

AAST/GWS 406
Black Feminism
Spring 2018
Wednesday, 3 pm – 5:45 pm – BSB 119

Instructor: Andrea J. Ritchie
Email: ritchiea@uic.edu
Office: Behavioral Science Building 4075A
Office hours: Wednesdays 1:30-2:30 PM
Phone: (646) 831-1243 (text or message only)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will explore Black feminist theory, praxis, critique, culture and visions for social change, and situate Black feminism within the broader context and tradition of Black radical thought. Through readings, screenings, presentations and class discussions we will delve into seminal Black feminist texts, explore Black feminist cultural work, learn about historical and contemporary Black feminist organizing, and envision Black feminist futures.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Develop a solid deep understanding of Black feminist theories, traditions, and critiques through analytical reading, critical thinking, creative questioning, research, writing, research, active and engaged listening and communication;
- Explore application of Black feminist theory in a broad range of contexts;
- Explore challenges to Black radical and feminist traditions posed by Black Feminism
- Explore Black feminist cultural interventions;
- Engage, support, and participate in Black feminist action for social change and visions for the future.

ASSIGNMENTS

ALL Students in the course are required to:

- (1) Complete the weekly readings and actively and thoughtfully participate in class discussions (20% of final grade)**
- (2) Prepare and post a 250 word comment on the readings weekly in the class discussion board (20% of final grade)**
- (3) Prepare and deliver a presentation and a short (1500-2500 word) paper describing an example of Black feminism in action (15% of final grade)**
- (4) Complete a mid-term examination (20% of final grade)**
- (5) Complete a final 15-20 page paper applying Black feminist principles and praxis learned throughout the course to the Vision for Black Lives (25% of final grade)**

READINGS

Required Texts:

The Black Feminist Reader, Joy James and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting eds., (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000)

Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000)

Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Spill: Scenes of Black Feminist Fugitivity*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2016)

Additional readings will be posted on BlackBoard. **Readings will be added to the Blackboard site over the course of the semester – please check back every week for current list of required readings.**

You are expected to complete all of the readings in advance of the class, and come prepared to engage in discussion.

This course is structured around active discussion and participation. You must take an active role in your own learning. It can often be a daunting task to read an article/book, particularly one that is heavy on theory. The following suggestions are intended to help facilitate your reading of the texts assigned in this class. It may help you to create your own concept chart.

The following is an example that you can make use of:

Title of the article/Name of author	
Basic Questions (What are the main points?)	
Basic Critiques	
Basic Concepts (Key Terms)	
Ideological/Values Slant	
Intersections of Culture/Structure Reflected	

1. **Summarize the basic ideas of the essay/article.** What is the main point of the reading? [You should be able to summarize this in three sentences]
2. **Critique the essay/article.** Consider questions like the following: In what way(s) are the points validated? What research methods did the author use to investigate their topic? Does the evidence given in the article lead to the author's conclusion(s)? What other conclusions might be made? What information could they have provided you with that would have been more convincing?
3. **Key Concepts:** What are the key concepts addressed in the reading? (make your own mini vocabulary list).
4. **Values/Ideological Slant:** Who is the audience that the author is addressing?

5. **Race, Class, Gender:** How are culture, structure, race, and gender reflected in this piece?

ONLINE DISCUSSION (20%)

- Each week you will be expected to write a short post for the class Blackboard Discussion Board consisting of fairly informal but polished mini-essays of about 250-300 words summarizing your reflections on the readings (not the readings themselves) and making connections between the assigned material, your research and scholarly interests, personal and professional experiences, and current events.
- Once you post your own mini-essay, you are welcome to respond to other people's posts, provided you do so in a manner that respectfully engages your fellow students' ideas.
- Posts will be graded for evidence of critical thinking, active reflection, originality of thought, creative questioning, engagement with course material, and clear writing.

PARTICIPATION (20%)

The central methodology of the course revolves around critical collective thinking, which requires each of us to pose and answer questions, take turns to talk, practice active listening and full response, personal reflection, and respectful argumentation and debate. Each week you arrive on time and use your voice results in a positive letter grade that will be averaged over the course of the quarter. Failure to attend a class session results in an F for that date, except in documented cases of family or medical emergency, which require direct communication with your professor.

PRESENTATION (15%)

Once during the quarter you will prepare a presentation on a specific instance or topic which you believe illustrates Black feminism in action: it can be an essay or blog post, an action or campaign, a performance, film, poem, song or other piece of cultural work, an interview you conducted with someone in your community, or something else. Students will select preferred weeks in advance and be scheduled by Week 2 as best as possible.

