

AFA 3930 - Special Topics/ WST 3930 - Special Interdisciplinary Topics:

Introduction to Black Women's Studies

Fall 2022

Tuesday, Period 4 (10:40 AM – 11:30 AM) and Thursday, Period 4 & 5 (10:40 AM – 12:35 PM)

In-Person (100%) Rolfs Hall Rm. 115

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Associate Professor

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Office Hours: TBD. and by Appointment

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Course Description:

This course is an introductory course that examines the historical, critical and theoretical perspectives that led to the development of Black feminist theory/praxis. The course will draw from the 19th century to the present, but will focus on the contemporary Black feminist intellectual tradition that achieved notoriety in the 1970s and initiated a global debate on “western” and global feminisms. Central to our exploration will be the analysis of the intersectional relationship between theory and practice, and of race, to gender, class, and sexuality. We will conclude the course with the exploration of various expressions of contemporary Black feminist thought around the globe as a way of broadening our knowledge of feminist theory.

The syllabus is structured in such a way that we will trace the ways in which the life stories we read describe the development of a feminist consciousness which leads to the development of feminist theory. In other words, we will explicitly be concerned with the interrelationship between life and theory and the way the two are written by black feminist writers. As such, an ongoing theme of this course will be the ways in which, as the old feminist slogan states, the personal is political.

Course Structure:

This is a course in which class discussion of the readings and films is the most important assignment. I expect that you will participate actively in class, ask questions, and challenge the ideas put forward by the texts or class discussions. I ask that you treat your peers with respect and consideration when they are speaking so that we can create an open environment in which all feel they have a right to voice their **informed** opinions.

This course is designed to engage students in research, critical thinking, and formal research skills through various means of learning in an attempt to provide all students with multiple opportunities to utilize their optimal learning style while building others. Students will be asked to demonstrate their learning through writing assignments, oral reports, class discussions and examinations. In each instance students will be assessed based upon the content and the form. For example: in the case of a writing assignment, there may be deductions in the student's grade if the writing impairs the reader's ability to understand the content or the content is not thoroughly argued and/or researched. Students should feel free to see me or to utilize the myriad resources available to assist students in their academic life here at the University of Florida College of Arts and Sciences Writing Center.

Student Accessibility:

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with me and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester. <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/accommodations/>

Sensitive Subject Matter:

This course requires engagement with issues of a potentially sensitive nature. Some of our readings and class discussions will frankly address race, ethnicity, health, and sexuality among other topics. While you are not required to self-disclose in assignments or discuss information with which you are uncomfortable, I do expect you to read and discuss in class the articles and chapters assigned. If you anticipate problems completing the readings or participating in class discussions, please talk to me well in advance. A passing grade in this class is not dependent on what you disclose in your writings and discussion but rather how well you engage the reading, think analytically, and write effectively. (adapted from Lindeman SDSU)

Colleague Sensitivity:

We each come from a range of backgrounds and have had a host of experiences that may affect how we read, discuss, and experience various aspects of the course and our work together as colleagues. There may be information presented or statements made that cause various emotions during class, while reading, or even post class when one has had time to think about the material alone or with others. I ask that we come to the readings, assignments, and discussions with compassion and empathy; for ourselves as individuals, and for others as colleagues in a community of learning. As your course instructor and facilitator, I will work to be attentive and to address concerns as sensitively as possible, however, I ask that if you experience something you would like to discuss, please make me aware after class, in office hours, or by appointment.

Wellness:

We are currently experiencing particularly difficult times as a society. The University offers resources that you should feel welcome to utilize.

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center:

<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Course Work Expectations:

All student assignments must be type-written, double-spaced, with pagination, your name on each page, and submitted via Canvas using docx or pdf files. This class requires a good deal of reading and writing. Writing assignments are given as an opportunity to build students' research, critical thinking, and formal scholarship skills. Therefore, writing is assessed along with content and will result in deductions in grading if there are significant errors in grammar, punctuation and style and/or the writing impairs the reader's ability to understand the content. With this in mind, please utilize the College of Arts and Sciences Writing Center.

I may occasionally recommend that students see me and/or a counselor for assistance in which case the student would be able to resubmit the assignment after having met with me and/or a tutor. This is the only time I allow resubmissions.

