IN 243: POST TRAUMATIC SLAVE SYNDROME AND ITS EFFECTS

Faculty Developed Independent Study (FDIS)  
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This FDIS seeks to inform students about the nature of trauma, and the impact of post-traumatic slave syndrome (PTSS) on African-American life and culture. In the context of this course, both of these phenomena are associated with 250 years of U.S. chattel slavery, followed by decades of de jure and de facto racial discrimination. It is a subject that has historical, psychological and sociological implications and thus is a must for students pursuing undergraduate and/or graduate work in these areas. With this primary goal in mind, students will be asked to review one of two texts on the subject, Joy DeGruy-Leary's *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America’s Legacy of Enduring Inquiry and Healing* or Thom Burrell's *Brainwashed: Challenging the Myth of Black Inferiority*, along with selected readings where appropriate.

Equipped with a sound understanding of PTSS, students will then be asked to construct a 4 to 5 page paper on their understanding of this phenomenon. Students are also asked to develop a second project that emerges directly from the competence. Suggestions for such projects are presented in the syllabus. Students can only register for one among the following competencies: H-4, H-1-I, A-3-A, A-2-C, and FX. Please note that there is a Desire2Learn (D2L) site for this course that includes an optional video (*Ethnic Notions*) that will further support the ideas and concepts embedded in the course.

**H-4:** Can analyze power relations among racial, social, cultural, or economic groups in the United States.

**A-3-A:** Can interpret experience in relationship to the perspective of a significant thinker or tradition.

**H-1-I:** Can understanding change methodology, plan change within a community,
assess its likely impact.

**FX:**  (to be written by student and faculty member)

**Readings:**

All students are required to read one of two texts: Joy DeGruy-Leary’s *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America’s Legacy of Enduring Inquiry and Healing* or Thom Burrell’s *Brainwashed: Challenging the Myth of Black Inferiority*. If you select DeGruy-Leary’s, **you are asked to read chapters 2 through 5.** Chapter two of this text is on the university e-reserves. Students can also purchase it via Amazon.com or order at Azizi Books in Matteson, Illinois.

If you select Burrell’s book, **you are required to read chapters 1-4, and 7-10.** You can purchase it also at Azizi Books in Matteson, Illinois (708-283-9850) or via Amazon.com. There are specific questions for each text (see below or course D2L site).

**H-4:** Can analyze power relations among racial, social, cultural, or economic groups in the United States.

This competence requires students to demonstrate an understanding of the development as well as the struggle regarding power, justice, and injustice in the United States and how these issues manifested between at least two population groups. The discussion of post-traumatic slave syndrome is at the heart of the system of oppression that dominated much of American history and continues to impact our society and therefore all of the readings will help students to become competent in this area.

**Students are therefore asked to write a 4 to 5 page paper that explicates the major points and rational for such points as identified in the readings.** This satisfies the first assignment and can be completed via a paper that addresses points offered by Dr. DeGruy-Leary or a response to pre-set questions that reflect some of her major arguments or respond to pre-written questions for Burrell’s *Brainwashed*.

At the same time as the H-4 competence intends to highlight systemic efforts to deny civil rights in the U.S., it also aims to highlight the many ways in which groups have “negotiated and attained power and voice in a complex society” and therefore students can pursue any one of two options in this second 4 to 5 page paper. To address this second aspect of the H-4 competence (the second paper), students can examine how either the dominant society has ‘negotiated,’ ‘attained power’ or ‘voice’ in American history or how African Americans have ‘negotiated’ or ‘attained power or voice’ in the United States. One might find oneself asking: what then does this have to do with the focus of this course, the concept of post-traumatic slave syndrome? As you read, you will
see that the ‘campaign’ to justify the enslavement of African Americans, which is reviewed in DeGruy-Leary’s book, was essentially made possible by the raising of one ‘voice’ - that of a specific category of white southerners - over the ‘voice’ of another, in this case, African Americans. There were counter movements in the African-American community, that presented a very different ‘voice’ or that intentionally countered the ‘voice’ of the society’s most oppressive elements which would take the form of civil and political rights movements and which can be the subject of this second paper. In ferreting out this argument or approach to American history, students might benefit from viewing two documentaries: *Ethnic Notions* by documentary filmmaker Marlon Riggs or *Race: the Power of an Illusion*, part 2 entitled “The Story We Tell.” Both should be available in the DePaul University Library.