- Your presentation is open in form and format but should be 15 minutes in duration, and consist mostly of your own words and discussion.
- You are required to prepare a PowerPoint presentation of no more than 5 slides illustrating the topic of your presentation with some form of visual, quotes, or data, and reference 2-3 quality sources beyond the course readings.
- The topic of your presentation **must be cleared with the instructor a week before** the presentation
- **Your PowerPoint presentation, a bibliography in Chicago Manual of Style, a one page (double spaced) summary of your presentation outlining the reason you selected your topic, and a one page fact sheet for your colleagues summarizing key points and data from your presentation must be submitted by noon on the Tuesday of the week you are presenting.**

MIDTERM EXAM (20%)

The mid-term exam will consist of short answer and essay questions. Questions will be posted on Blackboard and students will have a week to submit responses based on all the material covered in class up to the mid-term exam date.

FINAL PAPER/EXAM (25%)

As a final project/paper/exam, students will be asked to carefully review, analyze, celebrate, and critique the Vision for Black Lives, developed by a coalition of over 50 organizations that make up the Movement For Black Lives and available at <https://policy.m4bl.org/platform/> (be sure to click on all of the links and review all supporting documents), through a Black feminist lens, applying the theories, principles and examples we explore throughout the class. Additionally, students are expected to make a minimum of 5 concrete recommendations based on their analysis for deepening, additions, adjustments, shifts, and/or expansion of the Vision for Black Lives to more deeply reflect and center a Black feminist analysis.

CLASS STRUCTURE (may vary from week to week depending on presentation and speaker schedules)

3:00 PM	Discussion of readings
4:30 PM	Break
4:45 PM	Presentations, film or guest speaker
5:45 PM	Class ends

BASIC EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

- 1. Students are expected to complete ALL of the required readings.*
- 2. Students are expected to be on time and attend ALL class sessions. If you are unable to attend class due to illness or an unavoidable conflict, please advise the instructor as soon as possible. You may be offered the opportunity to make up the class at the instructor's discretion. Multiple absences can result in failure of the course. Late arrivals will result in a lower participation grade.*
- 3. Students are expected to actively participate in class discussions. Be prepared to say at least 2 things about the readings for the week – you can pose questions, make comments, share ideas, etc. You will be evaluated on the quality of your contributions to the class discussion, not just the quantity. **Cell phones must be silenced and students are not permitted to text during class unless it is a medical or other emergency in which case you will be expected to briefly step out of the room.***
- 4. Students are expected to contact the instructor with any question or concerns in a timely manner. If a student schedules a meeting with the instructor and then misses the meeting without contacting the instructor, participation grade could be affected.*
- 5. Students are expected to act respectfully of each other and of the instructor.*

You can expect that the instructor will provide you with feedback on your work in a timely manner. You can also expect that the instructor will provide clear instructions and offer guidance throughout the course. If there is something you don't understand or need greater clarity around, please ask!

Core Assumptions:

***We will interact respectfully.** Our beliefs, values, and ideas often differ from one another because we draw from different life experiences. We should learn from one another and challenge different ideas, but do so in respectful and supportive ways. We should be mindful of the partial lenses that each of us brings.*

***We will challenge our own beliefs, values, and ideas.** We will not learn and grow if we are not open to looking beyond ourselves. Learning in ways that challenge what we believe can be uncomfortable, and we should be open to entering uncomfortable places and working collectively to move forward.*

***We are here for a positive educational experience.** Please ask questions, share your thoughts and feelings, and make this class meaningful and useful to you.*

POLICIES

Any paper or weekly online discussion posts submitted late will be reduced by one letter grade for each day it is late, and submissions more than one week late will not be accepted, and result in an automatic F for that assignment.

Courtesy

Everyone should be respectful in their interactions with any person involved with the course, both in the class and online. While disagreement with *ideas* is welcome, personal attacks and judgments are not. Please be mindful of the impacts of your comments, and of the ways issues around policing may impact people differently based on race, gender, gender identity and expression, sexuality, disability, immigration status, national origin, and community.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, cheating and academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. Being caught engaging in any such activities will result in disciplinary action either within the course or at the university level. This includes attempting to use material submitted for this course in a previous semester; submissions for this course will be run through a software program called SafeAssign that WILL detect plagiarism in relation to all materials the software has access to on the Internet or that have been submitted to the software. As an academic community, UIC is committed to providing an environment in which research, learning, and scholarship can flourish and in which all endeavors are guided by academic and professional integrity. All members of the campus community—students, staff, faculty, and administrators—share the responsibility of insuring that these standards are upheld so that such an environment exists. Instances of academic misconduct by students will be handled pursuant to the Student Disciplinary Policy:

<http://dos.uic.edu/docs/Student%20Disciplinary%20Policy.pdf>

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Students who wish to observe their religious holidays shall notify the faculty member by the tenth day of the semester of the date when they will be absent unless the religious holiday is observed on or before the tenth day of the semester. In such cases, the student shall notify the faculty member at least five days in advance of the date when he/she will be absent. The faculty member shall make every reasonable effort to honor the request, not penalize the student for missing the

class, and if an examination or project is due during the absence, give the student an exam or assignment equivalent to the one completed by those students in attendance. If the student feels aggrieved, he/she may request remedy through the campus grievance procedure.

