

**Black Women in the Americas and the Caribbean**

Instructor Nneka Dennie

Office Hours: W 2:30 PM – 3:30 PM; Th 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

**Course Description**

This course will survey the historical, political, economic and socio-cultural realities that Black women in the Americas and the Caribbean have faced and continue to face. A variety of readings by and about Black women will highlight the ways in which race, class, and gender combine to operate in the lives of Black women. Special attention will be paid to Black women as laborers, Black women as political activists, and the various ways in which Black women in the Americas and the Caribbean experience race and gender.

**Course Objectives**

- Analyze the relationships between race, class, gender, and sexuality from the 1700s to the present
- Consider how race and gender have jointly impacted social, economic, legal, and political systems in the global community
- Understand the shared experiences and histories of black women through time and space
- Examine the diversity of black women's lives through time and space

**Required Texts**

All required texts will be available on Moodle. PDFs or links that I will post on the course page are marked with an asterisk (\*) on the reading schedule. All other materials will be available by clicking on the UMass Libraries Course Materials link.

**Academic Honesty**

Any instances of academic dishonesty will be addressed according to the University's Academic Honesty Policy. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to:

- *Cheating*- intentional use or attempted use of trickery, artifice, deception, breach of confidence, fraud and/or misrepresentation of one's academic work
- *Fabrication*- intentional and unauthorized falsification and/or invention of any information or citation in any academic exercise
- *Plagiarism*- knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own work in any academic exercise. This includes submitting without citation, in whole or in part, prewritten term papers of another or the research of another, including but not limited to commercial vendors who sell or distribute such materials
- *Facilitating dishonesty*- knowingly helping or attempting to help another commit an act of academic dishonesty, including substituting for another in an examination, or allowing others to represent as their own one's papers, reports, or academic works

## Evaluation of Students

Class Participation (15%)  
Two Response Papers (30%)  
Midterm Exam (20%)  
Final Paper (35%)

### Class Participation

Students will receive a participation grade for each class. A rubric is available on the handout titled "Class Participation Guidelines."

### Response Papers

Two response papers of 4-5 pages each will be due during the semester. You may choose which days to submit a response paper, but you may only submit one paper in a single week. Response papers will be due at the beginning of class. These papers should synthesize the readings for the day that it is due. Identify the authors' goals, offer analyses of the ideas presented, evaluate the strengths and/or weaknesses of the authors' arguments, and ask questions about the course texts. These responses should *not* summarize the readings. Avoid speaking from anecdotal evidence and personal experience. Instead, use examples from the text to discuss how the text impacts your understanding of the histories and experiences of black women in the Americas and the Caribbean. Please consult the "Paper Submission Checklist" handout before submitting your papers.

### Midterm Exam

The midterm will be a take-home exam due on **Wednesday, March 9**. It will be comprised of identifications and short essays in which you respond to multiple prompts.

### Final Paper

The final paper will be due on **Tuesday, May 3**. These papers should be 7-8 pages long. Prompts will be available by Thursday, April 21. You may write on a topic of your choosing if you speak with me about your topic by April 21. Please consult the "Paper Submission Checklist" handout before submitting your final paper.

### Grading Scale

A+ = 97-100	A = 93-96	A- = 90-92
B+ = 87-89	B = 83-86	B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79	C = 73-76	C- = 70-72
D+ = 67-69	D = 63-66	D- = 60-62
F = 59-0		

## Late Policy and Extensions

Late submissions for will be penalized by 1/3 of a letter grade per day (i.e. A- becomes B+ after one day; A- becomes B after two days). Extensions will be available for the midterm exam and final paper under extenuating circumstances only. If requesting an extension, please do so at least 48 hours in advance of the deadline.

I reserve the right to edit this syllabus. In the event of any changes, I will notify you in a timely manner.

