

BLACK FEMINISMS: PAST AND PRESENT

Instructor

Professor Kianna
Middleton
(She/Her/Hers)

Course

ETHN/CGS 147

Email

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Course Overview

When we speak of Black feminisms, we do so with the knowledge that stories, theory, and praxis in the present is connected to and in conversation with the past. Black feminisms are circular (we speak to and with ancestors), dynamic (Black feminist interventions are happening everywhere), and expansive (the future of Black feminism is endless). This quarter in *Black Feminisms: Past and Present* we will study feminist and womanist themes and real-world political enactments. Though we know that Black feminisms are intersectional, disabled, trans, intersex, and queer lived experiences and theory are still under-studied. For this reason, this quarter's texts prioritize the above intersections and uplift other Black ways of knowing and being. By the end of the quarter, we will be better able to articulate the general terrain of Black feminist theory and we will be better advocates (and accomplices) of Black feminisms.

Virtual Meeting Time

[ZOOM TuTh 2-3:20pm \(PDT\)](#)

Virtual Office Hours

Fridays 10am-12pm
(PDT) by Zoom
(10-11am) and Canvas
Chat (11-12pm)

[Zoom Office Hours Link](#)

[Office Hours Sign Up Sheet](#)

Required Text

All readings, films and videos are uploaded to Canvas. You are not responsible for purchasing any texts for this course. If Canvas is not accessible to you, please speak to me about alternative ways of accessing course materials.

Resources

Throughout the quarter, I will upload to Canvas resources, supplemental readings (not required readings), campus and community events, recorded lectures, social media posts, etc. that align with course themes. You may also send me any resources that you would like to have available for others.

Course Contacts:

[Zoom \(click here\)](#)

[Canvas \(click here\)](#)

Instagram: [@bfpp147](#)

COURSE SCHEDULE (COMPLETE MATERIALS BY THE DATE THEY APPEAR BELOW)

Week	Theme	Materials (Readings, Films, etc.)
Week 1 (March 30, April 1)	<i>Hello</i> (Course Introduction)	<p>TU: Introductions, Classroom Community Agreements</p> <p>TH: U. Taylor “Making Waves: The Theory and Praxis of Black Feminism”</p>
Week 2 (April 6, April 8)	<i>Roots</i> (Black Feminist Terrains)	<p>TU: <u>A. Julia Cooper “What are we Worth?”</u> (228-284) from <i>A Voice from the South</i></p> <p>TH: Combahee River Collective, “The Combahee River Collective Statement”</p>
Week 3 (April 13, April 15)	<i>Respiration</i> (On Breathing)	<p>TU: J. Dash <i>Daughters of the Dust</i> (film on Kanopy) <u>and</u> A. Walker “In Search of our Mother’s Gardens: Womanist Prose”</p> <p>TH: <u><i>The Sacred and Liberatory Power of Rest with Tricia Hersey of The Nap Ministry</i></u> (podcast)</p>
Week 4 (April 20, April 22)	<i>Imagination</i> (Feminist Futures)	<p>TU: S. Schalk, “The Future of Bodyminds, Bodyminds of the Future” from <i>Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women’s Speculative Fiction</i></p> <p>TH: Janelle Monáe “<u>Dirty Computer [Emotion Picture]</u>” AND J. Wortham “How Janelle Monáe Found Her Voice”</p>

Week	Theme	Materials (Readings, Films, etc.)
Week 5 (April 27, April 29)	<i>Stories</i> (Ways of Telling, Ways of Being)	<p>TU: A. Lorde and P. Parker <i>Sister Love</i> (excerpts): Introduction (by Mecca Jamilah Sullivan, 11-24); Lorde & Parker letters (64-74)</p> <p>TH: Explore Alexis Pauline Gumbs' website and read at least one poem/post from the <u>"Now"</u> tab</p>
MIDTERM – FLEXIBLE DUE DATE OF 4/30		
Week 6 (May 4, May 6)	<i>Grief</i> (And Other Feelings)	<p>TU: S. Hartman "Venus in Two Acts"</p> <p>TH: <u>A. Maree Brown "Dream Beyond the Wound"</u></p>
Week 7 (May 11, May 13)	<i>"Count it all Joy"</i> (Sunlight is Waiting)	<p>TU: F. Ringgold, <i>Tar Beach</i> (read aloud video)</p> <p>TH: Find your own joyful object!!</p>
Week 8 (May 18, May 20)	<i>Divergence</i> (Blackness Beyond Normalcy)	<p>TU: M. Bailey "Misogynoir and Medical Media: On Caster Semenya and R. Kelly"</p> <p>TH: C. Bell "Introducing White Disability Studies: A Modest Proposal"</p>
Week 9 (May 25, May 27)	<i>The Erotic</i> (As Power)	<p>TU: A. Lorde "Uses of The Erotic: The Erotic as Power"</p> <p>TH: Music Videos and lyrics: SZA <u>"Good Days"</u> AND Jamila Woods <u>"Sula (Hardcover)"</u> (see Canvas for lyrics)</p>