<http://oae.uic.edu/docs/ReligiousHolidaysFY20152017.pdf>

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

If you have a disability that requires accommodations, I strongly encourage you to make use of those accommodations. I am here to assist you, but need your help in ensuring I accommodate you properly. More generally, the University of Illinois at Chicago is committed to maintaining a barrier-free environment so that students with disabilities can fully access programs, courses, services, and activities at UIC. Students with disabilities who require accommodations for access to and/or participation in this course are welcome, but must be registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). You may contact DRC at 312-413-2183 or 773-649-4535 and consult the following:

[http://drc.uic.edu/guide-to-accommodations.](http://drc.uic.edu/guide-to-accommodations)

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

January 17

INTRODUCTIONS: WHAT IS BLACK FEMINISM?

WEEK 2

January 24

BLACK FEMINIST THEORY – SEMINAL TEXTS

Combahee River Statement, Black Feminist Reader, pp. 261-270

Hill Collins, Black Feminist Thought, pp. 1-43

Spillers, Black Feminist Reader, pp. 57-85

Gumbs, xi-15

"Whatcha Gonna Do?": Revisiting "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book": A Conversation with Hortense Spillers, Saidiya Hartman, Farah Jasmine Griffin, Shelly Eversley, & Jennifer L. Morgan, Hortense Spillers, Saidiya Hartman, Farah Jasmine Griffin, Shelly Eversley and Jennifer L. Morgan, *Women's Studies Quarterly* Vol. 35, No. 1/2, The Sexual Body (Spring - Summer, 2007), pp. 299-309 (available on BlackBoard)

WEEK 3

January 31

BLACK FEMINIST THEORY – GERMINAL TEXTS

Hill Collins, Black Feminist Thought, pp. 69-121

Davis, Black Feminist Reader, pp. 146-175

James, Black Feminist Reader, pp. 239-255

African American Women in Defense of Themselves, Black Feminist Reader, pp. 271-272

Gumbs, pp. 18-30

WEEK 4

February 7

BLACK FEMINIST THEORY – GERMINAL TEXTS

Hill Collins, "Black Feminist Epistemology," "Towards Black Feminist Empowerment"

Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House"

bell hooks, "Black Women and Feminism"

Cathy Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers and Welfare Queens"

Moya Bailey, "They Aren't Talking About Me," crunkfeministcollective.com

Che Gossett, “Žižek’s Transgender Trouble,” Los Angeles Review of Books

Nina Simone, “Four Women,” “Young, Gifted and Black,” “Strange Fruit,” “Mississippi Goddamn,” “See Line Woman,” “Backlash Blues,” “I Wish I Knew How it Would Feel to Be Free” (available online)

Presentations begin

WEEK 5

February 14

BLACK FEMINIST HISTORY

Sadiya Hartman, *Venus in Two Acts*

Christina Sharpe, *in the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, “The Wake”

Angela Y. Davis, *Black Women’s Role in a Community of Slaves*

Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, Preface, chapter 1, chapter 5

Sarah Haley, *No Mercy Here*, introduction, conclusion

Andrea J. Ritchie, *Invisible No More*, “Enduring Legacies”

Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Spill*, “How She Left,” “How She Survived Until Then”

FIELD TRIP - Policing Race, Gender & Sexuality

February 15

Attend event at DePaul University co-hosted by #SurvivedandPunished focused on *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color*, 6 – 9 pm

WEEK 6

February 21

BLACK FEMINIST PRAXIS – POLICING AND CRIMINALIZATION

Andrea J. Ritchie, *Invisible No More*, Introduction, Policing Paradigms and Criminalizing Webs, Responses to Violence

Monique Morris, *Pushout*, A Blues for Black Girls

Beth Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Male Violence and the Buildup of the Prison Nation*, chapter 4

Raquel Willis, Black trans history

Solutions Not Punishment Coalition, “The Most Dangerous Thing Out Here is the Police.”

