

Instructor- Christina Carney
Office Hours – Monday noon-2pm,
SSB 251
and by appointment
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CGSxETHN 147: Black Feminisms, Past & Present
Fall 2014
Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 11am-Noon
TM102

This course explores both historical and contemporary critical issues in Black feminisms in the United States. If the meaning and boundaries of Blackness are—and always have been—both fluid and contested, then what is the ‘Black’ in the diverse forms of Black feminism? Given the contentious history of the ‘f-word’ among women of color activists, how might we conceptualize contemporary Black feminisms that are attentive to questions of race, class, and citizenship? Using texts from the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, we will work together to answer these and other critical questions. By engaging a variety of theoretical approaches and sociocultural forms—from cultural criticism to political theory, from docudramas to welfare rights organizing—we seek to understand not only how Black feminist theories are constructed and used, but how these theoretical frameworks both reflect and inform the daily political struggles of Black women in the United States.¹

Goals:

- Developing a historically-informed genealogy of Black feminist political and theoretical traditions;
- Identifying and exploring key issues and debates within the diverse beliefs and practices of Black feminism;
- Building an understanding of Black feminism as not simple an identity-based belief system, but as a particular articulation of the dynamic interrelationship between modalities of power including race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality; and
- Strengthening the critical reading and writing skills necessary for the interdisciplinary study of race, gender, and sexuality.

Expectations and Assignments:

Students are required to do all readings, submit all written work and attend all class sessions. Late work will not be accepted unless you have informed me before the due date and, barring an approved extension from me in advance, will be penalized 3 percentage points a day (in other words, an ‘A’ becomes an ‘A-’).

Attendance & Participation	20%
Reading Journal	15%
Take-Home Midterm	20%
Group Manifesto Project	20%
Manifesto Research Paper.....	25%

¹ Kaplan, Sara. CGSxETHN 147: Black Feminisms, Past & Present. 2014. Ethnic Studies, University of California – San Diego. PDF file.

Attendance & Participation

Your attendance grade depends upon you being mentally as well as physically present, on time, and equipped with printouts of all assigned readings and notetaking materials. More than two unexcused absences will affect your final grade; an absence that results from unavoidable extenuating circumstances (eg. medical, family, or legal situations) may be excused on my discretion. Your participation grade relies upon your collaborative involvement in class discussions, including being up-to-date on the reading, sharing your ideas openly, attentively listening to your peers, and respectfully challenging yourself and others to stretch intellectually. PLEASE NOTE: If you are sleeping, reading, messaging, websurfing, or otherwise 'virtually absent' while in class, I will send you home, and you will be marked as absent for the day.

Weekly Reading Journal (7 total in 8 weeks)

You are each responsible for posting a weekly entry to their online journal for weeks 2-8. Your entry can take many forms—discussion question, critique, poem, song, image, personal reflection...the possibilities are only limited by your imagination and technological capacities. However, your entry must clearly relate to the themes and concerns of that week's readings. If the connection is not immediately apparent, be prepared to add a few sentences explaining the connection. Journal entries are due on TED by Friday of each week. Late submissions will not be accepted, however, you may choose one week to 'pass' on posting.

Take-Home Midterm

Your take-home midterm will cover all course material from the first five weeks, up to and including the week of 11/10-14. It will consist of two essay questions, of which you must answer ONE in 1200-1500 words (4-5 pages, double-spaced). Your exams will be due at the beginning of class on November 14th.

Group Manifestos Project

Working in groups, you will craft your own Black feminist manifesto, addressing what you feel are the most pressing concerns of Black feminism today. Each group will present their manifesto to the class in the final week of the quarter. Your manifesto must include (1) a description of the context and position from which you write, (2) a statement of your shared key beliefs, and (3) a clear set of desires, demands, or plans for the future. All group members will receive the same grade on the assignment.

Manifesto Research Paper

This final research paper will be in lieu of a final and will be due by 2:30pm on the scheduled date of the final exam: Tuesday, December 16th. Late papers will not be accepted. For this paper, you will choose one of a list of Black feminist manifestos provided to you (on TED by Friday, November 7th) and make an argument of your choice about its meaning, significance, or efficacy. Your final paper will require you to (1) analyze the premises, goals, and form of the chosen manifesto; (2) situate it in its historical context; and (3) connect its contents to the ideas, themes, issues, and theoretical frameworks of Black feminism as presented in course readings and discussions.