## Reading Schedule

### Week 1: Enslaved Black Women in the United States

January 21

1. Deborah Gray White, Chapter 2: "The Nature of Female Slavery," in *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, 62-90
2. Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, excerpt\*
3. Phyllis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America"\*
4. Phyllis Wheatley, "To S.M. A Young African Painter, On Seeing His Works"\*

### Week 2: Enslaved Black Women in Brazil and the Caribbean

January 26

1. Hilary Beckles, Chapter 8: "Persistent Rebels: Anti-Slavery Activity," in *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Women in Barbados*, pg. 152-174
2. Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave Narrative*, excerpts\*

January 28

1. Mary Karasch, Chapter 4: "Slave Women on the Brazilian Frontier in the Nineteenth Century," in *More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas*, pg. 79-96
2. Robert W. Slenes, Chapter 7: "Black Homes, White Homilies: Perceptions of the Slave Family and of Slave Women in Nineteenth-Century Brazil," in *More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas*, pg. 126-145

### Week 3: Nineteenth-Century Black Women

February 2

1. Maria Odila Silva Dias, Chapter 1: "Daily Life and Power," *Power and Everyday Life: The Lives of Working Women in Nineteenth-Century Brazil*, pg. 1-34

2. Paulette A. Kerr, Chapter 11: "Victims or Strategists?: Female Lodge-Keepers in Jamaica," in *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective*, pg. 197-212

February 4

1. Deborah Gray White, Chapter 1: "Jezebel and Mammy: The Mythology of Female Slavery," in *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, 28-61
2. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, "Woman's Political Future," in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, pg. 39-42
3. Anna Julia Cooper, "The Status of Woman in America," in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, pg. 43-50

#### Week 4: Transnationalism and Afro-Caribbean Women Workers

February 9

1. Claudia Jones, "An End to the Neglect to the Problems of Negro Women," in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, pg. 107-124
2. Margaret Byron, "Migration, Work and Gender: The Case of Postwar Labour Migration from the Caribbean to Britain," in *Caribbean Migration: Globalized Identities*, pg. 226-242

February 11

1. Robin Cohen, "Cultural diaspora: the Caribbean case," in *Caribbean Migration: Globalized Identities*, pg. 20-34
2. Patricia Mohammed, "Domestic Workers in the Caribbean," in *Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean*, pg. 161-169
3. Shellee Colen, "'Just a Little Respect': West Indian Domestic Workers in New York City," in *Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean*, pg. 171-194

#### Week 5: The Civil Rights Movement and Black Power

February 16

### **NO CLASS, MONDAY SCHEDULE**

February 18

1. Danielle McGuire, excerpt from Prologue, *At the Dark End of the Street*, pg. xv-xx
2. Danielle McGuire, excerpts from Chapter 1: "'They'd Kill Me If I Told,'" *At the Dark End of the Street*, pg. 6-28

3. Barbara Ransby, "Behind-the-Scenes View of a Behind-the-Scenes Organizer: The Roots of Ella Baker's Political Passions," in *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*, pg. 42-46, 53-55\*
4. Kathleen Neal Cleaver, "Women, Power, and Revolution"\*
5. Elaine Brown, "A Woman's Revolution," in *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story*, pg. 356-357, 362-371\*
6. Assata Shakur, "To My People" Speech\*

### Week 6: Feminisms in the African Diaspora

February 23

1. Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement"\*
2. Patricia Hill Collins, "The Politics of Black Feminist Thought," in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, pg. 1-20
3. Clenora Hudson-Weems, "Africana Womanism: An Overview," in *Out of the Revolution: The Development of Africana Studies*, pg. 205-217
4. Myriam J.A. Chancy, "Productive Contradictions: Afro-Caribbean Diasporic Feminism and the Question of Exile," in *Searching for Safe Spaces: Afro-Caribbean Women Writers in Exile*, pg. 17-22

February 25

1. Kia Lilly Caldwell, "Advocating for Citizenship and Social Justice: Black Women Activists in Brazil," in *Women's Activism in Latin America and the Caribbean: Engendering Social Justice, Democratizing Citizenship*, pg. 175-186
2. Bianca Santana, "On Black Women and Feminism in Brazil," in *Huffington Post*\*
3. Judith Soares, "Addressing the Tensions: Reflections on Feminism in the Caribbean," in *Caribbean Quarterly*, pg. 187-196
4. Linette Vassell, "Bringing the Broader Context Home: Gender, Human Rights and Governance in the Caribbean," in *Caribbean Quarterly*, pg. 51-65

