

Spring 2012
Black Feminist & Womanist Theory
AFA 3332-06FE/WST 3930-1A77

Dr. Faye V. Harrison
B129 Turlington Hall

Office hours: M 11-noon & 1:30-2:45, W 10am-noon (or by appointment)

Telephone: 392-1020, e-mail: fayeharr@ufl.edu

Course Description

This course offers an interdisciplinary survey of African-American and other African-descendant women's contributions to feminist theory as a heterogeneous field of knowledge encompassing multiple streams of gender- and race-cognizant articulation and praxis. Among these are the interventions and projects known as "multiracial feminism," "critical race feminism," "transnational black feminism," and "womanism." Caribbean, Afro-Latin American, and Black European feminisms are also included when we map feminist consciousness and practice across the Black Atlantic and African Diaspora. The central concerns of diverse Black feminists and womanists include: the "intersectionality" of race, gender, sexuality, class, and national or transnational identity; reproductive health; sexual violence; homophobia and heteronormativity; the historicity and cultural specificity of the subordination Black women face; and the effects of racism, colonialism, unequal forms of economic development, and globalization on Black communities. We will examine these concerns through a critical reading of a wide range of texts—from memoir to cultural criticism and sociopolitical analysis. While Black feminism's historical development will be sketched, our focus will be on contributions of the past 25-30 years. In other words, we will concentrate on the period since the height of the civil rights and second-wave women's movements, and the time since the early decolonization period in the Caribbean. These are the contexts within which Black Women's Studies emerged along with various subaltern feminisms mobilized by other women of color in the Global North and South.

Objectives

The key objectives of the course are: 1) to expand students' awareness of the contributions that African American, Caribbean, Black British, and other African Diaspora women have made to feminist scholarship and mobilization; 2) to expose students to African descendant women's role as feminist theorists, interpreting and explaining the raced, gendered, classed, culturally conditioned experience of women, particularly Black women; 3) to educate students on the diversity and commonality among Black women intellectuals, both academic and nonacademic; 4) to promote greater understanding of the multiple modalities of social inequality of which African descendant women have had to make sense and to which they have had to adapt, resist, contest, and politically mobilize against; 5) to expose students to some of the interpretive, theoretical, and methodological tools that Black feminists have constructed and deployed; and 6) to cultivate critical thinking and the interrelated ability to articulate ideas with clarity and cogency in both oral and written communications. This course meets the **Gordon Rule Composition E6 requirement**, which entails that students complete and receive feedback and guidance on writing assignments amounting to 6000 words.

Requirements

Readings

bell hooks. 2000. *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Beverly Guy-Sheftall, ed. 1995. *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*. New York: The New Press.

Layli Phillips, ed. 2006. *The Womanist Reader*. New York: Routledge.

Peggy Antrobus. 2004. *The Global Women's Movement: Origins, Issues, & Strategies*. London, New York: Zed Books.

All other readings will be made available either through library e-reserve or pdfs from professor.

Participation (25 points)

Learning is a shared collaborative endeavor. For this class to be successful, students must all accept responsibility for meeting the professor half way. This means they must attend class regularly and actively participate. A record of attendance and unexcused absences will be kept. Frequent unexcused absences will lower the score received for this requirement. At minimum, participation involves asking an occasional question and displaying attentiveness. Throughout the semester, there will be opportunities to give informal presentations, assume responsibility for leading class discussions on particular readings, and participate in small-group activities. Some of the weekly readings may be divided up among work groups, which will contribute to class discussions based on their respective readings. Small group discussions and presentations will bring the course to closure.

Examinations (20 points)

There will be two take-home exams: a mid-term (due **February 23**) and final (due **May 2**). Both will require short essay answers to question-sets generated from lectures and class discussions on the readings. Exams as well as all other written assignments must be typed and double-spaced. Each exam is worth a total of 10 points.

