This reading and discussion course examine the varying obstacles black women have encountered and strategies they have devised to define and attain “power” in their lives. Our goal will be to problematize the meanings of “power,” and to consider the ways systems of race- and gender-based oppression have given particular shape to black women’s pursuit of personal autonomy and control. Accordingly, our larger aim will be to both gain understanding of black women’s experience and to use black women’s history as a lens through which to approach broader questions regarding the intersecting roles of race and gender in U.S. History.

Required Readings:
The following eight books are required and should be ordered. They are also on reserve at Geisel Library (main circulation desk). Additional readings (both required and recommended) will be available online at J-Stor (www.jstor.org) or through Geisel Library E-Reserves.

Anna Julia Cooper, A Voice from the South (1892; Oxford University Press, reprint ed., 1990)
Angela Y. Davis, Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday (Pantheon Books, 1998)
Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God (Perennial, 1998)
Gwendolyn D. Pough, Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere (Northeastern University Press, 2004)

Weekly Assignments
(1) Regular preparation for and participation in class discussions is essential to the success of this colloquium. You are expected to come to class each week having completed all assigned readings; and you are expected to come to class prepared to make a substantive contribution to weekly class discussions. In order to guide your preparation, you are required to submit 2-3 type-written pages of comments on the assigned reading each week.

(2) In addition, two students will be responsible for leading class discussion each week. You may prepare questions for discussion individually, or collaborate as a team. It’s up to you, though you probably will enjoy the work more if you choose the teamwork route.

Research Paper and Oral Presentation:
(1) You will be required to write one 15pp. research paper, on a topic determined in consultation with me. A rough draft of your paper will be due the last week of class; your final draft will be due during finals week. To make timely progress on your research project, you are expected to meet the following deadlines:
   19 April (4th week): choose paper topic
   3 May (6th week): submit annotated bibliography of primary and secondary sources

(2) You will also be asked to give regular oral progress reports on your research, and will be required to make an oral presentation on your research project on the last day of class (31 May)

Grading:
Your work will be evaluated as follows:

- Weekly Reading Responses: 10%
- Oral Presentation: 10%
- 15pp. Research Paper: 40%
- Class Participation: 40%

**CALENDAR**

**Week 1 (March 29):** Introduction

**Week 2 (April 5):** Race and Gender in Colonial Slave Society


**Week 3 (April 12):** The Problem of “Resistance” in the Antebellum Slave South
Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom*

**Week 4 (April 19):** Confronting Racial Terror in the Wake of Emancipation
*Paper topics due*
Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice From the South*

Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender & Jim Crow*

**Week 5 (April 26):** Black Women and the Feminist Voice of the Blues
Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*

**Week 6 (May 3):** Creating Power in the Mind’s Eye: Fiction and Black Feminism
*Annotated bibliographies due*
Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

**Week 7 (May 10):** Can Women Lead the Race to Freedom?

**Week 8 (May 17):** Black Women and (Black) Power
Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman’s Story*

**Week 9 (May 24):** Gender and Power in the Hip Hop Age
Gwendolyn Pough, *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere*

**Week 10 (May 31):** Student Presentations on Research Projects
*Rough drafts due this week
*Final drafts due finals week*