

AML 4685: Womanist Intellectual Thought

Dr. Debra Walker King

Office Hrs: R2, 4-5 periods

Spring 2020 – T2-3; R3 periods

and by appointment

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“Sisters in Conference” artwork by Kolongi

“When you really look at the stereotypes of Black women, the worst you can say about them, that is once you disregard the vocabulary and the dirty words and deal with the substance of what is being said, is quite complementary. Think about it. What is being said is that Black women are wonderful mothers and nurturers (mammies), that we are sexually at home in our own bodies (oversexed), and that we are self-sufficient and tough (henpecking and overbearing). And isn’t that exactly what every woman wants to be: loving and nurturing, sexually at home in her body, competent and strong?”

-Toni Morrison

Ebony Magazine, July 1988

Description: The obscure position of African American women in the record of American intellectualism has resulted in a consensus among the uninformed that the phrase “Black womanist intellectual” is an oxymoron. This course disputes that assumption by challenging imposed boundaries. Students will examine the intersection of the public intellectual, academic, and political activism while discussing the influences of Black female intellectualism in the development of literary, spiritual and cultural criticism, education, law, and American (as well as global) social and political issues.

Objective: Since Alice Walker introduced the term "womanism" in 1983, critics have both embraced and rejected it. Black theologians and sociologists were the quickest to accept the label as one offering opportunities for a specific type of critical engagement: namely, womanist ethics and liberation theology. They have also been the most influential in defining (and redefining) the boundaries of its use. The value of womanist intellectual thought to theoretical and activist discourses--especially when we consider Black/White feminist relationships--has been criticized as offering nothing more to feminism than an analysis of the white woman as other. In this light womanism has been misunderstood. With these thoughts in mind the primary objective of this course is to answer the question "what is womanism?" Is it as Audre Lorde once charged an "attempt to disclaim being feminist"? Is it an umbrella term for a distinctly humanist approach to equality and social tolerance? Or is it something more...something revolutionary, liberating and necessary?

Format: Class sessions include lectures, student presentations and class discussions. Please purchase and prepare to use 3x5 index cards.

Required Texts

1. Layli Phillips, ed. 2006. *The Womanist Reader*.
2. Layli Maparyan 2012. *The Womanist Idea*.
3. Coleman, Monica A. 2013. *Ain't I a Womanist Too*.
4. Alice Walker, 2010. *Hard Times Require Furious Dancing*.
5. ---, 2006. *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For*.
6. ---, *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart (2004)*
7. ---, 2006. *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For*.

COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1 -- Course Introduction: Purpose and Goals

Introductory Lecture

Assignment: Read "Introduction" to *The Womanist Reader*, Layli Phillips, ed.

Week 2 -- TBA

Week 3 -- Required reading for discussion: Parts I & II: Chapter 1 and 4 *The Womanist Reader*. Layli Phillips

Impromptu Discussion (required reading only)

Suggested reading: Chapters 2, 3, and 5

Week 4 -- Required reading for discussion: Part III: Chapters 7, 9 and 10, *The Womanist Reader*. Layli Phillips

Impromptu Discussion (required reading only)

Suggested reading: Chapters 6 and 8

Week 5 -- Required reading for discussion: Part III: Chapters 11, 14, and 15, *The Womanist Reader*.

Impromptu Discussion (required reading only)

Suggested reading: Chapters 12 and 13

Week 6 – Required reading for discussion: Parts III and IV: Chapters 16 and 18, *The Womanist Reader*.

Impromptu Discussion (required reading only)

Suggested reading: Chapter 17

Week 7 – Required reading for discussion: Intro. & Part I: Chapters 1 and 3 *The Womanist Idea*. Layli Maparyan

Impromptu Discussion (required reading only)

Lecture on “Womanist Methodology”

Suggested reading: Chapter 2, 4, 5 and 6

Week 8 – Required reading for discussion: Chapters 4-6, *Ain't I A Womanist Too*, Monica A. Coleman, ed.

