

Black Women in the United States
21:014:305

Summer 2015
Session II: July 6 – August 12

Instructor: Professor Shana A. Russell
Email: shanarus@scarletmail.rutgers.edu
Phone: 973-878-9963

Office Hours: I am available via phone or Gchat by appointment.

Course Description

This course is a broad survey of black women in the United States from slavery to the present. It explores common themes such as sexuality, feminism, reproductive rights, activism, and identity. The course begins with enslaved women, continues on to black women's activism during reconstruction, the Depression, Civil Rights, and Black Power, and finishes with the role of black women in contemporary popular culture.

Course Objectives

- To use primary sources to critically examine the complex history of black woman
- To understand how “womanhood” and “blackness” have been defined and redefined throughout American history
- To be exposed to various strategies of resistance employed by black women
- To develop analytical writing skills through the critical examination of primary sources
- To develop a broad understanding of the various issues facing black women throughout history

Required Texts

Endesha Ida Mae Holland, *From the Mississippi Delta*

(All other articles, book chapters, and other media will be provided for you on the course site.)

Course Policies

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism will not be tolerated under any circumstances. This includes using another's ideas in a written assignment without proper citation, cheating on an exam, or using your own work from a previous course without prior approval. If you are unsure about whether or not something needs to be cited, just cite it. Always better to be safe than sorry. As your instructor, I am more interested in your original thinking (even if you think its not “academic” enough) than something you have cut and pasted or otherwise borrowed from someone else. The University takes plagiarism very seriously. For more information see the Academic Integrity Policy at: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>

Classroom Courtesy: This class covers several topics that are not easy to discuss. There are a number of things that many of you will feel strongly about. Many people, myself included, are less careful about what we say online than in person. However, please treat this course in the same way that you would a traditional classroom. I expect that we will all be accountable to each other in the interest of making this a space that is conducive to everyone's learning process.

Being engaged in the course is a significant part of your grade. I encourage everyone to challenge each other and the texts. This kind of discourse is both healthy and productive. But you must remain respectful at all times. Violent, racist, homophobic, transphobic, or otherwise inappropriate language will not be tolerated.

Special Accommodations:

If you require any special accommodations please contact me within the first week of the course. These include those accommodations as outlined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504, any events that may interfere with your ability to complete course assignments on time, or if you have unreliable (or limited access) to an internet connection.

Course Requirements

Weekly Annotations: (Due every Friday by 12 a.m. EST) Every reading assignment must have its own set of annotations to be posted in the discussion board for that week by Friday. Each annotation must include **3** items: Something you did not know or had a question about, something you disagreed with or would otherwise challenge, and the most important take away from the week's reading as it relates to definitions of black womanhood (broadly conceived). As a best practice, it would be wise to take notes as you read and use these to create your annotations. Although this is informal, please be attentive to spelling, grammar, and usage. You will receive an A each week if you perform this task completely and submit it on time; a C if it is incomplete; and an F if you do not complete it or it is not posted on Blackboard on time.

Discussion Board: (Due every Friday by 12 a.m. EST) Each week a discussion question based on the week's readings will be posted to that week's discussion board. You are required to post to the discussion board either as a direct response to the question or as a response to one of your classmates. Responses must be at least 250 words (or about two paragraphs). Think of this as the virtual version of classroom discussion and a chance to engage with me and with your peers as you would in a live classroom.

Five Page Paper: (Due Monday, July 27 by 12 a.m. EST) The paper topic will be posted to the assignments tab well in advance of the due date. The paper must be written in Times New Roman, double-spaced, in 12 pt. font. You are required to cite examples from the text(s) referenced in the question. No outside sources can be used.

Grading:

Annotations: 20%

Discussion Board: 20%

Five page paper: 30%

Final Exam: 30%

Schedule of Reading and Assignments

Week 1: July 6-July 10

Defining Black Womanhood from Abolition to Black Feminism

Required Reading:

1. Sojourner Truth: "Ain't I a Woman"
2. Harriet Beecher Stowe: "Sojourner Truth, The Libyan Sibyl"

Required Watching:

1. Melissa Harris-Perry (previously Laceywell) Debate with Gloria Steinem:
http://www.democracynow.org/2008/1/14/race_and_gender_in_presidential_politics

Week 2: July 13-July 17

Black Women's Political and Economic Participation Post-Emancipation

Required Reading:

1. Elsa Barkley Brown, "To Catch the Vision of Freedom: Reconstructing Southern Black Women's Political History, 1865-1880"
2. Hazel Carby, "Policing the Black Woman's Body in an Urban Context"

Week 3: July 20-July 24

Black Women and the Movement

Required Reading:

1. Endesha Ida Mae Holland, *From the Mississippi Delta*

5 PAGE PAPER DUE MONDAY, JULY 27TH BY 12 A.M. EST

Week 4: July 27-July 31

Black Women, Anti-Rape Activism, and Reproductive Rights

Required Reading:

1. Danielle 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 and Chapter 1)
2. Angela Davis, “Joanne Little: The Dialectics of Rape”
3. Angela Davis, *Women Race and Class* (Chapter 12)

Week 5: August 3-August 7

Redefining Black Womanhood in the 21st Century

Required Reading:

1. Mireille Miller-Young, “Hip-Hop Honeys and Da Hustlaz: Black Sexualities in the New Hip-Hop Pornography”
2. Noah Berlatsky, “Laverne Cox Gets Naked, Exposes Radical Feminist Exclusionism”

Week 6: August 10-August 12

FINAL EXAM