

Introduction to Black Women's History

HIST 269-A

Fall 2021

Payne 201

T/R 3:15 PM - 4:45 PM

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM and by appointment

Office Number: Newcomb 221

Course Description

What happens when American history is narrated by Black women and through Black women's experiences? How might we understand US history if we locate Black women at the center rather than the peripheries? These questions provide the guiding framework for this course. This course will trace African American women's history from slavery to the present. Particular attention will be devoted to Black women's labor, activism, intellectual thought, and cultural productions. We will also consider how race, gender, class, and sexuality have functioned in Black women's lives.

Learning Objectives

- Summarize how Black women's labor, activism, intellectual thought, and cultural productions have impacted United States history from the seventeenth to twenty-first centuries
- Analyze the relationships between race, gender, and class
- Apply historical modes of analysis to the study of Black women in the United States
- Synthesize primary and secondary sources about Black women's history
- Develop digital literacy and familiarity with public history
- Communicate historical knowledge to a non-specialist audience

Required Texts

- Daina Ramey Berry and Kali Nicole Gross, *A Black Women's History of the United States*, 2020

The required text is available at the college bookstore. All other readings will be available through Canvas or as e-books on the library website. To access Canvas, go to <http://canvas.wlu.edu>. Films will occasionally be required. While some will be available on YouTube, you may occasionally need to watch it through a paid service (i.e. Netflix or rent it on Amazon Prime for \$3.99). Films are marked with an asterisk (*) on the reading schedule.

Academic Misconduct

All students are expected to abide by the Honor System. Instances of academic misconduct may result in failing the assignment. Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to: aiding and

abetting academic misconduct; cheating; fabrication; plagiarism; and violating ethical or professional standards. For further information, see <https://my.wlu.edu/executive-committee/the-honor-system/plagiarism/plagiarism-pamphlet>.

Disability Resources

I am committed to ensuring equitable access to course content for all students. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Contact Lauren Kozak, Title IX Coordinator and Director of Disability Resources, at kozakl@wlu.edu or 540-458-4055 to confidentially discuss your individual needs and the accommodation process. More information can be found at <https://www.wlu.edu/disability-accommodations/undergraduate-accommodations>.

If you have already been approved for accommodations, please meet with me within the first two weeks of the term so we can develop an implementation plan together. It is important to meet as early in the term as possible; this will ensure that your accommodations are implemented early on. If you have accommodations for test-taking, please remember that arrangements must be made at least a week before the date of the test or exam.

Community Health Expectations

Our collective responsibility as a University community in the face of COVID-19 applies equally to students, faculty, staff, and members of the Lexington and Rockbridge County community. Specifically, our responsibilities with respect to classroom behavior are as follows:

- **Masks (or face shields where approved) *must be worn over your mouth and nose*** in the classroom at all times while our local area is considered a substantial or high transmission area by the CDC. You will be asked to leave the building if you do not comply. Please go here (<https://my.wlu.edu/covid-19-resources>) to find the latest university masking requirements.
- **DO NOT attend class or other in-person course meetings if you are sick.** Anyone with new onset of possible symptoms of COVID-19 should stay home in their residence hall room or apartment and call the Student Health Center for COVID-19 testing and evaluation (540-458-8401).
- **Any student placed in isolation due to COVID-19 illness, or any unvaccinated student placed into quarantine due to COVID-19 exposure, must be cleared by a Student Health Center official or a designated Campus Official before returning to class.** It is the responsibility of the student to communicate with faculty about how they can keep up with their studies and make up missed work.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance is mandatory. Material that we cover in class, including lectures, small-group discussions, and in-class assignments will be essential to developing a comprehensive understanding of Black women's history. However, due to the unpredictability of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we will need to be flexible. In the event that you will miss class, please email me in advance so that I can plan accordingly. I encourage you to prioritize your health and

do not expect you to attend class if you are ill, whether it is from the coronavirus, a chronic illness, or simply the common cold. I do not require a doctor's note and will take you at your word if you are sick. In turn, I trust that you will attend our classes if you are well enough to do so. Tardiness and repeated absences for reasons other than illness or emergencies will affect your daily class participation grade. A student who is absent from more than one-fourth of the course meetings (six classes) may receive a zero for class participation.

Instructor Communication

I look forward to working with you throughout the semester to ensure that you have a fulfilling learning experience. I will hold drop-in office hours twice a week and you are more than welcome to stop by. I encourage students to speak to me during office hours about any questions or concerns regarding the course. You can make an appointment for office hours at <https://calendly.com/nnekadennie>.

Please consult the syllabus, Canvas, and your classmates prior to sending emails about class procedures and requirements. If we have not resolved your issue after exchanging three emails, meet with me during office hours. I will respond to emails within three business days. This includes emails sent after 5 PM on weeknights or any time on weekends. I will not answer last minute questions via email the night before an assignment is due.