Reading Timeline

Week 0

10/3

- Introductions

I. Marking the Experience(s)

Week 1 – What is Black Feminism?

10/6

- E. Frances White. "Black Feminist Interventions." *Dark Continent of Our Bodies: Black Feminism and the Politics of Respectability*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2001. 25-80.

10/8

- bell hooks. "Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression." *Sexism*. 238-240.

10/10

- Alice Walker. "Womanist." *Feminist Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Wendy Kolmar & Frances Bartkowski. New York: McGraw Hill, 2010. 11.

II. POLITICAL AND THEORETICAL GENEALOGIES

Week 2 – Recovering the Past, We've Been Here Before...

10/13

- Angela Davis. "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves." *The Black Scholar* (December 1971): 2-15.

10/15

- Alice Walker. "Gifts of Power: The Writings of Rebecca Jackson." *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*. New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1983. 71-82.

10/17

- Sojourner Truth, "Women's Rights," "When Woman Gets Her Rights, Man Will Be Right." *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, ed. New York: The New Press, 1995. 36-38.

Nell Painter, "Ar'n't I a Woman?" *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol*. New York: Norton, 1996. 164-78.

Week 3 – All the Women are White...

10/20

Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." *Sister/Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. New York: Crossing Press, 1984. 110-113.

10/22

Hazel Carby, "White woman, listen! Black feminism and the boundaries of sisterhood." *Black British Feminism: A Reader*. Ed. Heidi Safia Mirza. London: Routledge, 1997. 45-53.

10/24

Video: TBA

Week 4 – Black Women/Black Men...What's the Difference, you ask?

10/27

Michele Wallace. "A Black Feminist's Search for Sisterhood." *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us are Brave*. Ed. Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith. New York: CUNY Feminist Press, 1982. 5-12.

10/29

Combahee River Collective. "Black Feminist Statement." *Black Feminist Reader*. Joy James and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, eds. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000. 165-171.

10/31

Pauli Murray. "The Liberation of Black Women." *Feminist Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Wendy Kolmar & Frances Bartkowski. New York: McGraw Hill, 2010. 190-197

Week 5 – Intersectionality

11/3

Kimberlé Crenshaw. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Feminist Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Wendy Kolmar & Frances Bartkowski. New York: McGraw Hill, 2010. 482-490.

11/5 - 11/7

Grace Hong, Roderick Ferguson. Introduction. *Strange Affinities: The Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization*. Ed. Grace Hong, Roderick Ferguson. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011. 1-22.

Week 6 Rethinking Politics and Nationalism

11/10

E. Frances White. "Africa on My Mind: Gender, Counter Discourse, and African American Nationalism." *Journal of Women's History* 2.1 (1990): 73-97.

11/12

Cohen, Cathy. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ* 3.4 (January 1997): 437-465.

11/14 - Library Research Workshop

Alanna Aiko Moore, UCSD Librarian for Critical Gender Studies and Ethnic Studies

Please come prepared—review the list of manifestos and select your top two before class.

Midterm Papers Due at the Beginning of Workshop

III. Negotiating Contradictions

Week 7 Black Women's Bodies, Sexuality and Performance

11/17

bell hooks. "Selling Hot Pussy: Representations of Black Female Sexuality in the Cultural Marketplace." *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press, 1999. 61-77.

11/19

Guest Speaker: Dr. Jillian Hernandez

Janell Hobson. "The Batty Politic: Toward an Aesthetic of the Black Female Body." *Hypatia* 18.4 (2003): 87-105.

Jillian Hernandez and Anya M. Wallace. "Nicki Minaj and Pretty Taking All Fades: Performing the Erotics of Feminist Solidarity." *Feminist Wire*, March 16, 2014.

<http://thefeministwire.com/2014/03/minaj-erotics/>

11/21

Mireille Miller-Young, "Putting Hypersexuality to Work: Black Women and Illicit Eroticism in Pornography." *Sexualities* 13.2 (2010): 219-235

IV. WHERE THEORY MEETS PRAXIS

Week 8 State Violence and Criminalization

10/24

Film: *Out in the Night* (2014)

Beth Ritchie. "The Matrix: A Black Feminist Response to Male Violence and the State." *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation*. New York: NYU Press, 2012. 125-156.