**Potential Areas of Study related to History and Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome that can be the subject of the second paper:**

David Walker and Resistance to the Psychological Effects of American Chattel Slavery
The Ideology behind the Million Man March (1996)
Rites of Passage, Black male identity, PTSS
The message of Marcus Garvey, the UNIA, and PTSS
Emergence and Popularity of Blackface (and how it connects to PTSS)
Niggerology and Scientific Racism
The Writings and Actions of Thomas Jefferson and their Impact
The Role of the Enlightenment Thinkers and Justifications for Slavery
The Role of Benjamin Palmer, Christian Thinking, and Slavery
The Book of Genesis and Justifications for Slavery
American Chattel Slavery and Trauma
Cultural Trauma
Coverage and Response to Slave Resistance
The demise of Reconstruction and Cultural Trauma

**H-1-I:** Can understand change methodology, plan change within a community, and assess its likely impact.

The purpose of this competency is to use the discussion of post traumatic slave syndrome to develop a plan for change in the African-American community. As the competence facets read, students are required to select a ‘community’ which is the African American (or possibly sub-parts of the African-American community – i.e. African-American youth, elderly, or even regional communities of African-Americans), identify a problem - which in the context of this FDIS is post traumatic slave syndrome or most likely aspects of it -, select at least one change methodology theory (discussed in the readings and below), and develop a corrective plan and assess its likely impact.
This presents one with an exciting opportunity to begin to think and design a plan for resolving problems resultant from post-traumatic slave syndrome. **This competency is all about thinking, writing, and creating change.** For instance, some of the elements of most change methodologies involve:

- **Establishing a Sense of Urgency**
- **Clarifying and Sharing the Transformative Vision**
- **Establishing Change Communication**
- **Involving Stakeholders**

Therefore, for those who pursue H-1-I, you will be asked to read about the notion of post traumatic slave syndrome as well as the elements of change methodology and to develop a plan that can be implemented in the African–American community. Your specific assignment is to write a 4 to 5 page paper on the major premises of post-traumatic slave syndrome (from either texts by DeGruy-Leary or Burrell) and a separate five to six page paper that begins with a:

- 1 page discussion of an overall approach to change (using all or part of a methodology)
- 2 page discussion of the change methodology theory you selected and then present
- 2 page plan for how such a plan can be ‘rolled out’ in the African–American community. Your plan should touch on the elements of the theory selected.

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**A-3-A: Can interpret experience in relationship to the perspective of significant thinker or tradition.**

This topic of discussion, post-traumatic slave syndrome, is peppered with significant thinkers, academicians over the centuries who have argued for slavery’s lingering impact. Your task is twofold: to **write a 4 to 5 page paper that reviews the major premises of DeGruy-Leary’s argument (or answer pre-set questions for either texts by DeGruy-Leary or Burrell)** and then to focus on the ideas of a significant thinker in this area. Intellectuals such as David Walker, who wrote in early decades of the 19th century, W.E.B. DuBois, Asa Hilliard, Jawanza Kunjifu, Na’im Akbar, Jabari Asim are among a long litany of scholars who have addressed this subject and can be the focus of your discussion. **After selecting the appropriate ‘significant thinker,’ write a separate 5 page paper wherein you review their contribution, discuss its connection to PTSS, and compare the ideas expressed in these work to your own experiences.** In this way, this latter paper is both a synthesis of a significant thinker’s views on the subject of slavery’s impact and your reflection regarding their ideas, your experiences, and PTSS.
Texts of some of the major thinkers in this area are listed below:

Jawanza Kunjufu, *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys__*, __Lessons from History__
__________, __Developing Positive Self-Images and Discipline in Black Children__

Orlando Patterson, *Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries*

Na’im Akbar, *Chains and Images of Psychological Slavery__*, __Know Thy Self__
__________, __From Miseducation to Education__

W. E.B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folks*


FX: *(written by the student in consultation with the instructor)*

Students enrolled in this FDIS for an FX must consult the instructor. All are required to read the designated sections of either Dr. De-Gruy-Leary or Thom Burrell’s text and write a 4 to 5 page paper on all or aspects of their discussion or in response to pre-written questions for each text.