Plagiarism and Cheating:

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class. Students caught plagiarizing, defined as misrepresenting another's work as one's own through omission, evasiveness, and/or improper citation, may receive an F on the assignment and in the class. Common yet no less egregious plagiarism includes using

verbatim other authors' summaries of research and then citing the primary source rather than citing the author who summarizes that primary source. If you are unsure about when you may be in danger of plagiarizing please talk with me. (adapted from Lindeman SDSU)

Classroom Policies Honor Code/Ethical Practice:

You are required to abide by the Student Honor Code. Any violation of the academic integrity expected of you will result in a minimum academic sanction of [faculty to insert their minimum academic penalty, for example: "failing grade on the assignment or assessment"] Any alleged violations of the Student Honor Code will result in a referral to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. Please review the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code at sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/

Audio/Visual Policy:

To encourage active engagement and academic inquiry in the classroom, as well as to safeguard the privacy of students and faculty, no form of audio or visual recording in the classroom is permitted without explicit permission from the professor/instructor or without a letter from the Disability Resource Center, signed by the faculty member, authorizing the recording as an accommodation. Authorized recordings may only be used by a student who has obtained permission and may not be shared or distributed for any reason.

See the University of Florida Guidance for Recording a Class Lecture

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/codechanges/>

Avoid Unauthorized Recordings:

A Student shall not make a video or audio Recording. A Recording must not be Published without the prior express written consent of the Faculty or guest lecturer.

A Student shall not make a Recording in class, through any means over any medium, of anything other than a Class Lecture, including but not limited to the Recording of any assessment, clinical activity, lab, or student presentation. The Recording of any meeting or conversation in class between Students or between Students and Faculty or guest lecturer is strictly prohibited.

Do Not Share or Publish Recordings:

A Student, independently or with another person or other people, must not without express written authorization take, give, Publish, post or submit, transmit, or receive materials, information, or resources in any manner, through any medium, for the purpose of gaining or providing an improper academic advantage to any Student.

Course Evaluation:

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluer.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/

Use of Electronics:

It is true that we now live in a sort of "Jetsons" age. However, I view the classroom as a professional environment much like an office or team meeting. It is quite rude in that context to take or receive phone calls, emails, chats, etc. Therefore students are asked to turn off or silence their electronic

devices including smart phones before arriving in class. If you forget and your phone rings, you are asked to quietly turn it off and proceed with class without any further distractions. If you need to take the call, silence it, and quietly leave the classroom and take your call outside. If you have, or anticipate an emergency that requires you to be available electronically, you are required to let me know, and step outside the classroom to take care of **ALL** electronic communications. Students may use laptops, ipads, ereaders, and other electronic reading devices **to read or view classroom materials ONLY**. You may not use these devices for social networking, “googling”, or other purposes not related to the course.

Course Requirements

1. Class Participation. (10% of final grade)

You are expected to come to class fully prepared for class discussions. All assigned readings must be completed by class time on the days they are due. You are also expected to participate actively in class discussions. Understanding that there are various ways in which a student may “participate,” student participation will also be calculated based upon active participation in online formats (Canvas discussion posts, etc).

2. Special Event reflection papers. (10% of final grade; 5% each)

Students are required to attend two events outside our class sessions that are related to Black women’s experiences. I will periodically provide a list of possible events. However, students are also encouraged to locate events on their own. Topics can be broad; however, each event must connect to our course and its focus on Black women.

The papers should be 2-3 pages, typed and double-spaced and submitted via Canvas. There is no need for a cover page. Students are asked to place their name, date, and page number on each page. Deadlines for the special events paper are rolling. Students should plan to submit one week after attending the event. Students are also encouraged to submit one paper before the midterm and the second by the last day of classes. If these guidelines pose a challenge, the last day students can submit these papers is the last day of fall semester classes.

3. Analytical response papers. (40% of final grade)

Students will write an analytical response paper engaging the assigned readings. These are not reflection papers. These are papers in which students are asked to use a reading guide, to identify key passages, quotes, themes, etc. from the assigned readings, develop a thesis, or argument, from your reading guide and write a paper using your themes, quotes, notes, etc. to provide evidence. Analytical response papers must be 2-3 pages typed, double-spaced. While short, they should be well-written and edited, and generally demonstrate that you care about the text and are finding meaning in it. The analytical response paper can also serve as a springboard for your final paper (guidelines will be provided).

