

GENDER AND WOMEN'S STUDIES (333)  
**BLACK FEMINISMS**

SPRING 2017  
TU, TH 9:30 – 10:45  
VAN VLECK B139

Professor Keisha Lindsay  
Room 3311-Sterling Hall  
263-2763  
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Office Hours:  
Tuesdays 8:25-9:25 am  
Thursdays 11:45-12:45 pm

**Course Description and Objectives:**

The aim of this course is to critically examine key issues, assumptions, and debates in contemporary, post-civil rights black feminist thought. Section one of the course explores how black feminist theorists simultaneously embrace and complicate established feminist and anti-racist readings of race and gender oppression. We will pay particular attention to how black feminists make use of standpoint theory, black nationalism, black liberalism, liberal feminism, black Marxism, and materialist feminist thought. Section two of the course interrogates black feminist thinkers' pioneering contributions to anti-racist and feminist thought. We will focus on black feminist understandings of intersectionality and womanism. The final section of the course examines how black feminist thinkers interrogate specific concepts including sexuality, leadership, and the criminal justice system. The particular questions we will analyze include but are not limited to the following. How do we recognize effective black leadership when we see it? What is the relationship between racism, gender based oppression, and homophobia in black women's lives?

Each section of the course will: 1) help develop the analytical skills necessary to think critically about feminism, race, and gender; 2) pay particular attention to how black feminist theory shapes and is shaped by other hierarchies of power including sexuality and 3) draw on a range of texts and films to situate black feminist theory not only as an intellectual project but as a personal and an activist one. Our ultimate aim is to build the skills and background that will enable us to apply these ideas and approaches to our own intellectual and political projects.

**Course Readings:**

The following required text is available at A Room of One's Own Bookstore, 315 W. Gorham. Tel: 608-257-7888.

**Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought (ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftall) (WOF)** ISBN-10: 1565842561; ISBN-13: 978-1565842564 This text is also on reserve at the Undergraduate Library, Helen C. White Building.

The **course pack/reader** is available at the L & S Social Science Copy Center, 6120 Social Science Building, 1180 Observatory Drive, Tel: 262-5396

**Course Requirements:**

1. Attending class and participating in class discussion (10%)  
You must sign the sign-in sheet at the beginning of every class. **You are allowed 2 absences.**  
Any absences greater than this number will drop your participation grade by one full letter grade

regardless of the extent to which you participate in class discussions when present. If you miss more than half of all of the class meetings without a satisfactory explanation you will receive a failing grade for the course.

2. Reflection Papers (10%)

You will submit a total of **two** papers throughout the semester. I will draw on your reflection papers to facilitate class discussion. Each paper must address **at least two of the readings assigned on a specific date**. Use papers to comment on anything that you find contradictory, controversial, confusing or otherwise noteworthy in of the assigned readings for a given class session. Your papers may seek clarification of particular terms or ideas; they may challenge the author(s)' presumptions; they may interrogate the implications of the author(s)' claims; or they may attempt to relate assigned readings to materials beyond the course.

**Please end each of your papers with two specific questions for class discussion.** Reflection papers are intended to keep you engaged with the readings. They should **not** be used to provide detailed summaries of the assigned texts. Each paper must be **between 250 to 275 words** long.

We will use Learn@UW for reflection papers. You can access Learn@UW from the University of Wisconsin's home page. Please **cut and paste** your papers directly into the relevant text box (no attachments). Reflection papers are due at **noon via learn@uw** on the day **before** class. **You must be present in class to solicit responses to and receive credit for your reflection paper. If you are absent you must write an additional reflection paper (and be present in class to discuss it) in order to receive "make up" credit.**

3. Mid-Term Essay (5-6 pages) (35%)

Your mid-term essay (hard copy only) is **due on FEBRUARY 27 AT 3:00 PM**

4. Final Essay (7-8 pages) (45%)

Your final essay (hard copy only) is **due in my office on MAY 4 AT 9:30 AM**

**Classroom Conduct:** Cell phones, texting, laptops, and their accompanying earpieces are NOT allowed during class in order to facilitate a non-distracting and intellectually productive learning environment. If you are found using any of these devices your attendance will be "zeroed" for the day in question.

**Email Communication:** I aim to respond to student emails within 24 hours of receipt, Monday to Friday.

**Statement on Grade Related Questions and Appeals:**

If you have questions about a grade, please speak to me first. If the question is not resolved, speak with the Chair, Judith Houck, who will attempt to resolve the issue informally and inform you of the Appeals Procedures if no resolution is reached informally. I will only discuss questions about grades during office hours or by appointment - not over email or before/after class.

Final grades will be determined according to the following official UW grading scale: A 93-100; AB 88-92; B 83-87; BC 78-82; C 70-77; D 60-69; F below 60.

**Late Paper Policy:** Papers and exams turned in late will be penalized **by ten (10) percentage points** for each 24-hour period after the due date.

**Academic Misconduct (Plagiarism and Cheating):** This class will strictly follow and enforce the university's policies on academic misconduct. UWS 14.03 defines academic misconduct to include acts in which a student seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation. Examples include but are not limited to: a) cutting and pasting text from the web without quotation marks or proper citation; b) paraphrasing from the web or written texts without crediting the source; c) using notes in an exam when such use is not allowed and d) using another person's ideas, words, or research and presenting it as one's own.

Complete information on academic misconduct is at [www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/academic\\_misconduct.html](http://www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/academic_misconduct.html)

**Writing Center:** For additional help with papers, visit the Writing Center at any stage during the writing process. Stop by 6171 Helen C. White, call for an appointment (263- 1992), or consult the Center's resources online at [www.wisc.edu/writing/](http://www.wisc.edu/writing/).