Critical reflections (25 points)

Students are required to write five short essays expressing their reflections on the readings. These are due sometimes weekly, sometimes every other week, and must be at least 800 words (roughly 3.5 pp.) each. They must be double-spaced, typewritten, and submitted in hard copy on the days they are due, usually Thursdays. Students are to examine some aspect of the readings they have done over a space of two or three weeks. Although the professor may suggest possible writing topics, students will have the academic freedom of writing about whatever most interests or concerns them. Essays may focus on a single text; however, generally these assignments should examine issues that run across several texts. Students may express their personal reactions; however, personal opinions and experiences should always be informed by the conceptual and empirical substance of the assigned readings. These essays will be evaluated for both their form and content. Students, therefore, are to respect the principles of both English composition and critical thinking. Critical feedback from the professor on these several assignments is meant to have a cumulative effect, providing constructive lessons and guidelines for subsequent assignments.

Term Paper Proposal, Draft, and Final Draft (30 points)

A term paper will be written in three phases of preparation. First, a *proposal* is to be submitted on **February 16**. This should comprise at least two pages of text (500 words) along with a third page listing at least ten potential references (journal articles, books or book chapters, and appropriate websites) the student will draw upon in researching the paper. The references should either be annotated briefly or addressed in the discussion of the chosen topic. Second, a preliminary *draft of the paper* must be submitted for the purpose of receiving the professor's

feedback and guidance before the paper is completed for final submission. The draft, which will not be given a recorded grade, is due on Thursday, April 5, and the *final paper* is due on Tuesday, April 24, the final class meeting. Students are encouraged to begin the search for term paper topic early in the semester. They may begin by browsing the required and recommended readings and taking advantage of their professor's office hours. Topics must be shown to be tenable as a research focus before they are approved.

The term paper, which should be at least 7 pages (or 1750 words), will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria: 1) the application and articulation of an interdisciplinary perspective, 2) the clarity of exposition, 3) the overall quality of evidence used to support the argument, 4) the adequacy of organization and writing (i.e., word usage, grammar and spelling), and 5) the relative quantity and quality of citations. *Most of these criteria (especially 2-4) should be considered general guidelines for all writing assignments. (Proposal=10 points, Draft=0 points, Final version=20; TOTAL==>30 points)*

Grading

Categories of Evaluation

Participation	25 points	Critical reflections (5)	25 points
Mid-term exam	10 points	Final exam	10 points
Proposal	5 points	Term paper	25 points

Grade/Point Scale

A=95-100 points, A- =90-94, 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, E= <60

Extensions on Assignments

Students will be allowed extensions on writing assignments and exams ONLY if there are serious extenuating circumstances. In the event that an H1N1 flu outbreak seriously inhibits class attendance, students will be expected to proceed with meeting course requirements at home through a combination of the course listserv, google group, and potentially a course blog. The policy will be to be as flexible as possible to facilitate students' successful completion of the course.

Academic Honesty

An implied honor code is observed in all academic work at the University. Every student must operate according to an implied pledge that "any work submitted for credit the student has neither received nor given unauthorized aid." In other words, cheating and plagiarism are breaches of academic honesty subject to disciplinary action, which may include a failing grade for the course. For further details, consult the honor code website:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Accommodations to Students with Disabilities

Students needing classroom accommodation should register with the Dean of Students Office, where the necessary documentation will be issued. Students must submit their documentation to the professor when requesting accommodation.

Class Schedule, Topics, and Reading Assignments
SCHEDULE

- 01.10-12 Introductions to course objectives and requirements, key concepts and perspectives

bell hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*
- 01.17-19 Perspectives on the significance of feminism and gender—and its intersections with race, class, and other dimensions of difference—for diverse Black women and communities

Critical reflection #1 due

bell hooks, continue with *Feminism is for Everybody*

Pauline Terrelonge, “Feminist consciousness and Black women” (in *Words of Fire*, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, ed. Pp. 490-501)

Barbara Ransby and Tracye Matthews, “Black popular culture and the transcendence of patriarchal illusions” (in *Words*, pp. 526-535)

Manning Marable, “Groundings with My Sisters: Patriarchy and the Exploitation of Black Women” (in *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*, 1983, pp. 69-103) (pdf)
- 01.24-26 Nineteenth century Black women’s proto-feminist consciousness & practice, from Maria Stewart and Sojourner Truth to Ida Wells-Barnett

Critical reflection #2 due

Beverly-Guy-Sheftall, “Introduction: the evolution of feminist consciousness among African American women”; and chapter 1, “Beginnings,” pp. 23-77 (in *Words of Fire*, pp.1-77)
- 01.31-02.02 Twentieth century trials, tribulations, and triumphs, part 1; breakout group assignments

WF chapter 2, “Triumph and tribulation” pp. 77-142

Lashawn Harris, “Running with the reds: African American women and the Communist Party during the Great Depression” (in *Journal of African American History*) (pdf)
- 02.07-09 Black women’s challenges to the civil rights and women’s movements in the U.S. and U.K.

