

ETHN 164/MUS 153: African Americans and the Mass Media
Spring 2017
Mondays, Wednesday, and Fridays, 12:00-12:50pm
York Hall 4080A

Instructor: Ashvin R. Kini, Ph.D.

Email: akini@ucsd.edu

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:30-2:30 pm (by appt.), 252 Social Science Building

This course offers an introduction to recent Black feminist and Black queer cultural studies work on media and popular culture. In units on photography, cinema, and popular music, we will examine how Black cultural producers—particularly Black queers and women—have critiqued, challenged, and subverted dominant pop culture representations of Black communities, while also articulating their own aesthetic visions for Black life, politics, and representation.

Required Texts

All assigned materials will be available for download through our course TritonEd website and/or library course reserves.

Assignments and Grading

- Attendance and Participation: 15%
More than two absences from class will result in a zero for attendance.
- Pop Quizzes: 10%
Short, in-class quizzes will be based on assigned materials and discussion. There will be no makeups for missed quizzes.
- Take-Home Midterm #1: 20%
- Take-Home Midterm #2: 25%
- Final Exam: 30%

Late work will be subject to penalty except in the case of verifiable emergencies or if arranged with me *prior* to the due date.

Please familiarize yourself with the UCSD Policy of Integrity of Scholarship, if you have not done so already: <http://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/process/policy.html>.

Majoring or Minor in Ethnic Studies

Many students take an Ethnic Studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a college general education requirement. Students often have taken many ETHN courses out of interest, yet do not realize how close they are to a major, a minor, or even a double major. An Ethnic Studies major is excellent preparation for a career in law, education, medicine, public health, social work, counseling, public policy, and many other careers. If you would like information about the Ethnic Studies major or minor, please contact the Ethnic Studies Department Undergraduate Advisor or visit www.ethnicstudies.ucsd.edu.

Course Schedule (subject to change)

All readings should be completed *before* the first class session of each week. Please bring copies of the assigned readings with you to class (reading off your phone is not acceptable).

I. Race, Gender, and the Photographic Image

Week 1 (4/3-4/7)

- bell hooks, Introduction from *Black Looks: Race and Representation*
- Film (screened in class): *Stuart Hall: Representation and the Media* (Dir. Sut Jhally, 1997)

Week 2 (4/10-4/14)

- Nicole Fleetwood, *On Racial Icons: Blackness and the Public Imagination*

Week 3 (4/17-4/21)

- Fleetwood, *On Racial Icons*, cont.

Week 4 (4/24-4/28)

- Kobena Mercer, “Just Looking for Trouble: Robert Mapplethorpe and Fantasies of Race”
- Alex Greenburger, “‘The Painting Must Go’: Hannah Black Pens Open Letter to Whitney about Controversial Biennial Work”
- Josephine Livingstone and Lovia Gyarkye, “The Case Against Dana Schutz”
- Coco Fusco, “Censorship, Not the Painting, Must Go: On Dana Schutz’s Image of Emmett Till”

II. Black Queer Cinema

Week 5 (5/1-5/5)

- **Take-Home Midterm #1 due in class 5/5**
- Film (watch on your own): *The Watermelon Woman* (Dir. Cheryl Dunye, 1996)
- bell hooks, “The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators”
- Laura Sullivan, “Chasing Fae: *The Watermelon Woman* and Black Lesbian Possibility”

Week 6 (5/8-5/12)

- Film (watch on your own): *Looking for Langston* (Dir. Isaac Julien, 1989)
- Kobena Mercer, “Dark and Lovely Too: Black Gay Men in Independent Film”
- José Esteban Muñoz, “Photographies of Mourning: Melancholia and Ambivalence in Van DerZee, Mapplethorpe, and *Looking for Langston*”

Week 7 (5/15-5/19)

- Film (screened in class): *Moonlight* (Dir. Barry Jenkins, 2016)
- Nikole Hannah-Jones, “From Bittersweet Childhoods to *Moonlight*”
- Ashon Crawley, “To Be Held by *Moonlight*”

III. Black Women’s Musical Protest

Week 8 (5/22-5/26)

- **Take-Home Midterm #2 due in class 5/26**

- Recordings by Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday
- Angela Davis, selections from *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude 'Ma' Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*

Week 9 (5/29-6/2)

No class Monday, May 29—Memorial Day Holiday

- Recordings by Nina Simone
- Shana Redmond, “Soul Intact: CORE, Conversions, and Covers of ‘To Be Young, Gifted and Black’”
- Ta-Nehisi Coates, “Nina Simone’s Face”

Week 10 (6/5-6/9)

- Recordings by Erykah Badu, Me’shell Ndegéocello, and Solange
- Lakesia D, Johnson, “Revolutionary Black Women and Music: The Hip Hop Feminism of Erykah Badu and Me’shell Ndegéocello”
- Judnick Mayard, “A Seat with Us: A Conversation Between Solange Knowles, Mrs. Tina Lawson, and Judnick Mayard”

Final exam: Wednesday, June 14, 11:30am-2:30pm, Location TBA