nature of Progress." In *The Principles of Sociology*, 16–19, 356–360. New York: Macmillan, 1896.
- Jan 31** Georg Simmel. "Female Culture." In *Georg Simmel: On Women, Sexuality, and*

*Love*, edited and translated by Guy Oakes, 65–101. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984. First published in German in 1911.

**Feb 2** Alain Locke. “The American Temperament.” *North American Review* 194 (August 1911): 262–270.

Alfred Fouillée. “Race from the Sociological Standpoint.” In *Papers on Inter-Racial Problems, Communicated to the First Universal Races Congress*, edited by Gustav Spiller, 24–29. London: P. S. King, 1911.

**Feb 7** Franz Boas. *The Mind of Primitive Man*. New York, Macmillan, 1911. [excerpts]

**Feb 9** F. Stuart Chapin. “Social Heredity.” In *An Introduction to the Study of Social Evolution*, 171–202. New York: Century, 1913.

Robert E. Park. “Racial Assimilation in Secondary Groups with Particular Reference to the Negro.” *American Journal of Sociology* 19 (1914): 606–623.

## Early Writings

**Feb 14** Alain Locke. *Syllabus of an Extension Course of Lectures on Race Contacts and Inter-Racial Relations: A Study in the Theory and Practice of Race*. Washington, D.C.: R. L. Pendleton, 1916. [Lectures 1–3]

Alain Locke. *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations: Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Race*. Edited by Jeffrey C. Stewart. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1992. [Lectures 1–3]

**Feb 16** Alain Locke. *Syllabus of an Extension Course of Lectures on Race Contacts and Inter-Racial Relations: A Study in the Theory and Practice of Race*. Washington, D.C.: R. L. Pendleton, 1916. [Lectures 4–5]

Alain Locke. *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations: Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Race*. Edited by Jeffrey C. Stewart. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1992. [Lectures 4–5]

**Feb 21** Alain Locke. “The Problem of Classification in Theory of Value.” PhD diss., Harvard University, 1918. [1–58]

**Feb 23** Alain Locke. “The Problem of Classification in Theory of Value.” PhD diss., Harvard University, 1918. [59–99]

**Mar 7** Alain Locke. “The Problem of Classification in Theory of Value.” PhD diss.,

Harvard University, 1918. [100–170]

**Mar 9** Alain Locke. “The Problem of Classification in Theory of Value.” PhD diss., Harvard University, 1918. [171–213]

**Mar 14** Alain Locke. “The Problem of Classification in Theory of Value.” PhD diss., Harvard University, 1918. [213–263]

### Public Intellectual

**Mar 16** Alain Locke. “The Role of the Talented Tenth.” *Howard University Record* 12 (December 1918): 15–18.

Alain Locke. “The Ethics of Culture.” *Howard University Record* 17 (February 1923): 178–185.

Alain Locke. “The Command of the Spirit.” *Southern Workman* 54 (July 1925): 295–299.

**Mar 21** Edward Sapir. “Culture, Genuine and Spurious.” *American Journal of Sociology* 29 (January 1924): 401–429.

Alain Locke, “The Concept of Race as Applied to Social Culture.” *Howard Review* 1 (June 1924): 290–299.

**Mar 23** Alain Locke. “The New Negro.” In *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, edited by Alain Locke, 3–16. New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925.

[each student chooses another text or texts—not by Locke—from *The New Negro*]

**Mar 28** Alain Locke. “The Negro Spirituals.” In *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, edited by Alain Locke, 199–213. New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925.

Alain Locke. “The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts.” In *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, edited by Alain Locke, 254–267. New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925.

**Mar 30** Alain Locke. “Negro Youth Speaks.” In *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, edited by Alain Locke, 47–53. New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925.

W. E. B. Du Bois. “Criteria of Negro Art.” *Crisis* 32 (October 1926): 290–297.

Alain Locke. “Art or Propaganda?” *Harlem* 1 (November 1928): 12. [NHC, 2007](#).

**Apr 4** John Dewey. “The Construction of Good.” In *The Quest for Certainty*, 254–286. New York: Minton, Balch, 1929.

Alain Locke. “Values and Imperatives.” In *American Philosophy, Today and Tomorrow*, edited by Horace M. Kallen and Sidney Hook, 313–333. New York: Lee Furman, 1935.

**Apr 6** NO CLASS [Passover]

### Unity Through Diversity

**Apr 11** Alain Locke. “Impressions of Haifa.” *Star of the West* 15 (April 1924): 13–14.

Alain Locke. “Unity Through Diversity: A Bahá’í Principle.” *Bahá’í World* 4 (1930–1932): 372–374.

Alain Locke. “The Orientation of Hope.” *Bahá’í World* 5 (1932–1934): 527–528.

Alain Locke. “Lessons in World Crisis.” *Bahá’í World* 9 (1940–1944): 745–747.

**Apr 13** Alain Locke, “Minorities and the Social Mind.” *Progressive Education* 12 (March 1935): 141–146.

Alain Locke, “Culture Contact and Conflict.” In *Proceedings of the Workshop in General Education, University of Chicago, 1940*, vol. 5, 54–65. Chicago: American Council on Education, 1941.

**Apr 18** Philipp Frank. “Science and Democracy.” In *Science, Philosophy and Religion: A Symposium*, 215–228. New York: Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion in Their Relation to the Democratic Way of Life, 1941.

Alain Locke. “Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy.” In *Science, Philosophy and Religion: Second Symposium*, edited by Lyman Bryson and Louis Finkelstein, 196–212. New York: Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion in Their Relation to the Democratic Way of Life, 1942.

**Apr 20** Alain Locke. “The Negro’s Contribution to the Culture of the Americas.” In *African American Contributions to the Americas’ Cultures*, edited by Jacoby Adeshei Carter, 9–103. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. First published in French in 1943. [Lectures 1–3]

- Apr 25** Alain Locke. “The Negro’s Contribution to the Culture of the Americas.” In *African American Contributions to the Americas’ Cultures*, edited by Jacoby Adeshei Carter, 9–103. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. First published in French in 1943. [Lectures 4–6]
- April 27** Filmer S. C. Northrop. “Philosophy and World Peace.” In *Approaches to World Peace: Fourth Symposium*, edited by Lyman Bryson, Louis Finkelstein, and Robert M. MacIver, 642–652. New York: Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion in Their Relation to the Democratic Way of Life, 1944.
- Alain Locke. “Cultural Relativism and Ideological Peace.” In *Approaches to World Peace: Fourth Symposium*, edited by Lyman Bryson, Louis Finkelstein, and Robert M. MacIver, 609–618. New York: Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion in Their Relation to the Democratic Way of Life, 1944.
- May 2** Krishnalal Shridharani. “War and Satyagraha.” In *War Without Violence: A Study of Gandhi’s Method and Its Accomplishments*, 237–251. London: Victor Gollancz, 1939.
- Edgar S. Brightman. “Philosophical Ideas and Enduring Peace.” In *Approaches to World Peace: Fourth Symposium*, edited by Lyman Bryson, Louis Finkelstein, and Robert M. MacIver, 542–556. New York: Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion in Their Relation to the Democratic Way of Life, 1944.