

Black Women and the Black Freedom Struggle
History 21:512:334 & Women and Gender Studies 21:988:389-02

Instructor: Dr. M. Cooper

Email: melissa.cooper@rutgers.edu

Mondays: 2:30-3:50pm; Wednesdays: 1:00-2:20pm

Room:106 Hill Hall

Office Hours: 1:20 PM-2:20 PM; Wednesdays 2:20 PM-3:20 PM, 330 Conklin Hall

Course Description:

This course explores the history of African American women and the ways that they engaged the black freedom struggle from the colonial period to the present day. Using primary and secondary source material to trace the social, political, economic and cultural transformations that mark significant episodes in the African American past, this course unearths the historical changes that shape the black experience and black freedom struggle in America.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course:

- Students should be able to identify and chart specific events and circumstances central to the black American experience and black women's leadership and engagement in the black freedom struggle.
- Students should be able to identify and describe significant events in African American history from the inception of the colonial period to the present day.
- Students will be able to interpret and analyze a variety of primary and secondary source materials.
- Students will be able to compose "synthetic essays" that analyze, compare and contrast multiple scholarly interpretations and studies.

Requirements:

Discussion Questions/Attendance

The completion of weekly readings is mandatory. You are expected to bring required readings to class meetings: please print out, and bring to class, readings posted on Blackboard. Each student is required to compose one question derived from the readings for each class meeting. Your typed question should be linked to a specific passage—please quote directly from the text. Your question should be submitted at the start of each class. You will not receive credit for your question if you are absent from the class meeting. Each class meeting, several students will be asked to raise their question for discussion. Your questions, and contributions to class conversations will constitute your participation grade.

Students are expected to attend each scheduled class meeting, to be on time, and to be prepared for each class session. The University attendance policy specifies that students are allowed four absences, excused or unexcused, with each further unexcused absence resulting in a deduction of a portion of a letter grade (i.e., B+ dropping to a B). An illness that requires medical attention; curricular or extracurricular activities approved by the faculty; personal obligations claimed by the student and recognized as valid; recognized religious holidays; and severe inclement weather causing dangerous traveling conditions are “excused” absences. Class absences will inevitably affect your class participation grade. Repeated tardiness will lower your participation grade.

Academic Integrity

Please review Rutgers University-Newark's Academic Integrity Policy and Policy on Plagiarism (<https://spaa.newark.rutgers.edu/phd-university-policy-plagiarism>). Students who violate this policy will be subject to academic penalties under the code in addition to whatever disciplinary sanctions are applied.

Classroom Expectations

Please set your cell phones to the "silent" notification mode during class sessions. Do not use your cell phone to send "text messages," etc. during class meetings. While I understand that many students use laptops and tablets to take notes, I expect that these devices will be used for those purposes only. Please do not audio or video record class meetings or lectures. You are also expected to refrain from distracting and disruptive behaviors (i.e. "chatting" during lectures/discussions, consuming a full meal in class, etc.).

Students With Disabilities

If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, contact the Office of Student Disability Services at the semester's start. Please review the University's statement on this issue below:

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>. For more information please contact Kate Torres at (973) 353-5375 or in the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, in suite 219 or by contacting odsnewark@rutgers.edu <<mailto:odsnewark@rutgers.edu>>.

Papers

Students must complete one paper during the semester—the midterm assessment. Students will write a *synthetic* essay of 5-10 pages that analyzes a theme that emerges from three or more of the secondary source course readings and primary source readings. All writings are to be double-spaced, in 12-pt font, with sources cited in the Chicago format. Extensions will not be granted except for health and family emergencies.

Exams

Students will also complete a final examination that will assess content explored in course readings and lectures.

Classroom Expectations:

Students are expected to respectfully engage in all class activities. Please set your cell phones to the "silent" notification mode during class sessions. Do not use your cell phone to send "text messages," etc. during class meetings. While I understand that many students use laptops and tablets to take notes, I expect that these devices will be used for those purposes only. Please do not audio or video record class meetings or lectures. You are also expected to refrain from distracting and disruptive behaviors (i.e. "chatting" during lectures/discussions, consuming a full meal in class, etc.).

***GRADING:**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Attendance/Participation/ Discussion Questions	20%
Midterm Exam Paper	40%
Final Exam	40%

Books to Purchase:

Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861).

Theme 1- On becoming “Black Women,” and Forging Freedom in the Colonial and Antebellum Era

Week 1-

-Wheatley, Phillis. *Memoir and Poems of Phillis Wheatley, a Native African and a Slave. Dedicated to the Friends of the Africans* (1834 collection publication)

*Electronic Edition (UNC Documenting the American South:

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/wheatley/wheatley.html>).

-Egerton, Douglas. *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America* (2009) Chapter 7, “Mum Bett Takes a Name: The Emergence of Free Black Communities” *on Blackboard.

