

POL 210
Black Women's Political Activism
Spring 2019
Tuesdays 3:30-6:00 pm
108 Kirby

Prof. Melissa Harris-Perry
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Office Hours: By Appointment

Prof. Jessica Lynn Stewart
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00-3:00pm

This course examines black women's participation in American politics as citizens, residents, voters, activists, candidates, and elected officials. Topics include traditional political action such as voting, campaigning, and protesting and less traditional engagement such as education, research, media, sports and art. We will consider the intersections of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation and identity.

The format for our class will be a combination of lecture, discussion, and small group work. Please come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings. The course also seeks to develop the critical questioning, writing, and engagement skills of students.

Course Objectives

Students will critically engage a wide range of scholarly and popular texts focused on social constructions of politics, race, and gender.

Students will become familiar with broad themes and approaches to social science research and contemporary writing by and about black women political actors. .

Students will develop skills of critical analysis and practical problem solving.

Students will be introduced to multiple, contested ideas for understanding gender, race, and politics.

Assessment

Papers (60%): Students must write two papers for this course. Each paper should be 5-7 pages. The first paper must be submitted on or before **Friday, March 1 at 7pm**. The second paper must be submitted on or before **Friday April 19 at 7pm**. Each paper will account for 30% of your grade. Prof MHP and Prof Stewart will each grade one of your papers. Rubrics for assessing papers will be posted on Sakai. Each paper must address a key theme by tying together assigned readings from TWO (2) or more weeks. Paper should be **submitted via Sakai on the Assignments link**.

Final Project (30%): In groups of three to four (3-4), students will collaboratively develop a final project. Details regarding the final project are forthcoming. Due dates for steps in final project are below.

Groups chosen/ Assigned:	January 30, 5pm
Proposal for Group Topic:	February 18, 5pm
Project Outline:	April 15, 5pm
Final Project Due:	May 6, noon
Final Project Presentation in Class	To Be Scheduled for Week 15

Class Leadership (10%): Students will be expected to take on the task of developing discussion questions (in pairs) for one class during the semester and leading the discussion portion of class. This class leadership counts as 10% of the final grade. Students will sign up for which classes they will lead on the first day.

Extra Credit: Extra credit opportunities will be made available throughout the semester.

Attendance: More than three unexcused absences will result in 1/3 letter grade reduction from the final grade of the course.

Late Assignment Policy: All students have one Free Pass to be used on any *individual* written assignment. One assignment can be turned in up to 48 hours late with no questions asked and no negative consequences for the grade. After the Free Pass is used, any assignment submitted late will be subject to the late assignment policy. Assignments submitted late will lose 1/3 letter grade for any late submission within the first 48 hours. Each additional 24 hours results in another 1/3 letter grade reduction. Exceptions to this policy will only be made for emergencies or health challenges that are documented by a physician or university administrator. GROUP assignments do not have a free pass.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious violation of ethical conduct and academic integrity. Plagiarism need not be intentional. All cases of plagiarism – the theft of words, ideas, sources, and conclusions whether from written, audio, oral, or digital materials – will not be tolerated and will be reported to appropriate departmental and dean leadership.

How We Are With One Another

We acknowledge that racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, ableism, and other forms of interpersonal and institutionalized forms of inequality exist in society. This does not mean we all agree on the causes, consequences, or solutions for these forms of inequality. It does mean we agree to do our best to better understand them, refrain from repeating misinformation, and refrain from personal attack. No student is expected to have all the answers. Mistakes and questions are welcomed in the spirit of cooperative learning.

We will work to create an atmosphere where:

We keep an open mind and listen;

Everyone is valued and respected;

Everyone can work and learn in a safe and caring environment;

Everyone engages in the thoughtful presentation of ideas, shares the floor, and can critically assess each other's ideas;

No individual is ridiculed or demeaned for sharing their personal experiences and ideas;

Personal experiences shared in the context of the classroom remain confidential unless otherwise agreed upon;

No individual is expected to be a representative spokesperson for a given group of people, given there is intra-group diversity of skills, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors.

Email Policy

Professor Harris-Perry typically responds to all necessary and appropriate emails directly related to course matters within 5 business days. Professor Harris-Perry does not respond to unsolicited student emails from Friday at 12:00 noon until Monday at 12:00 noon unless specifically designated.

Please be aware that your instructors will provide regular updates to the syllabus and various course materials on Sakai but students who rely on excessive use of email communications may experience a negative effective in their course grade. Professor Harris-Perry considers more than one email interaction a week to be excessive unless there is a legitimate and documented emergency.

Required Texts

Most readings marked with a * are available as links from the course Sakai site. You will find them under the Resources link, organized by week. Others are available via the Course Reserves link on the Sakai site, organized by title. You are responsible for ALL readings, even if there is a broken link. Please note we have provided sufficient citations for you to identify the correct article to prepare for class.