4. Presentation on a woman of color scholar introduced in this course. (20% of final grade)

Many of the womxn you will encounter in the readings for this course will be new to you. I encourage you to take a moment, as you are reading, and look them up (google) to get an idea of who they are/were. This gives you the opportunity to build on your knowledge at your own pace. As you are

reading about these womxn, choose one you would like to know more about; conduct additional research, and prepare a short presentation. I will provide you with further instructions on what is expected of these presentations, but they will include a discussion of the author's personal history and biography, other works, criticisms and/or interpretations of their work, and their contribution to black women/women of color feminism. **Presentations will be the last two weeks of class.** No one can research the same person and length will vary according to the person you decide to research.

4. Final Paper Black Women's Studies at UF. (20% of final grade).

You will write one final paper, 8-10 pages, typed, double-spaced, that locates and writes about the experiences of Black womxn on UF's campus. You may choose to do a biography of an individual or an exploration of an activist moment, the development of a club, or even a department and/or student service. We will visit UF libraries and the archives to select topics. You may also contextualize your findings using other historical resources (guidelines will be provided).

Required Texts:

All texts are available at the campus book store and on reserve

Barnes, Riché J. Daniel. 2015 *Raising the Race: Black Career Women Redefine Marriage, Motherhood, and Career*. Rutgers University Press
Rutgers University

hooks, bell. 2015. *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*
Routledge Press

Walker, Alice. 2003. *The Color Purple*
Harcourt Publishers

Berry, Daina and Kali Gross. 2020. *A Black Woman's History of the United States*
Beacon Press

Farmer, Ashley. 2017. *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era*
University of North Carolina Press

Trigger Warning: Some of the readings in this course explore sexual assault and rape. The course materials in which these issues are explored are listed on the syllabus with a (TW) next to them. There are other readings that may touch on these issues but are not wholly about them. Students should let me know as soon as possible if they encounter readings or materials that make it difficult to complete assignments for the course. I will make every effort to be sensitive to these issues however, if a student believes these are issues they are not ready to explore in an academic setting, I would suggest the student withdraw from the course.

—with well wishes and respect, Professor Barnes

COURSE OUTLINE:

Your reading assignment is provided for each week. Course requirements are due the day they appear on the outline. In-class assignments, homework assignments and pop quizzes/short writing assignments will be disseminated periodically throughout the course. The schedule is subject to minor changes you will be notified of changes verbally and in writing.

Part 1: We will begin the course with a focus on the way black women (mostly fiction) writers introduced Black Women's Studies as an area of inquiry and established a lens through which to understand and establish black feminism/womanism. We will focus on Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and the literary and communal response to the book, and later the film.

Week 1: Introductions

Introduction to the course

Syllabus

Introduction to Reading Guide

Week 2: What's the significance of "the color purple?"**Tuesday**

Decide on a screening and discussion date for *The Color Purple* (TW)

Begin reading Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (about 50 pages per class period) (TW)

use the reading guide to take notes.

Thursday

-Walker, *The Color Purple* (TW)

-Guy-Sheftall, Beverly. 1995. "The Evolution of Feminist Consciousness among African American Women," in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought*. The New Press: New York.

Week 3**Tuesday**

-Walker, *The Color Purple* (TW)

Thursday

-Walker, *The Color Purple* (TW)

Week 4**Tuesday**

-Walker, *The Color Purple* (TW)

Thursday

View Film, *Silence: In Search of Black Female Sexuality in America* (directed by Mya Baker, 2004)

Part 2: We will explore the history of Black women in the U.S. and the activism and early forms of feminism that later shaped the Civil Rights, feminist, and LGBTQ movements. We will focus on Daina Berry and Kali Gross. *A Black Woman's History of the United States* and Ashley Farmer's *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era*

"Only the BLACK WOMAN can say "when and where I enter, in the quiet undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole...race enters with me." ANNA JULIA COOPER, 1892