10/26-28

Thanksgiving Break

Week 9 Reproductive Justice, Poverty, and Access

12/1

Dorothy Roberts. "The Dark Side of Birth Control." *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*. New York: Vintage, 1998. 56-103.

Optional Reading: Toni Cade [Bambara]. "The Pill: Genocide or Liberation?" *The Black Woman*. 1970. Toni Cade Bambara, Ed. New York: Washington Square Press, 2005. 203-12.

12/3

Premilla Nadasen. "Expanding the Boundaries of the Women's Movement: Black Feminism and the Struggle for Welfare Rights." *Feminist Studies* 28.2 (2002): 271-30.

12/5

Grayson, Deborah R, "Necessity was the midwife of Our Politics": Black Women's Health Activism in the "Post"- Civil Rights Era (1980-1996), *Still Lifting, Still Climbing: African American Women's Contemporary Activism*, 131-147

Videos:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRcT_NMa6al&feature=youtu.be

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNIWbvdeJas>

Week 10

12/8 Group Presentations

12/10 Group Presentations

12/12 Group Presentations

Accommodations

If you have a medical condition or different physical or learning needs for which you may need accommodation in order to participate fully and successfully, please feel free to speak with me individually so that we can make necessary adjustments. You may also seek assistance or information from the Office for Students with Disabilities (858-534-4382). If you prefer to be called by a different name or referred to as a different gender than the one under which you are officially enrolled, please inform me, so that I can adjust accordingly. If you are struggling, confused, or behind in class, it is always your right and responsibility as a student to meet with me so that we can strategize about how to best address your concerns.

Academic Integrity

According to the UCSD Policy on Academic Integrity, "no student shall engage in any activity that involves attempting to receive a grade by means other than honest effort." This includes:

- "completing [...] any examination or assignment for another person" or "allowing any examination or assignment to be completed [...] for himself or herself by another person;
- plagiarizing or copying the work of another person and submitting it as his or her own work;
- employing aids excluded by the instructor in undertaking course work or in completing any exam or assignment."

Any work that you produce for this course that violates the UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship will automatically result in an 'F' on that assignment. Further penalties may include your failure in the course and your suspension and/or expulsion from the University. To learn more about

academic integrity, please consult the UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship: (<http://www-senate.ucsd.edu/manual/Appendices/app2.htm>).

Principles of Community:

By the very nature of the course topic, there will likely be a wide range of opinions among students, many of which may be rooted in personal histories and experiences. This class will raise critical questions about the significance of these divergences, encouraging you to interrogate your personal experiences and situate them within broader social structures. As explained in the UCSD principles of community, however, the freedom of expression that is essential for this kind of open intellectual exchange is only effective when conducted with generosity, respect, and self-reflection. In keeping with these principles abusive, insulting, discriminatory, or derogatory language and behaviors will not be tolerated in this class; nor will students be allowed to disrupt others' learning process in the attempt to impose a particular perspective. For more information about the UCSD Principles of Community, visit (<http://www.ucsd.edu/principles/>). Also see the UCSD Student Conduct Code at (http://ugr8.ucsd.edu/judicial/22_00.html).

THE MAJOR/MINOR IN CRITICAL GENDER STUDIES OR ETHNIC STUDIES

This 4-unit course is applicable to the major or minor in Critical Gender Studies (CGS) and to the major or minor in Ethnic Studies. Both Critical Gender Studies and Ethnic Studies offer students the option of a major, double major, or a minor. Each of these interdisciplinary majors provide excellent preparation for a variety of career opportunities including: law, advertising, public policy, teaching, journalism, business administration, international studies, public health, graduate studies and much more. If you would like more information about the CGS major or minor, please contact Joje Reyes, the CGS Student Affairs Advisor, at 858-534-3589 or cgs@ucsd.edu. If you would like more information about the Ethnic Studies major or minor, please contact Daisy Rodriguez, the Ethnic Studies Department Undergraduate Advisor, at 858- 534-3277 or d1rodriguez@ucsd.edu.