The Delights of Du Bois
An Interview with Prof. Avinnash Tiwari
By Lauryn Cole

For the third installment of faculty features with a focus on African American Literature and Black Studies, I have an interview with Career Instructor Avinnash Tiwari. While I’ve never had the express pleasure of taking one of Professor Tiwari’s courses, he comes highly recommended and focuses on the potential for Black Studies and Black spirituality as a place of power for mobilizing movements of change. Throughout this interview I found Prof. Tiwari’s enthusiasm for this discipline and curiosity about the potential for its literature to inspire movement towards liberation in the world is compelling. And with that, I’ll let Tiwari’s words speak for themselves:

Q: Can you tell me about how you were introduced to the discipline of Black and African American Literature and the decision to pursue it academically?

A: I was fortunate to do my undergrad at Temple U, where I had a number of mentors and folks who looked out for me. They were all Black Studies scholars in some discipline or another, or across multiple disciplines. They introduced me to work and discourse that I wanted to be a part of.

Q: Do you have a favorite class or text to teach at UO?

A: At some point, I almost always will, at the least, read from Robin D.G. Kelley's *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. To this day, the opening pages break open my heart and mind in powerful ways.

Q: For anyone interested in looking into the subject, are there people working in the field that you would recommend reading or looking up?

A: Where do we begin?! Begin with Du Bois, read him from his earliest works to latest along with his contemporaries. He published for roughly 60 years of his life, so a heck of a way to be introduced into the field.

Q: Are you willing/able to talk a little bit about the research you're conducting right now or do you have a favorite project you've worked on in the past?

A: I haven't spent as much time on this area as I would like to, but I am interested in exploring lesser-examined nuances of spirituality and blackness. From Du Bois's "souls" to MLK's sermons with a dash of Nietzsche to Black Feminist Buddhists today, I want to delve into another dimension of power and liberation living alongside and within other areas of power and movements for liberation.

To conclude with a final PSA, Prof. Tiwari can usually be found teaching WR 123 (and with a 100% approval rating from students on RateMyProfessor, this is a class you definitely want to take). The opportunity to hone your research writing skills while working with a professor dedicated and interested in the power of Black Studies and Literature? What could be better? Besides sitting down to read Du Bois, of course.