Impromptu Discussion (required reading only)

Suggested readings: Chapters 1-3

Week 9 – (No Class--Spring Break)

Week 10 --Required reading for discussion: Chapters 7, 8, 11, and 12 in *Ain't I A Womanist Too*.

Impromptu Discussion (required readings only)

Suggested readings: Chapters 9, 10, 13, 14

Week 11— Reading for discussion: Selections from Alice Walker's *Hard Times Require Furious Dancing*

Lecture on “Womanist Technologies”

****The 'Siddon Look' Concepts Paper" (Preview submission of one complete question) due in Canvas by 11:59 pm. ****

Week 12 – Required reading for discussion: Parts 1 & 2 of Alice Walker's *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart*

Impromptu Discussion

Week 13 – Required reading for discussion: Part 3 through the end of Alice Walker's *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart*

Impromptu Discussion

Week 14 – Required reading: Selections from: *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For*

Week 15— Required reading Selections from: *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For*

Week 16-- Final " 'Siddon Look' Concepts Paper" **due in Canvas by 11:59 pm.**

Grade Distribution

500 total points

Impromptu Discussions

25 Points

Beginning on January 23rd, I will select a minimum of three students each week (during class) to enter into discussions guided by issues raised in your entrance cards. You must bring depth to the idea on the floor for discussion as well as offer your own card remarks for consideration. Discussions will proceed as follows:

1st Speaker—offers entry card commentary on the assigned reading

2nd Speaker—responds with reflections on the opening statement

You may agree with the opening speaker or disagree, but you must discuss why.

1st Speaker—responds to the reflections of speaker #2 with depth of insight

2nd Speaker—adds additional information from his or her own entry card

1st Speaker—responds to the additional information

You may agree with the opening speaker or disagree, but you must discuss why.

2nd Speaker—responds to the reflections of speaker #1 with depth of insight

Speaker #3—Summary of the issues raised

Summary participants synthesize what was argued or discussed and offer insights overlooked or not fully considered. The selected summary speaker must summarize briefly and should introduce related information from additional texts read that week, from texts read in previous weeks, or from his/her own entry pass. This speaker also moderates the open floor, class discussion of the panel commentary.

Open Floor Class Discussion—volunteers from the class and professor
offer insights

This pattern will repeat with new speakers. I hope to have six (6) assigned participants (but a minimum of three) in discussions such as this each week. Be prepared for participation without prior notice.

Preparation, Participation, Quizzes, and Exams

225 Points

See Assignments Section of Canvas for point distributions

Preparation:

All readings must be prepared and ready for each class session. Your entrance cards are very important in the area's assessment so be sure to do your best work when preparing them.

Participation: Students should complete all readings prior to the class meeting and participate fully in class discussions. Assessment is made in the areas of attendance, impromptu discussions, engagement, leadership, teamwork, and originality.

Strong participation includes:

1. only excused absences with no recorded tardiness
2. adherence to course policies and guidelines
3. entrance pass evidence that readings are completed and ready for class discussions
4. outside research done and shared with class on multiple occasions
5. clear and respectful exchanges with other students and the professor
6. volunteering to enter or begin discussions (brief presentations included)
7. leadership within small group activities noted by reporting out for the group or taking a guiding role
8. an understanding of teamwork and one's responsibility to advancing positive class or group dynamics
9. originality in thought, discussion and entrance card information and sharing
10. encouraging others' ability to enter or sustain participation in discussions
11. engaging questions from the professor or other students without hesitation or persuasion

Rubric

- "A" level participation is strong in all key areas.
- "B" level participation, albeit promising, is notably weak in *two* key areas.
- "C" level participation is notably weak in *three* key areas.
- "D" level participation is significantly weak in *THREE* or more of the key areas.

Exams, Quizzes and Other assignments: There will be several tests—no makeup quizzes. Your performance during class, progress evaluations (tests and quizzes) and in-class discussions will determine whether a final exam is necessary. I will inform you of my decision.