Students are then asked to write a second paper on a subject related to PTSS and their Focus Area. The latter assignment requires a discussion with the course instructor.
Questions for DeGruy-Leary’s text:

If you read De-Gruy-Leary’s work, please respond to the following questions. Your response constitutes completion of the first of your two major FDIS written assignments. Please email your document to ndavis@depaul.edu, retain a copy, and resend along with your final paper.

1. Please explain ‘cognitive dissonance’ and its relevance to the intentions of the Founding Fathers?

2. In at least two paragraphs, discuss aspects of the process by which African-Americans were dehumanized, as outlined in chapter two by Dr. DeGruy-Leary, including the work of Carl von Linneaus, Blumenbach, and phrenology as a pseudo-scientific theory.

3. Please explain the following PTSS concepts and/or symptoms and their implications:
   a. “Male as Breeder” (chapter 5)
   b. “inspiring fear and relishing conflict” (Chapter 5)
   c. “planning to fail” (chapter 5)

4. In chapters five and six, Dr. DeGruy-Leary presents and analyzes the concept of vacant self-esteem and offers about six different ways to treat this. Please discuss in at least one paragraph, four of her suggestions in depth.

5. In chapter six, Dr. DeGruy-Leary discusses mechanisms for healing and offers specific remedies. In no less than two paragraphs each, please capture recommendations she offers to build trust and a spirit of community and to combat racist socialization and evaluate them.
6. Please integrate what you have just read into your life experience. In what ways has PTSS impacted how you interact with your environment both past and present? Has DeGruy-Leary’s work inspired you to change or revise your personal way of being or worldview and in what ways?

Or,

…questions from Thom Burell’s *Brainwashed*. Your response constitutes completion of the first of your two major FDIS written assignments. Please email your document to ndavis@depaul.edu, retain a copy, and resend along with your final paper.

**Questions for Burrell’s text:**

1. What is your understanding of Burrell's notion of the 'paradox of progress'? Provide examples and discuss why he asserts that it impedes 'substantive collective progress.' Four points are offered regarding this concept in the first chapter. Please discuss all four.

2. Discuss Burrell's argument regarding the past and present Black inferiority campaign (which he refers to as the BI campaign). What were its elements in the 19th and early 20th centuries and how does it manifest today? In the first and second chapters, Burrell writes a great deal about the dynamics of enslavement including the male’s role, the image of the planter’s house, domestic work and how it was represented. He continues on with a discussion of images of black males and females in the media post-1980. Among these, please discuss four aspects of the past ‘black inferiority’ campaign and three ways in which it manifest today.

3. In chapter eight, Burrell articulates his three ‘endeavors’ or goals. Provide a paragraph on each that describes the goal and how it manifest?

4. As part of Burrell’s discussion of the different forms of inferiority in chapter 9, explain ‘God-mandated inferiority’ and provide your response. How is this relevant to African-American autonomy and Burrell’s notion that African-Americans are ‘bred to be led’? (See also an article on e-reserves by Naim Akbar entitled “The Effect of Racial Religious
5. In the chapter entitled “Buy Now, Pay Later,” Burrell examines the buying practices of African-Americans. Given his discussion, what is ‘conspicuous consumption’ and how does it intersect with racial low self-esteem and emotional buying?

6. Burrell’s text emphasizes the importance of ‘reprogramming’ African-Americans vis-à-vis, among other endeavors, promoting uplifting images and messages. Please provide in a minimum of two paragraphs examples of how this might be accomplished.

7. Lastly, Burrell further emphasizes the need for African-Americans to scrutinize all images and messages concerning them in the media. Select a media product (television show, film, commercial, video, among others) and examine the messages in two paragraphs. Please provide details about the media product (title, type of product, means by which it is circulated) as part of your discussion.