Camille Acker, *Training School for Negro Girls*. Feminist Press 2018

Shirley Chisholm, *Unbought and Unbossed*. 1970. 2009 reissue

Monique W Morris, *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in America*. The New Press. 2016

Michelle Obama, *Becoming*. Random House. 2018

Beth Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence and America's Prison Nation*. NYU Press 2012

Stanlie James, Frances Smith-Foster and Beverly Guy-Sheftall (editors) *Still Brave: The Evolution of Black Women's Studies*. New York: Feminist Press 2009.

*Please Note Professors Harris-Perry and Stewart reserve the right to make changes to the assigned readings and course schedule throughout the semester as necessary for to achieve an optimal course of study.

INTRODUCTION

Week 1: January 15 Introduction

*A Conversation with Black Women on Race. New York Times 2015. Video.

*Cohen, Cathy J., and Sarah J. Jackson. 2016. "Ask a Feminist: A Conversation with Cathy J. Cohen on Black Lives Matter, Feminism, and Contemporary Activism." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 41(4): 775–792.

*African American Policy Forum: "Did You Know? The Plight of Black Girls & Women in America." Fact Sheet.

CONSTRUCTING BLACK GIRLHOOD and WOMANHOOD

Week 2 January 22 Constructing Black Girlhood/Womanhood through Narrative

Camille Acker, *Training School for Negro Girls*

*Nazera Sadiq Wright. Introduction and "Black Girlhood in early 20th Century Black Conduct Books" both from *Black Girlhood in the 19th Century*. University of Illinois Press 2016

Week 3, January 29 Constructing Black Girlhood/Womanhood - Law and Politics

*Jasmine Phillips, Black Girls and the (Im)Possibilities of a Victim Trope: The Intersectional Failures of Legal and Advocacy Interventions in the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Minors in the United States. UCLA Law Review 2015

*Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes and Black Women in America*. Introduction, Chapter 1 and Chapter 4

*Cathy Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" GLQ: Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies. May 1997. Pp. 437-468.

*Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" in *Critical Race Theory: Key Writings that Formed the Movement*. Crenshaw, Peller, Thomas (editors) Free Press: 1995. pp. 357-383

*Isoke, Zenzele. 2014. "Can't I Be Seen? Can't I Be Heard? Black Women Queering Politics in Newark." *Gender, Place & Culture* 21(3): 353–369.

*Watch Video of Assata Shakur linked to Sakai

LEADERSHIP

Week 4, February 1-3

No class on Tuesday, February 5. Instead students are REQUIRED to take part in at least ONE session of the Leadership and Character conference. This includes any session of the conference and/or the Keynote Interview and Performance by Renée Elise Goldsberry

All information regarding conference and keynote are available on Sakai under Resources Week 4.

All students must submit a 750-1000 word response to their participation in the Leadership Conference by February 9. Details regarding the response are on Sakai under Assignments.

HOME

Week 5, February 12

Michelle Obama, *Becoming*, Chapters 1-15

*Chatelain, Marcia. *South Side Girls: Growing Up in the Great Migration*. Duke University Press, Introduction, Chapter 1 and Chapter 4

*Some Did Choose to Return to Slavery Because They Chose Family Over Everything. Tera Hunter, The Root.com 2018

*Zenzele Isoke. *The Politics of Homemaking: Black Feminist Transformations of a Cityscape*. 2011

WORK

Week 6, February 19

*Harris, LaShawn. 2018. *Keona K. Ervin. Gateway to Equality: Black Women and the Struggle for Economic Justice in St. Louis*. Oxford University Press. Chapters 2, 6, and Conclusion

*Gillespie, Deanna M. 2018. "Black Women Workers and" Comrade Sisters": Gendering the Labor and Black Power Movements." *Reviews in American History* 46(1): 151–155.

*Tera W. Hunter. "Washing Amazons" and "Organized Protests" To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997.

*"We Are Literally Slaves": An Early Twentieth-Century Black Nanny Sets the Record Straight

*Vanessa Tait. "Workers Just Like Anyone Else: Organizing Workfare Unions in New York City" Still Lifting, Still Climbing. 297-325

SCHOOL

Week 7, February 26

Monique W Morris, *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in America*

*Aimee Meredith Cox "Narratives of Protest and Play" *Shapeshifters: Black Girls and the Choreography of Citizenship*. Duke University Press 2015

*Let Her Learn Toolkit- National Women's Law Center

Week 8, March 5

*Love, Bettina L. "Urban Storytelling: How Storyboarding, Moviemaking, and Hip-Hop-Based Education Can Promote Students' Critical Voice." *English Journal* 103.5 (2014)

*Baldwin, Andrea N., and Raven Johnson. 2018. "Black Women's Co-Mentoring Relationships as Resistance to Marginalization at a PWI." In *Black Women's Liberatory Pedagogies*, Springer, 125–140.

*Marshall, Anneka. 2018. "Surviving the Academic Alienation of Black Women." In *Identity and Difference in Higher Education: Outsiders Within*, Routledge, 162–169.

*Patton, Lori D., Kimberlé Crenshaw, Chayla Haynes, and Terri N. Watson. 2016. "Why We Can't Wait:(Re) Examining the Opportunities and Challenges for Black Women and Girls in Education (Guest Editorial)." *The Journal of Negro Education* 85(3): 194–198.

****SPRING BREAK****

MEDIA

Week 9, March 19

*Surviving R Kelly. More details TBA

*Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams. 2018. "Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew." In *Words That Wound*, Routledge, 111–132.

*Sherri Williams. 2015 Digital Defense: Black Feminists Resist Violence With Hashtag Activism, *Feminist Media Studies*, 15:2, 341-344,

*McArthur, Sherell A. 2016. "Black Girls and Critical Media Literacy for Social Activism." *English Education* 48(4): 362.

*Ruth Nicole Brown, *Hear our Truths: The Creative Potential of Black Girlhood*. Chapter 5, "More than Sass and Silence" (Course Reserves link)

VIOLENCE

Week 10, March 26 Interpersonal Violence

*Surviving R Kelly continued

* White, Aaronette M. "Talking Black, Talking Feminist: Gendered Micromobilization Processes in a Collective Process against Rape," in *Still Lifting, Still Climbing*, 189-219.

*Rushing, Andrea B. "Surviving Rape: A Morning/Mourning Ritual," in *Theorizing Black Feminisms*, 127-141.

*Canaan, Andrea R. "I Call Up Names: Facing Childhood Sexual Abuse," in *The Black Women's Health Book*, 78-82.

Week 11, April 2 State Violence

Beth Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence and America's Prison Nation*.

*Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, and Underprotected"

*Chatelain, Marcia, and Kaavya Asoka. 2015. "Women and Black Lives Matter." *Dissent* 62(3): 54–61.

*Towns, Armond R. 2016. "Geographies of Pain:# SayHerName and the Fear of Black Women's Mobility." *Women's Studies in Communication* 39(2): 122–126.

*Neely, Cheryl. *You're dead? So what? Media, Police, and the Invisibility of black women as victims of Homicide*. Chapter 5

*Chatelain, Marcia, and Kaavya Asoka. 2015. "Women and Black Lives Matter." *Dissent* 62(3): 54–61.

POLITICS

Week 12, April 9 Black Feminist Thought and Practice

All of Section I of *Still Brave: The Evolution of Black Women's Studies*

The Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," 3-12.

Clark, "Lesbianism: an Act of Resistance," 12-22.

Walker, "Womanist," 22-23.

Lourde, "The Uses of Anger," 23-31.

hooks, "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory," 31-45.

Brown, King, & Ransby, "African American Women in Defense of Ourselves," 45-47.

Awkward, "A Black Man's Place in Black Feminist Criticism," 47-64.

From Section IV of *Still Brave*

Brown, "What Has Happened Here?" 283-300.

Griffin, "That the Mothers May Soar and the Daughters May Know Their Names: A Retrospective of Black Feminist Literary Criticism," 336-358.

James, Resting in the gardens, battling in the deserts : black women's activism

June Jordan, Some of us did not die / June Jordan --

Stanlie M. James, Racialized gender/gendered racism : reflections on black feminist human rights theorizing

Barriteau, "Con-di-fi-cation" : black women, leadership, and political power

Relevance of black feminist scholarship : a Caribbean perspective

Cheryl A. Wall, On dolls, presidents, and little black girls

Week 13, April 16 Government and Elections

Michelle Obama, *Becoming*, Chapter 16-End

Shirley Chisholm, *Unbought and Unbossed*, Chapters 5-14

*Philpot, Tasha S. and Walton Jr, Hanes "One of Our Own: Black Female Candidates and the Voters Who Support Them" *American Journal of Political Science* 2007

* Wendy Smooth. Standing for Women? Which Women? The Substantive Representation of Women's Interests and the Research Imperative of Intersectionality. *Politics & Gender*, 7(3), 436-441. 2011

*"The Chisholm Effect: Black Women in American Politics 2018" Report of the Center for American Women and Politics

FLEX WEEK

Week 14, April 23

On advice of the university registrar, instructors are encouraged to build in a "flex week" to account for snow, illness, or other unforeseen circumstances. This week can be used to make-up lost time or, if all goes well it can be used to make room for a guest speaker or special event. Due to unpredictable weather and course cancellations in recent semesters we are including a "Flex Week" in the overall course planning.

CLASS PRESENTATIONS of GROUP PROJECTS

Week 15 April 30

Each group will prepare a presentation of their final project (10-12 minutes) and Respond to questions from their peers - (5-10) minutes