Extra Credit (5 bonus points): *This is an optional assignment.* You may give a fifteen-minute oral report to the class on an issue or author under discussion. These reports must be approved prior to presentation. Submit a short proposal describing what you plan to do. The assignment will earn scores ranging from 1/2 to 5 points (added to your overall course score). PowerPoint presentations must follow the 5-1-1 rule. By that, I mean no more than five words per slide with one image used one time.

Audits and Independent Studies:

* Students entering this course via independent study must attend class regularly and participate. They should follow the requirements of the course as outlined above.

* Students auditing this course must also attend class regularly and participate. For audits I require an entrance paper (3 pages) and an exit paper (3-5 pages--due 4/21—discussing what you learned in this seminar). These requirements must be fulfilled in order to earn a “satisfactory” audit grade.

Final Paper Assignments

250 points

Final paper:

250 points

“The 'Siddon Look' Concepts Paper”

For this assignment, you are considering the purpose and nature of womanism. To do this you will engage two of the following questions, or matters to be explored, within 10-12 pages:

Question: Whether womanism can be “a significant intervention upon” human deaths caused by global violence

Question: Whether womanism maintains the historical divide between Black and White women

Question: Whether womanism is a true intellectual endeavor

Question: Whether the womanist praxis of changing hearts and minds, absent of legal mechanisms ordering behavioral modification, is sufficient to sustain social-ecological change

I do not care how you answer the questions you choose as long as you represent both sides of the arguments thoroughly and persuasively. If you wish to support a “yes” answer in response to a question, you should begin your considerations with the “no” answers or the answers supporting the position you oppose. You will call this an “Objection” and, although you will oppose it in the end, be sure you argue on behalf of the “objection” thoroughly. You must open the first objection as if you support the position it presents (“It seems to me...”). For each “Question” you must present at least two (2) “Objections”—more, if you wish to demonstrate deep engagement.

How to Construct Your (10-12 page) “Concepts Paper”

1. Begin each of the “Questions” with the title of the matter to be explored (as outlined above). For instance, my imaginary (not aligned with the 4 choices) concept paper, might read as follows:

What is the Purpose and Nature of Womanism?

Question 1

“Whether anyone besides African American women can define the nature of womanism”

2. Raise the first “Objection” then present a specific statement supporting this objection (within a paragraph or two). Since I want to end my paper with a yes answer to the question by claiming anyone can define the nature of womanism, I will begin with a “no” or negative answer. My first “Objection,” then, might begin as follows:

Objection 1: It seems to me no one other than African American women can define the nature of womanism. Alice Walker, an African American, coined the term *womanist* for the use of women like herself. Experiences beyond African American women's lives violate the purpose for which Walker introduced the term. Other perspectives might represent White women's experiences or speak to something other than Black, women's reality. Black women's perspectives are sufficient for womanism. Therefore, there is no need of any outsider input.

Pretend I have explored this perspective as fully and rigorously as I can within one or two paragraphs (no more than a page).

3. Raise a second "Objection" beginning with the word "*Furthermore*," supporting the previous statement (number 2 above). For instance, in my example a second "Objection" might be the following:

Objection 2: Furthermore, Black cultural awareness is all womanism requires. No other specializations or philosophies of life or intellect are of value. ...

Pretend I am explaining and exploring this perspective fully. Do not forget to use quotes from the readings or your own research as support in all arguments or points you make. Whose reasoning or position are you using as support or points of departure for the objection you are discussing? Use the strongest arguments you can find and be rigorous in your research and systematic in your writing.

4. Next an "On the Contrary," or counter argument, should be given in direct response to the last "objection" made, using strong support materials from experts whose work aligns with and helps develop your perspective. Your use of these experts' work should stand in opposition to some aspect of the previous objection (in this case Objection #2). This is where the argument turns toward your preferred viewpoint. My imaginary example might read something like this:

On the Contrary: Fictitious womanist critic, Clarice Butler maintains, "Philosophy and sociology are just as important as Black cultural awareness, if not more so, when defining the nature of womanism."