Week	Theme	Materials (Readings, Films, etc.)
Week 10 (June 1, June 4)	<i>Legacy</i> (Goodbye for Now)	TU: A. Davis <i>Blues Legacies and Black Feminism</i>
ALL CLASS WORK DUE BY 6/4 **FINAL PROJECT DUE 6/11**		TH: Taneréle, <i>Mama Saturn's Virtual Concert</i>

A Statement About Access

The Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) asks you to submit your access needs to your Disability Specialist or to the OSD at osd@ucsd.edu. You may also find more information about OSD resources at osd.ucsd.edu. It is critical to note that the OSD may not be able to provide support to you for all of your access needs. Your frustration is valid. Please email me with questions or suggestions for how I can make this course more accessible for everyone. Please share what you need with either/both the OSD and me as soon as possible.

Attendance and Participation

I understand that attendance is difficult during the pandemic for a number of personal and technological reasons. I will not take any formal attendance or award points for attending class. Therefore, this course has an asynchronous option: you may complete assignments, listen to recorded lectures, and submit responses to the daily writing prompts on your own. However, I encourage attending class lectures for discussion and community. If you attend class, we will begin each class period with a warmup writing assignment that can serve as a form of participation if you do not wish to participate in other ways (speaking up in class, writing in chat box). You may submit your warmup during class or at any point during the rest of the day for 'credit'. You do not need to inform me as to why you have missed class.

There are multiple ways to participate in class: submitting warmups; speaking during Zoom meetings; typing in the chat box during Zoom meetings; attending office hours; attending and contributing to breakout sessions; working with a partner on your final project. I am also open to other forms of participation. For example, if you participate in an extracurricular organization, community group, etc. that overlaps with class themes, we can talk about making your participation there count towards our class.

Lectures

Lectures for this class will be recorded and uploaded to our Canvas page after class. Note: all lectures are between 5-10 minutes and are meant to provide you with background information about the authors/artists, their main arguments and/or artistic intentions, and provocative questions that will guide discussion (in class and discussion board posts). You are responsible for either listening to lectures on your own or attending class.

Assignments

All assignments for this course have flexible deadlines, though all assignments need to be submitted by the end of the quarter (**June 5, 2021**). If you have difficulties submitting assignments by the final deadline, please let me know. You are responsible for the following assignments:

1. Daily Writing Warmups
2. Discussion Board Posts (must complete 5 total)
3. Midterm Project: *Write a Black Feminist*
4. Final Project (or Paper): *Black Feminists Conversations* (Includes 2 brief progress reports)

Daily Writing Warmups:

For the first five minutes of class, we will free-write on a topic that relates to the week's course materials/themes. You do not need to submit polished writing: writing can be fragments, lists, etc. Daily writing will also loosely serve as an attendance and participation meter, though there is no formal attendance for this course and there are other ways to participate. If you are unable to attend class, please submit your writing by the end of the week.

Discussion Board Posts:

On Canvas, you will find a corresponding discussion board question that explores the readings and themes for each week. You are responsible for answering 5 out of 10 discussion board posts. You may choose any weeks you would like. You may post as we go or complete all posts by the end of the quarter (**June 5, 2021**). Discussion posts must be a paragraph (minimum) that: (1) clearly identify a course text, film, etc. (2) addresses the discussion question (3) ends response by asks a question to the rest of the class. You do not need to do more than the answer the above components.

Midterm Project: Write a Black Feminist:

There is no formal midterm assignment for this course. Instead, you will practice feminist letter writing (see Sister Love excerpts). Letters allow space for thinkers to write each other about such topics as: their intellectual work, activism, marginalization, health, love, and heartache. This assignment provides you a space to craft your own letter to a feminist (living or deceased) concerning any topic of your choosing. Ideas include current events (political, cultural, academic), the importance or resurgence of their work, entertainment, medicine and science. Letter requirements: references the work of chosen feminist, must be two pages (minimum, max 4). The letter can be either typed or handwritten (if handwritten, please upload images to Canvas).

