

**CGSxETHN 147: Black Feminisms, Past & Present**  
**Spring 2014 (T/Th 2-3:20)**  
**Sequoyah 148**

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Social Science Building #220  
**Office Hrs:** T/Th 12-1:30 by sign-up. Sign up online at <kaplansc.youcanbookme.com>

### **COURSE OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES**

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 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

***Our collective goals include:***

- 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.

### **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & EXPECTATIONS**

It goes without saying that 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%

**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 Thursday 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 April 29/May 1. 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 May 13<sup>th</sup>.

### **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 4pm on the scheduled date of the final exam: Tuesday, June 10<sup>th</sup>. 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 Thursday, May 1<sup>st</sup>) 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.

## **REQUIRED READINGS**

All readings will be available on TED. You’ll need to print them out and keep them to refer back—I advise creating your own reader in a loose-leaf binder or multi-pocket folder.

## **READING SCHEDULE**

### **I. SETTING THE TERMS**

#### **Week One**

#### **4/1: Introduction**

### **4/3: No class—UC Student Workers on Strike**

*Take time to review the syllabus and make sure you can access TED!*

### **Week Two**

#### **4/8: What is Black Feminism?**

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

#### **4/10: Contested Terms**

bell hooks. "Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression" *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press, 1984. 18-33.

Alice Walker. "Womanist," *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*. New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1983. xi-xii.

## **II. POLITICAL AND THEORETICAL GENEALOGIES**

### **Week Three**

#### **4/15: Not Born Yesterday...**

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, "Akron, 1851", "Ar'n't I a Woman?" *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol*. New York: Norton, 1996. 121-31, 164-78.

#### **4/17: Creating a Usable Past**

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

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

### **Week Four**

#### **4/22: "All the Women are White..."**

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.

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.

#### **4/24: "All the Blacks are Men...But Some of Us are Brave"**

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.

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

### **Week Five**

#### **4/29: Race/Gender/Class/Nation—From Marxism to Intersectionality**

Frances Beale, "Double Jeopardy: To be Black and Female." *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement*. Ed. Robin Morgan. New York: Vintage, 1970.

Kimberlé Crenshaw. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Critical Race Theory*. Ed. Kimberlé Crenshaw, et. al. New York: The New Press, 1995.

### **5/1: From Intersections to Interstices—Poststructuralist Approaches**

Hortense Spillers. "Interstices: A Small Drama of Words" *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003. 152-75.

## **III. TERRAINS OF CONFLICT**

### **Week Six**

#### **5/6: Body (Batty) Politics**

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.

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

#### **5/8: (Queer) Sexual Politics**

Evelynn Hammonds. "Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality." *differences 2+3 Feminism Meets Queer Theory* (1994): 126-45.

Cohen, Cathy. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ* 3.4 (January 1997): 437-65.

**\*\*\*Take-Home Midterm Due FRIDAY at 4PM\*\*\***

### **Week Seven**

#### **5/13: 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.*

#### **5/15: Black (Queer) Feminist Critiques of Nationalism**

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

Rhonda M. Williams. "Living at the Crossroads: Explorations in Race, Nationality, Sexuality and Gender." *The House that Race Built*. Ed. Wahneema Lubiano. New York: Vintage, 1998

### **Week Eight**

#### **5/20: Black Feminists Theorize Culture**

FILM: *The Watermelon Woman* (1997)

Barbara Smith. "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism." *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: The Feminist Press, 1982. 157-175.

bell hooks. "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Women Spectators." *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press, 1999. 61-77.

## **IV. WHERE THEORY MEETS PRAXIS**

### **5/22: Opposing Gendered Violence**

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.

Cece McDonald, "Violence Against (Trans)Women Today"

<http://supportcece.wordpress.com/2013/05/12/violence-against-transwomen-today/>

Janet Mock, "Because of You: An Open Letter to CeCe McDonald on her Release from Prison."

<http://janetmock.com/2014/01/13/open-letter-to-cece-mcdonald-prison-release/>

### **Week Nine**

#### **5/27: Struggling for Reproductive Justice**

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.

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

#### **5/29: Politicizing Poverty**

Johnnie Tillmon. "Welfare is a Women's Issue." *Ms. Magazine*, Spring 1972.

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.

### **Week Ten**

#### **6/3: Group Manifesto Presentations**

#### **6/5: Group Manifesto Presentations**

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **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.html0](http://ugr8.ucsd.edu/judicial/22_00.html0)).

### **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](mailto: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](mailto:d1rodriguez@ucsd.edu).