Evaluation of Students

Class Participation (20%)
Two Primary Source Analyses (30%)
Wikipedia Editing Project (35%)
Final Presentation (15%)

Class Participation (20%)

All students are expected to contribute to discussion consistently. Students will receive a participation grade for each class. A rubric is available on the handout titled "Class Participation Guidelines" on Canvas. Participation can take various forms, like asking questions, agreeing or disagreeing with classmates during whole-group discussions, or offering your opinion in small group discussions. You may also tweet during class for participation points using **#hist269f21**. Your tweets must be public for me to see them. Feel free to make a separate Twitter account specifically for class if you want your existing account to remain private.

Primary Source Analysis (30%)

Write two 2-3 page papers analyzing two different primary sources from *The Portable Nineteenth-Century African American Women Writers* (ed. Hollis Robbins and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.). Each paper should only focus on one source. The table of contents is available on Canvas and the book is available through the library. Once you have chosen your documents, be sure to add your name and the titles to the Primary Source Sign-Up Sheet on Canvas. This first essay is due on Canvas by 5:00 PM on **Friday, October 1** and the second is due on Canvas by

5:00 PM on **Friday, October 29**. Each student needs to choose a different primary source. Additional instructions are available on Canvas in the Primary Source Analysis document.

Wikipedia Editing Project (35%)

Throughout the term, you will be responsible for editing existing Wikipedia pages and/or writing new pages related to Black women's history. You will use the online Wikipedia Education Dashboard to complete trainings and learn how to successfully contribute to the Wikipedia knowledge community. (More information is available on <https://dashboard.wikiedu.org/training/students>.) The following components will be part of your grade.

Complete online training modules (5%)

I will send you an online invitation to our Course Dashboard through the Wikipedia Education website. There will be specific training modules to familiarize you with creating and editing content for Wikipedia that must be completed on a weekly basis beginning **October 12**. All of the module completion dates will be available on the Wikipedia Education Course Page.

Project proposal (5%)

Write a 1-2 page project proposal describing the topic that you would like to research and produce new content about for Wikipedia. Specify whether you will edit existing pages or write new ones. Identify the main themes you would like to illuminate for public audiences through your Wikipedia project. Be sure to include a justification of why you have chosen your topic, what gaps exist in the Wikipedia coverage of your topic, and why it would benefit public audiences to learn more about your topic. The project proposal is due **in class on Tuesday, October 19** so that we can discuss them in small groups.

Annotated bibliography (10%)

Create an annotated bibliography of 5 sources about your topic. You may include a combination of primary and secondary sources. Each annotation should be a minimum of 150 words. Rather than summarizing the text, annotations should evaluate the text and describe its significance to your topic. The annotated bibliography is due on Canvas on **Friday, November 12** by 5 PM.

Wikipedia Content (15%)

Because some of you will edit existing pages while some of you are writing entirely new material, there is no specific word count or page count for your Wikipedia edits. Also, since Wikipedia may be edited by the public, you may find that your work has been revised by other users. That said, you will be graded more on the process than the final product. You will be graded on the quality of your sources, your ability to reframe and present information in your own words, and the depth of your research. We will

frequently spend time in class peer reviewing each other's work. As such, your grade will also take into consideration your ability to offer constructive feedback to others and apply your classmates' feedback to your own work. A sample rubric is available [here](#).

Final Presentation (15%)

During our final week of class, everyone will make a presentation of approximately 10-15 minutes about their Wikipedia project. Your presentation has two primary goals. First, you should offer an overview of your topic. What is significant about it? What did you learn in your research? Second, you should reflection on the process of completing the project. Discuss the edits you made or the new material you developed; describe your editing process; and speak to us about what went well and what challenges you encountered. Your presentation should also address what you learned about information literacy, research methods, and the production of history.

Grading Scale

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

Late Policy and Extensions

Late submissions 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). Everyone is permitted to use a maximum of one extension. If requesting an extension, you must do so at least 48 hours in advance of the deadline. Extensions will not be available for the project proposal since we'll discuss those in class on the day they are due. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an additional extension will be available under extenuating circumstances only (i.e. illness or emergency).

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: Welcome and Introduction

September 9

- No readings required

Week 2: Black Women('s) Historians

September 14

- Deborah Gray White, *Telling Histories: Black Women Historians in the Ivory Tower*, Introduction, pg. 1-27 (e-book available through library website)
- Darlene Clark Hine, *Telling Histories*, "Becoming a Black Woman's Historian," pg. 42-57

September 16

- Deborah Gray White, *Telling Histories*, "My History in History," pg. 85-100
- Sharon Harley, *Telling Histories*, "The Politics of Memory and Place: Reflections of an African American Female Scholar," pg. 101-134

Week 3: The Slave Trade and the Black Female Body

September 21

- Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Sexuality and Slavery: Reclaiming Intimate Histories in the Americas*, Chapter 1: "Early European Views of African Bodies," pg. 9-32 (e-book)
- Janell Hobson, *Venus in the Dark: Blackness and Beauty in Popular Culture*, Chapter 2: "Venus and the Hottentot: The Emergence of an Icon," pg.