Final Project (or Paper): Black Feminist Conversations

If you select the final project option for this course, you must work with a partner to host a conversation about either past or current issues that deserve Black feminist interruption(s). You may be aware of the more well-known conversations between James Baldwin and Nikki Giovanni (1971). Other powerful conversations include: James Baldwin and Maya Angelou (1975) and Angela Davis, Kwame Ture, and Fannie Lou Hamer (1973). For

this project you will craft a number of questions that you will answer through conversation with your partner. Topics include: Black feminism (as a definition/terrain/praxis); cross-community solidarity and accomplices; popular culture (ex. a musician, film); a current event. Specifications: Partners are required to meet and plan their conversation at least twice during the quarter and turn in a brief progress report. Partners must craft a minimum of four questions to be addressed in conversation, research a conversation topic, and must record (audio only or audio and video) or formally type up a transcript of the conversation.

If you select the final paper option for this course, you will work alone to write a traditional paper that puts Black feminist thinkers in conversation, even if their work does not directly reference each other. For example, you may write about the linkages between Adrienne Maree Brown's pleasure activism and its indebtedness to Audre Lorde's work, particularly "Uses of the Erotic". Another example could be about the connections between The Combahee River Collective and Jamila Woods' "Sula (Hardcover)" and Toni Morrison's *Sula* (outside reference). Essentially, you will make an argument for why and how class texts inform each other's thinking. Additionally, your essay will explore how Black feminist thought (as a way of knowing/experiencing the world) is strengthened by the work of your chosen thinkers for your paper. Specifications: 10pgs (15pgs max), double-spaced, 12 point, includes a bibliography and appropriate citations (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.). Papers must include 2 main texts (books, articles, films, music videos) from class and a minimum of one external text/reference.

Due dates for assignments:

Meeting the listed due dates for assignments is encouraged. This course was designed to give you enough time to work on projects throughout the quarter. However, you may find that you need more time to complete assignments. With that being said, you may turn in all assignments by the end of quarter if you choose. Note: this may put a heavier workload on you at the end of the quarter if you choose this route. Furthermore, you may not receive feedback on your work and risk submitting work at the end of term with no guarantee or knowledge of the grading system for this course. If you are able to submit assignments by the dates listed here, I encourage you to do so.

Finals Week

Our class will not meet during finals week nor will we have a traditional final exam. Rather, student will work on final projects or papers throughout the quarter and submit them by the end of finals week (**June 11, 2021**). You may submit your final earlier than finals week; however, you must complete your progress reports before submitting your final project.

Grading

Participation 20% (includes daily writing exercises, group work and final projects, class discussions, office hours)

Discussion Posts 25% (5 total)

Midterm Project: Write a Black Feminist 25%

Final Project: Black Feminist Conversations 30%

****Detailed rubrics for each assignment will be posted in the assignment tab on Canvas.**

Grading Scale:

A+ (97-100)	B (85-83)	C- (72-70)
A (96-93)	B- (82-80)	D and below – not passing
A. (92-90)	C+ (79-76)	
B+ (89-86)	C (75-73)	

Academic Integrity

From the University:

"Academic Integrity is expected of everyone at UC San Diego. This means that you must be honest, fair, responsible, respectful, and trustworthy in all of your actions. Lying, cheating or any other forms of dishonesty will not be tolerated because they undermine learning and the University's ability to certify students' knowledge and abilities. Thus, any attempt to get, or help another get, a grade by cheating, lying or dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office and will result sanctions. Sanctions can include an F in this class and suspension or dismissal from the University. So, think carefully before you act by asking yourself: a) is what I'm about to do or submit for credit an honest, fair, respectful, responsible & trustworthy representation of my knowledge and abilities at this time and, b) would my instructor approve of my action? You are ultimately the only person responsible for your behavior. So, if you are unsure, don't ask a friend—ask your instructor, instructional assistant, or the Academic Integrity Office. You can learn more about academic integrity at academicintegrity.ucsd.edu" (Source: Academic Integrity Office, 2018).

For this course:

It is understandable that you are now navigating new educational terrain. You may be attending class from a location where you do not have the same resources, dedicated time, silence, etc. to work on assignments. Our goal is to work together this quarter to create new educational materials and familiarize ourselves with the concept of decolonization. Work does not need to be perfect; it is more about working intentionally on projects of interest. Please do not submit work you have written for other courses or work that is not your own. What you complete this quarter is more than enough.

Declaring a CGS minor or major

Many students take a Critical Gender Studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a university or college requirement. Often students have taken three or four classes out of interest yet have no information about the major or minor and don't realize how close they are to a major, a minor, or even a double major. A Critical Gender Studies major is excellent preparation for a career in law, public policy, education, public health, social work, non-profit work and many other careers. If you would like information about the Critical Gender Studies major or minor at UCSD, please contact Joje Reyes-Alonzo, Critical Gender Studies Program Advisor, via email at cgs@ucsd.edu.