Imagine I am explaining and exploring the value of this perspective in a paragraph or two. Remember: this perspective should support your position concerning the question under consideration. End the "on the contrary" statement with a definitive answer to the question. For instance, I might end my statement as follows:

In this way, individuals other than African American Women can define the nature of womanism.

5. Now you, as the expert on the subject, must give your response to the "On the Contrary" statement, using the words: "I answer that...". Pretend you are a lawyer or teacher of womanist thought. Finally, something you can support without grinding your teeth is being argued! Employ examples from the texts we've read as well as your individual research as you respond to the "On the Contrary" statement. Focus your comments on that statement alone. Hint: This section should expand the "On the Contrary" statement, giving it depth and previously unexplored insights; so, you might not want to use everything you know in the "On the Contrary" statement, leaving yourself room to address or answer the shift in focus (from opponent to ally). Your job here is to persuade the opposition using dialogue, respect, and systematic engagement.

6. Then you, as an expert arbitrator and mediator, must reply to each "Objection," offering your perspective on the comments made. With intentionality, explain why the objection is in error, harmonizing differences of opinion while making "fresh perspectives possible" (Maparyan 61). My concept paper might read as follows:

Reply to Objection 1: The Black experience is not limited to African American women. In fact, there is not one but many African American experiences just as there are many Black experiences worldwide.

Imagine I am citing critics and scholars from our course reading and my own research in support of my argument. Now, note my possible concluding comment:

Womanism speaks to and for all people of color (male and female) as well as our cousins who are White, Asian, and African. ...All voices are welcome and valued at the table of change. So, African American women are not the only people who can define the nature of womanism.

You must maintain your position throughout each reply. Be as thorough as you can within the page limitations of the assignment. Do this for each of your selected questions.

7. Use a "Works Cited" bibliography to identify your sources.
8. Submit no more than 12 pages, excluding bibliographical information.
9. Be sure to follow the structure of the concepts assignment as outlined above and summarized here:

Question 1: "Whether..."

Objection 1: It seems to me

Objection 2: Furthermore, ...

On the contrary

I answer that ...

Reply to Objection 1:

Reply to Objection 2:

Reply to objection 3:

Question 2: "Whether..."

Objection 1: It seems to me

Objection 2: Furthermore, ...

On the contrary

I answer that ...

Reply to Objection 1:

Reply to Objection 2:

This assignment has two due dates. The first is a preview worth a small portion of the final project grade (see assignments) and is due in Canvas on 3/27. The second is the final submission, worth the remaining points for this assignment, and is due 4/17 in Canvas by 11:59 pm.

Grading

All papers and short essay quizzes are evaluated on content, originality, creativity, connections to course objectives, and form (grammar, spelling, bibliography, etc.). Grades will be calculated in terms of possible score percentages with no curve. You are guaranteed an A or A- if you earn 450 points or more out of 500 possible points (90 %).

435 to 449 (87%+)	B+	385 to 399 (77 %+)	C+	335 to 363 (67 %+)	D+
415 to 434 (83%+)	B	365 to 384 (73 %+)	C	315 to 334 (63 %+)	D
400 to 414 (80 %+)	B-	350 to 364 (70 %+)	C-	300 to 314 (60 %+)	D-

Grading Criteria

Assignments will be graded on how proficiently they meet expectations in the key areas of focus, content, organization, and grammar/mechanics.

Strong content includes:

- A clearly delineated and/ or interpreted topic
- A strong, clear, and logically developed thesis that is supported by fully developed ideas in the form of relevant textual evidence and research
- Ideas that show evidence of independent thinking
- Commentary that explains how the concrete details support the thesis. Commentary may include interpretation, analysis, argument, insight, and/or reflection.
- Research supporting materials (note: Google searches are fine for starters, but please use academic journals and books for strong research effort).