Week 5: Inventing and Saving Themselves**Tuesday****Walker Analytical Reflection Paper Due****Thursday**Daina Berry and Kali Gross. *A Black Woman's History of the United States***Week 6: The Unfinished Revolution****Tuesday**Daina Berry and Kali Gross. *A Black Woman's History of the United States***Thursday**Daina Berry and Kali Gross. *A Black Woman's History of the United States***Week 7****Tuesday**Daina Berry and Kali Gross. *A Black Woman's History of the United States***Thursday**Daina Berry and Kali Gross. *A Black Woman's History of the United States***Week 8****Tuesday**Ashley Farmer. *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era***Thursday**Ashley Farmer. *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era***Week 9****Tuesday****Berry and Gross Analytical Reflection Paper Due**Ashley Farmer. *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era***Thursday**Ashley Farmer. *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era*

Part 3: We will explore the uneasy beginnings of black feminism. This exploration will include the perceived conflict between the importance of race versus gender in the black community, and black feminisms' conflict with mainstream feminism, black men, black women, and other women of color. We will focus this exploration around bell hooks' text, *Ain't I A Woman* and build with other writers' contributions.

Week 10: Black Feminist Rumblings**Tuesday**

- Smith, Barbara. (1983/1995). "Some Home Truths on the Contemporary Black Feminist Movement" in *Words of Fire*, Beverly Guy Sheftall, ed. The New Press: New York. (see Moodle)
- Combahee River Collective Statement (1977/1995), in *Words of Fire*, Beverly Guy Sheftall, ed. The New Press: New York. (see Moodle)
- Walker, Alice. (1983/2009). "Womanist," in *Still Brave: The Evolution of Black Women's Studies*, Stanlie M. James, Frances Smith Foster, and Beverly Guy-Sheftall. Feminist Press: New

York (see Moodle)

Thursday

-Ula Taylor "The Historical Evolution of Black Feminist Theory and Praxis" *Journal of Black Studies* 29(2): 234-253. (Moodle)

-bell hooks *Ain't I a Woman*

Week 11

Tuesday

Farmer Analytical Reflection Paper Due

bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*

Thursday

bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*

Week 12 Women of Color and Feminist Coalitions

Tuesday

-Zinn, Maxine Baca and Bonnie Thornton Dill. "Theorizing Difference from Multiracial Feminism," in *Feminist Studies*, 22:2 summer 1996.

-Martinez, Elizabeth. "In Pursuit of Latina Liberation," in *Signs*, Vol 20:4, Summer 1995)

Thursday

-Johnson, Gaye Theresa. 2013. Chapter One, "Luis Moreno, Charlotta Bass, and the Constellations of Interethnic Working-Class Radicalism," in *Space of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity*. University of California Press: Berkeley

-"Forward" by Toni Cade Bambara, "the Bridge Poem" by Donna Kate Rushin, and Introduction to *This Bridge Called my Back*, edited by Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrí Moraga (1981).

Part 4: Contemporary Black women: the struggle for freedom, choice, and citizenship

In our final section of the course, we will take the temperature of the U.S. and its relationship to Black women. Using Riché J. Daniel Barnes' text, *Raising the Race: Black Career Women Redefine Marriage, Motherhood, and Community* we look at contemporary politics to understand what it means to be a Black woman, and an American citizen.

Week 13

Tuesday

hooks Analytical Reflection Paper Due

Riché J. Daniel Barnes. *Raising the Race: Black Career Women Redefine Marriage, Motherhood, and Community*

Thursday

Riché J. Daniel Barnes. *Raising the Race: Black Career Women Redefine Marriage, Motherhood, and Community*

Week 14

Tuesday and Thursday

Women of Color Coalitions Analytical Reflection Paper Due

Riché J. Daniel Barnes. *Raising the Race: Black Career Women Redefine Marriage, Motherhood, and Community*

Thursday University Holiday No Classes

Week 15

Tuesday

Riché J. Daniel Barnes. *Raising the Race: Black Career Women Redefine Marriage, Motherhood, and Community*

Thursday

Final Project Presentations

Week 16

Tuesday

Barnes Analytical Reflection Paper Due

Final Project Presentations

Wednesday, December 7

Last Day of Classes

Final Paper Due 12/14/2022

Final Exam Scheduled for: 12/14/2022 @ 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM