

## **Culture, Community, & Science**

*A curriculum development project supported by Piedmont Sustainability Initiative*

### **Description**

In my original proposal I had planned to examine the lives of two African American scientists, George Washington Carver and Benjamin Banneker in order to provide an opportunity for students to explore racialized notions embedded in the work of these two scientists. Based on what I had learned from their biographies, Carver and Banneker sought to position race differentially in relationship to their individual accomplishments. While I found this initially appealing, the more I read of Carver and the multiple narrative renderings of his legacy, I began to consider that Carver is positioned in African American history during the time of segregated schooling and the oppressive forces of Jim Crow laws. However, he was undeterred in his mission to bring a scientific approach to agriculture to improve the economic conditions of the black farmer. Strikingly, during the last decade of Carver's life. The Tuskegee Syphilis Study was launched and dismantled much of the progress Carver had made in communicating the usefulness of science and scientific ways of thinking in the life of the southern farmer specifically and the African American community generally. This realization provided me an opportunity to use my Piedmont curriculum module to explore contemporary issues of environmental and healthcare sustainability as they might be considered through historically racialized perspectives in the African American community.

The readings are intended to provide students with some understanding of Carver's work juxtaposed against the legacy of African American student achievement in science. Readings about the Tuskegee experiment are meant to highlight the devastating affects the study's implementation had on eroding the trust blacks held for scientific and medical personnel. Questions will be raised and considered the relative lack of protest against the study and its aims during the first two decades. Once the details of the study and questions about the ethics and utility of the findings were brought to light, it would still take a considerable amount of time to bring an end to the study and even a longer length of time for a public and official apology to be issued to the participants and their family. The irony of place will be brought to bear on our discussions – the Tuskegee Institute and Tuskegee University play differential roles in the two cases. Ultimately, students will be asked to consider identified and unidentified consequences of these two events in American history. Students will be challenged to think in terms of the vision of sustainability evidenced in Carver's life and work and how the manifestation of this vision might have been stunted by the troubling legacy of the syphilis study. Students will be asked to development projects that provide some evidence of their understanding of the historical and contemporary perspectives that inform the narratives of the African American scientist and/or the impact of science on African Americans.

**EDS 471 Foundations Seminar  
Culture, Community, and Science  
Division of Educational Studies  
Emory University**

**Instructor:** Magnia A. George, Ph.D

**Class Time:** Tu/Th 2:30-3:45 pm (August 27 – December 8)

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays (by appt); Thursdays (11:30 am – 1 pm)

**Welcome!!**

This seminar will provide an opportunity to explore two cases through the lens of science and social movements as it relates to person and place. Racialized notions of person and place are evident in the narratives describing the work of George Washington Carver and the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, respectively. The outcomes of both cases raise questions about perspectives on environmental and healthcare sustainability in the African American community.

Your prior and/or current experiences as a science learner are considered to be valuable and provide you with a point of view from which to actively participate in class discussions, activities, and assignments. Careful consideration of and reflection on your own thoughts and opinions as well as respect for the thoughts and opinions of others will be the rule rather than the exception. I encourage you to be open to learning from others' experiences, and I expect that you will find aspects of this course innovative as well as intellectually challenging. Please keep the lines of communication open and do not hesitate to see me during office hours if you have questions or concerns about the course or your performance at any time.

Finally, if you have special needs for which accommodations may be needed, please inform me as soon as possible. Emory's disability services policy can be found at [www.emory.edu/EEO/ODS](http://www.emory.edu/EEO/ODS).

*Note: The course syllabus is subject to revision, at the instructor's discretion.*

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS/PROJECTS

- 1) **Blackboard Online Discussion**
- 2) **Thought Papers**
- 3) **Final Project/Paper**

**Evaluation/Grading Scheme:** Assignments are due on the dates noted below.

Assignment	Percent of Grade	Due Date
<u>Blackboard Online Discussion</u>	20	Throughout the term
<u>Thought Papers</u>		
Paper 1	10	10/1
Paper 2	20	11/10
<u>Project Reveal &amp; Reflection</u> specific focus & format to be decided	10	12/1, 12/3, 12/8
<u>Final Project Submission</u>	30	on or before 12/16
<u>Attendance*/Participation</u>	10	Throughout the term
No absences = full credit		
3 or more absences = $\frac{3}{4}$ credit		
5 or more = $\frac{1}{2}$ credit		
(The above scale assumes full participation on days of attendance)		

**\*Attendance requirements go into effect after the official add/drop period for the semester.**

**Note: All assignments are due by class time on the dates noted above. Late work will not be accepted without prior approval from the instructor. In the case of illness or other unforeseen emergencies, an extension of one week is allowed to submit an assignment. This policy can be revised at the instructor's discretion, in the case of rare or extenuating circumstances that are clearly outside of the student's control. Any intentional abuse of this will be viewed as a violation of the university's policy on academic misconduct (see Article 4 in Emory's Honor Code).**