Critical reflection #3 due

WF chapter 3, “Civil rights & women’s liberation,” pp. 143-227

Hazel V. Carby, "White woman listen! Black feminism and the boundaries of sisterhood" (in *Black British Feminism*, Heidi Mirza, ed., 1997)

02.14-16 Claiming feminism

Term Paper Proposal due
Mid-term exam distributed

WF chapter 4, "Beyond the margins," pp. 229-357

02.21-23 Expanding the space for Black women-centered praxis; listening to the voices of womanism; debating womanism

Mid-term exam due

Layli Phillips, Introduction to *Womanist Reader*, "Womanism: On Its Own," xix-lv

Womanist Reader selections from part 1, "Birthplaces, birthmothers: womanist origins," and part 2, "Womanist kinfolk, sisters, brothers, daughters, and sons on womanism," pp. 3-113:

--Alice Walker, "Womanist," p. 19

--Clenora Hudson-Weems, "Cultural and Agenda Conflicts in Academic: Critical Issues for Africana Women's Studies," and "Africana Womanism," pp 37-54

--Patricia Hill Collins, "What's in a Name? Womanism Black Feminism, and Beyond," 57-68

--Gary Lemons, "To Be Black, Male, and 'Feminist': Making Womanist Space for Black Men," pp 96-112

02.28-03.01 Perspectives from other parts of the diaspora: the Caribbean world transnationally

Critical reflection #4 due

V. Eudine Barriteau, "The relevance of black feminist scholarship: a Caribbean perspective" (*Feminist Africa*, Issue 7:9-31, Dec. 2006) (available online)

Rhoda Reddock, "Conceptualizing 'Difference' in Caribbean Feminist Theory" (in *New Caribbean Thought*, 2002) (pdf)

Rhoda Reddock, "Women's organizations and movements in the Commonwealth Caribbean" (*Feminist Review*, 59:57-73, 1998)* (available online)

Beverly Bryan et al., "Chain reactions: Black women organizing" (in *The Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain*, pp. 123-181) (pdf)

Marie-José N'Zengou-Tayo. "Fanm Se Poto Mitan: Haitian woman, the pillar of society" (in *Feminist Review*, 59:118-142, 1998) (online)

- 03.02-08 **No class—SPRING BREAK!**
- 03.13.-15 Perspectives from the diaspora: Brazil
- Benedita da Silva, “Feminism with passion,” (in *Benedita da Silva: An Afro-Brazilian Woman’s Story of Politics and Love*. Oakland, CA: Food First Books [Global Exchange], 1997) (pdf)
- Kia Lilly Caldwell, “The black women’s movement: politicizing and reconstructing collective identities” (in *Negras in Brazil: Re-invisioning Black Women, Citizenship, and the Politics of Identity*. Rutgers University Press, 2007) (pdf)
- 03.20-22 Perspectives from Latin America
- Critical Reflection #5 due***
- Helen Safa, Racial and gender inequality in Latin America: Afro-descendant women respond” in *Feminist Africa* 7:49-66, 2006 (available online)
- Miriam De Costa-Willis, “The Poetics and Politics of Desire: Eroticism in Luz Argentina Chiriboga . . .” (pdf)
- Excerpts from *On Friday Night* (2007 [1990]), introduced and translated by Paulette Ramsay and Anna-María Bankay (pdf)
- 03.27-29 Professor’s out-of-state conference—use this time to work on term paper
- 04.03-05 The transnational and global significance of Afro-Atlantic women’s feminisms and coalitions
- M Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Cartographies of Knowledge and Power: Transnational Feminism as Radical Praxis” (from *Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis*, Amanda Lock Swarr & Richa Nagar, eds. Pp.23-45, 2010)
- Peggy Antrobus, *The Global Women’s Movement*
- 04.10-12 Student research presentations
- 04.17-19 Student research presentations
- 04.24 LAST CLASS research presentations, **term papers due**, final exam distributed
- 05.02 FINAL EXAM due by noon