Week 2-

-White, Deborah Gray. *Ar’n’t I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (1999), Chapter 1, “Jezebel and Mammy: The Mythology of Female Slavery” *on Blackboard.

-Carney, Judith. *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (2001) *excerpt on Blackboard.

Week-3

-Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861).

Theme 2-Black Women and the Civil War and Reconstruction Era Freedom Fight

Week 4-

-May, Vivian. “Under-Theorized and Under-Taught: Re-Examining Harriet Tubman’s Place in Women’s Studies” in *Meridian* (2014) *on Blackboard.

-Taylor, Susie King. *Reminiscence of My Life in Camp with the 33rd United States Colored Troops Late 1st S.C. Volunteers* (1902). *Electronic Edition (UNC Documenting the American South:

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/taylorsu/taylorsu.html>).

Week 5-

-Camp, Stephanie. *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (2008), Chapter 5, “To Get Closer to Freedom: Gender, Movement and Freedom” *on Blackboard.

-Hunter, Tera. *To ‘joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (1997) Chapter 4, “ ‘Washing Amazons’ ” and Organized Protests” *on Blackboard.

Theme 3- From Uplift to “New Negro” Women and the Struggle for Freedom

Week 6-

-Cooper, Ann Julia. *A Voice from the South* (1892) **selected pages** *Electronic Edition (UNC Documenting the American South: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/cooper/cooper.html>).

-Ida B. Wells excerpts *on Blackboard.

Midterm Due

Week 7-

-Zora Neale Hurston excerpts *on Blackboard.

-Dossett, Kate. “I Try to Live Somewhat in Keeping with My Reputation as a Wealthy Woman:” A’Lelia Walker and the Madam C.J. Walker Manufacturing Company,” *Journal of Women’s History* (2009) *on Blackboard.

-Scott, Michelle R. *Blues Empress in Black Chattanooga: Bessie Smith and the Emerging Urban South* (University of Illinois Press, 2008) Chapter 5, “An Empress in Vaudeville: Bessie Smith on the Theater Circuit.” *on Blackboard.

-The Poetics of Blues Women: Lyric analysis—*on Blackboard.

Theme 4- Black Women's "Double V" Campaign

Week 8-

-Mary McCleod Bethune essays *on Blackboard.

-Shockley, Megan Taylor. "Working for Democracy: Working-Class African-American Women, Rights in Detroit, 1940-1954" *Michigan Historical Review* (2003) *on Blackboard.

Theme 5-Black Women and the Civil Rights and Black Power Era

Week 9-

-Bush, Harold. "Continuing Bonds and Emmett Till's Mother" *Southern Quarterly* (2013) on Blackboard.

- McGuire, Danielle L. " 'It Was like All of Us Had Been Raped': Sexual Violence, Community Mobilization, and the African American Freedom Struggle." *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 3(2004): 906-931.

Week 10

-Beal, Frances "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female" (1969) *on Blackboard.

-Combahee River Collective Statement *on Blackboard.

- In Class Film Study: *Free Angela Davis and All Political Prisoners* (2012) Shola Lynch

Theme 6-Imagining the Struggle: Black Women and Liberatory Arts in the Wake of the Black Studies Movement

Week 11-

-Dash, Julie. *Daughters of the Dust: The Making of an African American Woman's Film* (1992) *on Blackboard.

In Class Film Study: *Daughters of the Dust* (1991) Julie Dash

-On Kara Walker's "A Subtlety:"

1.Preziuso, Marika. "A Subtlety By Kara Walker: Teaching Vulnerable Art" *Journal of International Women's Studies* (2016) *on Blackboard.

2."Symposium on the Recent 'Mammy' Sculpture of Kara Walker" *Black Renaissance Noire* (2014) *on Blackboard.

Theme 7-"Woke" Women: Black Women and Black Lives Matter

Week 12-

- "Women and Black Lives Matter: An Interview with Marcia Chatelain" *Dissent* (2015) *on Blackboard.

- Locke, Mamie. "Whose Lives Really Matter: The Invisibility of African American Women in the Political Discourse of the Black Lives Campaign," *Virginia Social Science Journal* (2016) *on Blackboard.

Independent Research

Weeks 13 & 14

In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Discovering Black Women on the Front Lines of the Freedom

Fight: Black women have interpreted and engaged the black freedom struggle in a variety of ways.

Reflect on their divergent strategies—paying close attention to "time" and "place." Conduct research to discover a black woman/or group of black women who gained notoriety locally or nationally for her/their engagement in the freedom struggle. Write a paper that explores the connection between your subject and the women we studied this semester. Prepare a brief summary/abstract that you will present in class.

Week 15-Presentations

Final Exam: Monday, December 18, 2017, 3-6pm