### Week 7: Race and Gender in the Spanish Caribbean

March 1

1. Karen Y. Morrison, Chapter 4: "Nineteenth-Century Racial Myths and the Familial Corruption of Cuban Whiteness," in *Cuba's Racial Crucible: The Sexual Economy of Social Identities, 1750-2000*, pg. 106-130
2. Marta Cruz-Jansen, "Latinegras: Desired Women—Undesirable Mothers, Daughters, Sisters, and Wives," in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies*, pg. 168-183

March 3

1. Veronica Chambers, "The Secret Latina," in *Essence*\*

2. Ana-Maurine Lara, "Cimmarronas, Ciguapas and Senoras: Hair, Beauty and National Identity in the Dominican Republic," in *Critical Articulation of Black Hair/Body Politics in Africana Communities*, pg. 113-126
3. Ana-Maurine Lara, "Bodies and Memories: Afro-Latina Identities in Motion," in *Women Warriors of the Afro-Latina Diaspora*, pg. 23-46

### Week 8: Queer Black Women

March 8

1. Barbara Smith, "Homophobia: Why Bring it Up?" in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, pg. 99-102
2. Cheryl Clarke, "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, pg. 128-137
3. Cheryl Clarke, "Lesbianism, 2000," in *The Days of Good Looks: The Prose and Poetry of Cheryl Clarke*, pg. 379-390
4. June Jordan, "A New Politics of Sexuality," in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, pg. 407-412
5. Raymina Y. Mays, "LeRoy's Birthday," in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, pg. 161-163

### **MARCH 9: Midterms Due**

March 10

1. Gloria Wekker, "Mati-ism and Black Lesbianism: Two Idealtypical Expressions of Female Sexuality in Black Communities of the Diaspora," in *Journal of Homosexuality*, pg. 11-24
2. Makeda Silvera, "Man Royals and Sodomites: Some Thoughts on the Invisibility of Afro-Caribbean Lesbians," in *Feminist Studies*, pg. 521-532
3. Audre Lorde, "There Is No Hierarchy of Oppression," in *I Am Your Sister: Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde*, pg. 19-20
4. Staceyann Chin, "All Oppression is Connected," YouTube\*
5. Glennisha Morgan, "Staceyann Chin Interview Reveals Lesbian Poet's Views on Homophobia, Jamaica, Motherhood," in *Huffington Post*\*

### Week 9: Black Women Writers

March 22

1. Carole Boyce-Davies, Chapter 5: "Writing Home: Gender, Heritage and Identity in Afro-Caribbean Women's Writing in the US," in *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*, pg. 113-116
2. Edwidge Danticat, "Caroline's Wedding," in *Krik? Krak!*, pg. 155-216

March 24

1. Carole Boyce-Davies, Introduction: "Migratory Subjectivities: Black Women's Writing and the Re-negotiation of identities," in *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*, pg. 1-8
2. Jamaica Kincaid, "Girl"\*
3. Alice Walker, "Coming Apart," in *The Womanist Reader*, pg. 3-11\*
4. Zora Neale Hurston, "Sweat"\*

**SPRING BREAK: March 12-20**

Week 10: Afro-Brazilian Women, Sex Tourism, and the Politics of Desire

March 29

1. Erica Lorraine Williams, excerpt from Introduction, Chapter 2: "Racial Hierarchies of Desire and the Specter of Sex Tourism," in *Sex Tourism in Bahia: Ambiguous Entanglements*, pg. 1-7, 44-63
2. Erica Lorraine Williams, "Tourist Tales and Erotic Adventures," in *Sex Tourism in Bahia: Ambiguous Entanglements*, 83-96

March 31

1. T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, Chapter 1: "'I See the Same Ho': Video Vixens, Beauty Culture, and Diasporic Sex Tourism" in *Pimps Up, Ho's Down: Hip Hop's Hold on Young Black Women*, pg. 23-52
2. Snoop Dogg ft. Pharrell, "Beautiful" music video, YouTube\*
3. T.I., "Why You Wanna" music video, YouTube\*
4. Ja Rule, "Holla, Holla" music video, YouTube\*