Strong organization includes:

- The effective arrangement of points that reveals itself in very good incorporation of evidence (use of summary, paraphrase) and the sparing and judicious use of quotations
- Rounded and well-connected paragraphs
- The use of appropriate transitions

Strong grammar, mechanics, and prose style is characterized by:

- Mature sentence structure, syntax, and diction
- Strong audience awareness as evidenced in the use of appropriate style, register, tone, and vocabulary
- Little to no errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation,

- The formatting of document in keeping with prescribed guidelines
- No more than assignment permissible "fatal errors" (see description of these errors below)

Course Policies

- **"Fatal Errors" Policy:** Students must meet high standards in writing. To this end, all written assignments must meet minimal presentation criteria to be acceptable. These standards address spelling, punctuation, format and basic grammar. The term *Fatal Errors* refers to formal writing errors of form. Specifically, they include the following and will be identified in evaluated written assignments by error number:
 1. Each different word misspelled,
 2. Each sentence fragment,
 3. Each run-on sentence or comma splice,
 4. Each mistake in capitalization (I require capitalization of the words *black* and *white* when writing about people or groups/communities of people),
 5. Each serious error in punctuation that obscures meaning, including errors in the use or failure to use italics and quotation marks,
 6. Each error in verb tense or subject/verb agreement,
 7. Each instance of ending a sentence with a preposition,
 8. Each improper citation, or lack of citation, where one is needed
 9. Each misuse of words (*who* for *that* or unwarranted use of clichés, for instance, or the use of the word *that* when it is not needed--"I see..." not "I see that..."),
 10. Poor Paragraphing or lack of paragraphing,
 11. Lack of conformity with assignment format.

Papers with more than **three (3) fatal errors on any one page** or more than **seven (7) for the entire document** may be returned to the student and will suffer a half letter grade deduction. Only one resubmission is allowed. Penalties for final course assignments (where there is no time for a resubmission) will be based on the relative importance of the assignment to the determination of the final course grade. This policy applies to all assignments, excluding entrance cards.

- **Cell phones and computers:** Cell phones must be muted or turned off during the class session. If an emergency occurs and you have to respond to calls or texts, please leave the classroom. Computers (iPads or other electronics) are allowed for note taking, access to eBooks, and presentations only. Anyone using a computer for any other purpose will be asked to deliver the device to me for retrieval after class. You may record the class (presentations, for instance) with my permission only.
- **Papers / PORTFOLIO FORMAT:** Microsoft Word compatible documents only please. All papers must be typed and double spaced using the 8 1/2 x 11 page layouts with one inch margins all around. Use Courier or New York Times font at 12 point size. Documentation and form should follow the MLA style manual. Number all pages after the first within the upper right margin. Submit papers to through Canvas. Late submissions, if allowed, will suffer a half letter grade reduction. Include the course section number in the subject heading.
- **Paper Maintenance Responsibilities:** Students are responsible for maintaining duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course and retaining all returned, graded work until the semester is over. Should the need arise for a resubmission of papers or a review of graded papers; it is the student's responsibility to have and to make available this material.

- *Grade Disputes:* Questions about assigned grades are acceptable during my office hours only. If my written responses do not address your concerns, I will explain why a grade was earned. With the exception of miscalculation or posting error, I will not consider grade changes. **Please do not ask.**
- *assessments:* Individual grades are available on Canvas immediately after grading.
- *Missed class sessions:* Make up work for approved absences must be addressed within one week of your return. See me for submission deadlines for missed work within this time frame.
- "Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>."

University Policies

Disability Services: The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. It is your responsibility to contact the school administration regarding any disability you may have, and to inform me so we can make any necessary arrangements. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Academic Honesty: Honor Code. "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity." This oath represents UF's commitment to academic honesty and integrity. "Cheating, plagiarism, bribery, misrepresentation, conspiracy and fabrication" are violations of the Honor Code. Violators will suffer the consequences. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Harassment: UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentconductcode.php#s4041>

COURSE EVALUATIONS: "Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>."