September 23

- Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*, Introduction, pg. 1-11
- ABWHUS Introduction "Nannie's Legacy and the Histories of Black Women" and Chapter 1, "Isabel's Expedition and Freedom Before 1619," pg. 1-23

Week 4: Eighteenth-Century Slavery

September 28

- ABWHUS Chapter 2, "Angela's Exodus out of Africa, 1619-1760," pg. 24-39
- Poetry Foundation, "Phillis Wheatley"
- Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America"

September 30

- ABWHUS Chapter 3, "Belinda's Petition for Independence, 1760-1820," pg. 40-63
- Catherine Maria Sedgewick, *Bentley's Miscellany*, "[Slavery in New England](#)," pg. 417-424

October 1 – FIRST PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS DUE BY 5 PM ON CANVAS

Week 5: Nineteenth-Century Slavery

October 5

- ABWHUS Chapter 4, “Millie and Christine’s Performance and the Expansion of Slavery, 1820-1860,” pg. 64-86
- Millie-Christine, “[The History of the Carolina Twins: ‘Told in Their Own Peculiar Way’ by ‘One of Their Own’](#)”

October 7

- Harriet Jacobs, [Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl](#), Chapters 1-10 pg. 11-89

Week 6: W&L Museums

October 12 – BEGIN TRAINING MODULES

Class will meet at the Reeves Gallery

- No readings required

October 14 – Reading Day; No Class

Week 7: Black Women Abolitionists

October 19 – WIKIPEDIA PROPOSALS DUE IN CLASS

- ABWHUS Chapter 5, “Mary’s Apron and the Demise of Slavery, 1860-1876,” pg. 87-103
- Maria Stewart, “Why Sit Ye Here and Die?”
- Mary Ann Shadd Cary, “Meetings at Philadelphia”

October 21

- Martha Jones, *All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830-1900*, Chapter 1: “Female Influence is Powerful: Respectability, Responsibility, and Setting the Terms of the Woman Question Debate,” pg. 23-58
- Frances Harper, “The Free Labor Movement”

Week 8: Early Black Women Activists

October 26

- ABWHUS Chapter 6, “Frances’s Sex and the Dawning of the Black Woman’s Era,” pg. 104-123
- Anna Julia Cooper, “Womanhood: A Vital Element in the Regeneration and Progress of a Race”
- Frances Harper, “Women’s Political Future”

October 28

- Ida B. Wells, “Lynch Law in All its Phases”
- Mary Church Terrell, “Lynching from a Negro’s Point of View”

October 29 – SECOND PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS DUE BY 5 PM ON CANVAS

Week 9: Gender and Jim Crow

November 2 – Election Day; Class cancelled

Class is cancelled in order to provide eligible voters sufficient time to exercise their right to participate in our democracy. If you are able, I encourage you to go vote!

November 4

- Sarah Haley, *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity*, Introduction and Chapter 2, “Convict Leasing, (Re)Production, and Gendered Racial Terror,” pg. 1-16, 86-104 (e-book)

Week 10: Black Left Feminism

November 9

- ABWHUS Chapter 7, “Augusta’s Clay, Migration, and the Depression, 1915-1940” and Chapter 8, “Alice’s Medals and Black Women’s War at Home, 1940-1950,” pg. 123-163
- Claudia Jones, “Lift Every Voice for Victory”

November 11

- Erik McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism*, Introduction, pg. 1-24
- Claudia Jones, “An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman”

Week 11: The Civil Rights Movement

November 16

- ABWHUS Chapter 9, “Aurelia’s Lawsuit against Jim Crow, 1950-1972,” pg. 162-184
- Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance—A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power*, Prologue, pg. xv-xx
- McGuire, Chapter 1, “They’d Kill Me if I Told,” 1-18

November 18

- Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*, Introduction and Chapter 6: “The Preacher and the Organizer: The Politics of Leadership in the Early Civil Rights Movement,” pg. 18-26, 147-171 (e-book)

Week 12: Thanksgiving Break

Enjoy your break!

Week 13: Black Power

November 30

- ABWHUS, Chapter 10, “Shirley’s Run, Black Power, Politics, and Black Feminism, 1970-2000,” pg. 185-207
- Black Panther Party for Self Defense Ten-Point Program
- Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman’s Story*, “A Woman’s Revolution,” pg. 356-371

December 2

- Ashley Farmer, *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era*, Chapter 2: “The Black Revolutionary Woman, 1966-1975,” pg. 50-92

Week 14: Wrap Up

December 7

- ABWHUS, Conclusion, “Patricia’s Climb and the Sisters Holding Down Liberty,” pg. 208-214
- Additional readings to be selected by the class

December 9

- No readings required