**Accessibility:** The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform me of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. I will work either directly with you or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

## Section One: Roadmaps

### Introduction - The Why and How of Black Feminist Theory?

January 17:

Meet and Greet/Syllabus Review

January 19:

bell hooks. "Theory as Liberatory Practice"

Barbara Christian. "Race for Theory"

January 24:

Sojourner Truth. "Woman's Rights" & "When Woman Gets Her Rights Man will be Right" (WOF)

Barbara Smith. Some Home Truths on the Contemporary Black Feminist Movement (WOF) Audre

Lorde. "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" (WOF)

## **Equality and Justice for All?**

January 26:

Ida B. Wells. "Lynch Law in America" (WOF)

Alice Dunbar Nelson. "The Negro Woman and the Ballot" (WOF)

Florence Kennedy. "A Comparative Study" (WOF)

Shirley Chisolm. "Facing the Abortion Question" (WOF)

January 31:

Pauli Murray. "The Liberation of Black Women" (WOF)

Beverly Davis. "To Seize the Moment: A Retrospective on the National Black Feminist Organization"

Kristal Brent. "A Manifesto of Sorts for a Black Feminist Movement"

February 2: In class film: Unbought and Unbossed

## **Towards a Black Materialist Feminism**

February 7:

Claudia Jones. "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman" (WOF)

Gloria Joseph. "The Incompatible Menage à Trois: Marxism, Feminism, and Racism"

February 9:

Angela Davis. "Rape, Racism and the Capitalist Setting"

Joy James. "Radicalizing Feminism"

## **(Re)Reading Black Nationalisms**

February 14:

"Panther Sisters on Women's Liberation"

Toni Cade Bambara. "On the Issue of Roles"

Pauline Terrelonge. "Feminist Consciousness and Black Women" (WOF)

February 16:

Frances White. "Africa on My Mind: Gender, Counter Discourse and African-American Nationalism" (WOF)

Patricia Hill Collins. "Black Nationalist Interpretations of Black Women's Community Work"

In class film: Still Revolutionaries

February 21: Mid-Term Essay Review

## **Black Feminism and/as Standpoint Theory**

February 23:

Patricia Hill Collins. "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought" (WOF)

Barbara Smith. "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism"

***MIDTERM ESSAY DUE – FEBRUARY 27 AT 3:00 PM***

February 28:

Hazel Carby. "'Women's Era': Rethinking Black Feminist Theory"

Tracey Reynolds. "Re-Thinking a Black Feminist Standpoint"

## **Section Two - Pioneering Schools of Black Feminist Thought**

### **Womanisms**

#### March 2:

Alice Walker. "Alice Walker's Womanism"

Patricia Hill Collins. "What's in a Name: Womanism, Black Feminism, and Beyond"

#### March 7:

Jacquelyn Grant. "Black Theology and the Black Woman" (WOF)

Monica Coleman. "Must I be a Womanist?"

#### March 9:

C. Hudson-Weems. "Africana Womanism"

Nikol Alexander-Floyd and Evelyn Simien. "Revisiting 'What's in a Name': Exploring the Contours of Africana Womanist Thought"

### **Intersectionality**

#### March 14:

Combahee River Collective. "The Combahee River Collective Statement" (WOF)

Kimberlé Crenshaw. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex"

March 16: In Class Film: Eve's Bayou

#### March 28:

Janice Yoder and Patricia Aniakudo. "Outside within the Firehouse: Subordination and Difference in the Social Interactions of African American Women Firefighters"

Dorothy E. Roberts. "Race, Gender, and Genetic Technologies: A New Reproductive Dystopia?"

#### March 30:

Ange Marie Hancock. "Intersectionality as a Normative and Empirical Paradigm"

Nikol Floyd-Alexander. "Disappearing Acts: Reclaiming Intersectionality in the Social Sciences in a Post-Black Feminist Era"

## **Section 3 – Specific Themes in Black Feminist Thought**

### **Crime and Punishment**

#### April 4:

Dorothy Roberts. "Punishing Drug Addicts Who Have Babies"

Michele Goodwin. "Gender, Race, and Mental Illness: The Case of Wanda Jean Allen"

#### April 6:

Andrea Ritchie. "Law Enforcement Violence Against Women of Color"

Kristen West Savali. "Black Women are Killed by Police, Too"

Kirsten Clarke. "Towards a Black Feminist Liberation Agenda"

### **Sexual and Body Politics**

#### April 11:

Barbara Omolade. "Heart of Darkness" (WOF)

Darlene Hine. "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women" (WOF)

April 13:

Film: Silent Choices

April 18:

Susan Cavin. "An Interview with Audre Lorde"

Cheryl Clarke. "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance" (WOF)

June Jordan. "A New Politics of Sexuality" (WOF)

April 20

Talia Bettcher. "Terminology"

Heath Fogg-Davis. "Sex-Classification Policies as Transgender Discrimination: An Intersectional Critique"

### **Leadership**

April 25:

bell hooks. "Black Women Intellectuals"

Patricia Hill Collins. "Rethinking Black Women's Activism"

April 27: Writing Center Workshop

May 2:

Joy James. "Captive Theorists and Community Caretakers"

Alicia Garza. "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement"

May 4:

Course Evaluation/Review

***FINAL ESSAY DUE THURSDAY, MAY 4 AT 9:30 AM***