Week 11: Hip Hop and Feminism

April 5

1. Marquita Marie Gammage, "From the Auction Block to Hip Hop," in *Representations of Black Women in the Media: The Damnation of Black Womanhood*, pg. 34-71
2. Nelly, "Tip Drill" music video, YouTube\*
3. Nicki Minaj, "Anaconda" music video, YouTube\*
4. Beyoncé, "Partition" music video, YouTube\*

April 7

1. bell hooks, "Hardcore Honey: bell hooks Goes on the Down Low with Lil' Kim, in *Paper Mag*\*
2. Rich Juzwiak, "Beyoncé is a 'Terrorist,' According to bell hooks," in *Gawker*\*  
In addition to reading the article, please watch the first two video clips that are embedded within the article.
3. Joan Morgan, Chapter 2: "Hip-Hop Feminist," in *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: My Life as a Hip-Hop Feminist*, pg. 47-62
4. T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, Chapter 5: "Coda, or a Few Last Words on Hip Hop and Feminism" in *Pimps Up, Ho's Down: Hip Hop's Hold on Young Black Women*, pg. 149-156

### Week 12: Colorism, Hair Politics, and Beauty Culture

April 12

1. Kathy Russell and Midge Wilson, Chapter 1: "The Emergence of Modern Colorism in the Americas," in *The Color Complex: The Politics of Skin Color in a New Millennium*, pg. 3-25
2. JeffriAnne Wilder, Chapter 3: "The Language, Scripts, and Practices of Everyday Colorism," in *Color Stories: Black Women and Colorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, pg. 63-98

April 14

1. Kathy Russell and Midge Wilson, Chapter 5: "Hair Stories: Politics of the Straight and Nappy," in *The Color Complex: The Politics of Skin Color in a New Millennium*, pg. 102-129
2. Ingrid Banks, Chapter 1: "Why Hair Matters: Getting to the Roots," in *Hair Matters: Beauty, Power, and Black Women's Consciousness*, pg. 21-40
3. Alexandra Samuels, "If White Women Can Wear Afros, Why Can't Black People Have Natural Hair at Work?" in *The Daily Dot*\*
4. Rebecca Klein, "Ohio School Apologizes after Attempting to Ban 'Afro Puffs' and 'Twisted Braids,'" in *Huffington Post*\*

### Week 13: Violence against Women

April 19

1. Dorothy Roberts, Introduction, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*, pg. 3-21
2. Rebecca M. Kluchin, Chapter 3: "Sterilizing 'Unfit' Women," in *Fit to Be Tied: Sterilization and Reproductive Rights in America, 1950-1980*, pg. 98-101
3. Anna Nti-Asare, "We Will Not Be Erased: Confronting the History of Black Women and Forced Sterilization," in *For Harriet*\*



April 21

1. Hillary Potter, Chapter 3: “Dynamic Resistance: ‘I’m a Strong Black Woman!’” in *Battle Cries: Black Women and Intimate Partner Abuse*, pg. 27-28, 36-46
2. Halimah DeShong, “Gender, Sexuality and Sexual Violence: A Feminist Analysis of Vincentian Women’s Experiences in Violent Heterosexual Relationships,” in *Journal of Eastern Caribbean Studies*, pg. 64-73, 76-89

Week 14: Violence against Women and #BlackLivesMatter

April 26

1. Alicia Garza, “A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement by Alicia Garza,” in *The Feminist Wire*\*
2. Darnell L. Moore, “Black Women Are Getting Killed by Police Too—So Why Aren’t More People Discussing It?” in *Mic*\*
3. Molly Redden, “Daniel Holtzclaw: Former Oklahoma City Police Officer Guilty of Rape,” in *The Guardian*\*
4. Terrell Jermaine Starr, “Violence Against Black Transgender Women Goes Largely Ignored,” in *The Root*\*
5. Sabrina Rubin Erdely, “The Transgender Crucible: How CeCe McDonald Became a Folk Hero,” in *Rolling Stone*\*

**FINALS DUE: Tuesday, May 3**