Parchman farm blues:

Black woman blues medley: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zr3qLAW3QWA>

Black woman: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgihfVo0BEA>

WEEK 7

February 28

NO CLASS – MID TERM

WEEK 8

March 7

BLACK FEMINIST PRAXIS – EMPLOYMENT & ECONOMY

Hill Collins, *Work, Family and Black Women's Oppression*

Black Feminist Reader, Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Sex and Gender"

Black Women in the Labor Force,

https://www.dol.gov/wb/media/Black_Women_in_the_Labor_Force.pdf

The Welfare Queen is a Lie, <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/09/welfare-queen-myth/501470/>

Black Feminism Should Speak for the Women Who are Not at the Table Too,

<https://www.theroot.com/black-feminism-should-serve-the-women-who-aren-t-at-the-1792906857>

Single Mothering in Poverty: Black Feminist Considerations

WEEK 9

March 14

BLACK FEMINIST PRAXIS – SEX AND SEXUALITY

Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic"

Patricia Hill Collins, "The Sexual Politics of Black Womanhood," *Black Feminist Thought*

Cynthia Blair, excerpts, *I've Gotta Make My Living*

Andrea J. Ritchie, "Policing Sex," *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color*

Patricia Hill Collins, "Get Your Freak On," and "No Storybook Romance," *Black Sexual Politics*

Crunk Feminist Collective, "Part VII, Love, Sex & Relationships," *Crunk Feminist Collection*

WEEK 10

March 21

BLACK FEMINIST PRAXIS – LIVESTREAM INVISIBLE NO MORE CONFERENCE

SPRING BREAK

WEEK 11**April 4****BLACK FEMINIST PRAXIS – PREGNANCY, PARENTING AND FAMILY**

Hill Collins, "Black Motherhood"

Ritchie, Policing Black Motherhood

Dorothy Roberts & Lisa Sangoi, Black Families Matter: How the Child Welfare System Punishes Poor Families of Color, injusticetoday.com

Foster Care as Punishment: The Reality of "The New Jane Crow," *The New York Times*

Dani McClain, "What it's like to be Black and Pregnant When you Know How Dangerous That Can Be," *The Nation*

Priscilla Ocen, Punishing Pregnancy: Race, Incarceration, and the Shackling of Pregnant Prisoners

Sistersong, [Reproductive Justice](#)

WEEK 12**April 11****BLACK FEMINIST ORGANIZING**

Ashley Farmer, Remaking Black Power, excerpts

Danielle McGuire, *At The Dark End of the Street*, excerpts

Robyn Spencer, *The Revolution Has Come*, excerpts

Kimberly Springer, *Living for the Revolution*, excerpts

An interview with Marsha P. Johnson :

Black Feminist Reader, "A letter from Assata"

WEEK 13**April 18****BLACK FEMINIST ORGANIZING**

Treva Ellison, "The Labor of Working It," *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*

Please listen to the following lecture by UIC's very own Barbara Ransby:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QqtWY_girE beginning at 6:32 to 56:22

and read the following documents by the Black Radical Congress:

<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/228.html>

https://archive.org/stream/FreedomAgenda/FA_djvu.txt

Please carefully review the content of the following websites (click through all tabs to get a sense of their work, read recent press statements, skim through recent reports):

<http://www.blackwomensblueprint.org/>

<http://www.blackfeministfuture.org/>

<https://byp100.org/>

<http://www.thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/>

<http://wwav-no.org/>

<https://trustblackwomen.org/>

<http://www.incite-national.org/>

WEEK 14**April 25****BLACK FEMINIST ORGANIZING**

Keeanga Yamahtta-Taylor, *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*, excerpts

Che Gossett and Juliana Huxtable, "Existing the World," *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*

Crunk Feminist Collective - Crunk Feminist Mission, Manifesto and Introduction

Hill Collins, "Rethinking Black Women's Activism"

Andrea J. Ritchie, "Resistance"

WEEK 15**May 2****BLACK FEMINIST FUTURES**

Film: Born in Flames, by Lizzie Borden: <https://uic.kanopy.com/video/born-flames>

Nnedi Okorafor, "Rusties," http://clarkesworldmagazine.com/okorafor-kahiu_10_16/

Octavia's Brood short stories by Alexis Pauline Gumbs, amber marie brown and essay by Tananarive Due

adrienne maree brown, afrofuturism, <http://adriennemareebrown.net/2015/05/02/afrofuturism-and-blackspring-new-school-afroturismtns/>

WEEK 16**May 9****FINAL EXAM DUE**

FINAL NOTE

All of the above format is a general guideline only and will be adapted to the materials and the nature of our living discussion. In addition the Instructor reserves the right to make any changes in dates, sources, or other details deemed necessary, provided there is communication to all students, and with notification of an edited syllabus posted online.