

Black Women in the United States

Course Number: WGS 21:988:389 (Sec 1)

Cross-listed: African American and African Studies 21:014:305:H5 (Sec 1)

Jarrettia Adams, Instructor

ONLINE COURSE

Summer 2021

"We specialize in the wholly impossible."
(Motto of Nannie Helen Burroughs school)



1-Faith Ringgold, 1997

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a broad, chronological survey of the history of Black women in the United States from slavery to the present. It explores common themes such as everyday forms of resistance, feminism, sexuality and reproductive rights, political activism, and identity. The course begins with enslaved women, continues to black women's social roles and activism

during reconstruction and after, the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, and finishes with an examination of the roles of Black women in contemporary culture. This course incorporates both fiction and nonfiction works to illuminate the major themes in black women's history.

IMPORTANT: This is a completely online course which means *there are no required meetings* for students. I strongly recommend that you schedule a meeting with me at least once via Zoom – the earlier the better. Your grade is comprised of responses to discussion questions, papers, etc. I will provide a number of short videos each week to provide historical background and other information you may find helpful, which you will be expected to watch and on which you should take notes.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The course requirements are based upon our learning goals:

- To use primary sources to critically examine the complex history of black woman in the United States
- To understand how “womanhood” and “blackness” have been defined and redefined throughout American history
- To understand various strategies of resistance employed by black women
- To develop analytical reading and writing skills through the critical examination of primary sources and written response papers
- To develop a broad understanding of the various issues facing black women throughout U.S. history, including the roles of black women in family life, the workplace, politics, literary and artistic achievement, education, and the struggle for women's rights

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance/Participation: This course is an asynchronous, online course which will be run using the CANVAS platform. CANVAS provides me with stats regarding how each student is utilizing the course materials. These stats along with *your timely submission of coursework* will form the basis of your grade for Attendance/Participation.

Discussion Board: Discussion Board is a space available for your contributions or comments. Generally, I will ask you to post on a particular topic with one original post of your own and with responses to at least 2 other class members.

Response Papers: There will be five (5) 2-3 page response papers required for the assigned books (not the articles which will be covered via the discussion board assignments). I will provide you with a checklist or rubric for how to organize your responses.

Final Multimedia Project or Research Paper: Students will have a choice of producing a multimedia, research project with associated written documentation or writing a short

research paper (length to be decided). Either choice will require you produce a one-page proposal and a one-page bibliography ahead of and in addition to the final project or paper. I will provide you with more detailed information about each choice, as well as a checklist or rubric for each required part of the final paper or research project.

WEIGHTED GRADING:

Attendance/Participation: 20%
 Discussion Board: 25%
 Response Papers: 25%
 Final Multimedia Project or Paper: 30%

Grading Scale:

90 - 100	A
87 - 89	B+
80 - 86	B
77 - 79	C+
70 - 76	C
60 - 69	D
59 or less	F

POLICIES

Accommodation and Support Statement

Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and the University as a whole. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

For Individuals with Disabilities: The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter barriers due to disability. Once a student has completed the ODS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and reasonable accommodations are determined to be necessary and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be provided. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at ods.rutgers.edu. Contact ODS at (973)353-5375 or via email at ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals who are Pregnant: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance at (973) 353-1906 or via email at

TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Absence Verification: The Office of the Dean of Students can provide assistance for absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (e.g., illness, personal or family emergency, etc.). Students should refer to University Policy 10.2.7 for information about expectations and responsibilities. The Office of the Dean of Students can be contacted by calling (973) 353-5063 or emailing deanofstudents@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals with temporary conditions/injuries: The Office of the Dean of Students can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition or injury (e.g., broken or sprained limbs, concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request using the following link: <https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu>.

For English as a Second Language (ESL): The Program in American Language Studies (PALS) can support students experiencing difficulty in courses due to English as a Second Language (ESL) and can be reached by emailing PALS@newark.rutgers.edu to discuss potential supports.

For Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students who are experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance by calling (973) 353-1906 or emailing TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm. For more information, students should refer to the University's Student Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence, Relationship Violence, Stalking and Related Misconduct located at <http://compliance.rutgers.edu/title-ix/about-title-ix/title-ix-policies/>.

For support related to interpersonal violence: The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance can provide any student with confidential support. The office is a confidential resource and does not have an obligation to report information to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Students can contact the office by calling (973) 353-1918 or emailing run.vpva@rutgers.edu. There is also a confidential text-based line available to students; students can text (973) 339-0734 for support.

For Crisis and Concerns: The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a support plan to address personal situations that might impact their academic performance. Students, faculty and staff may contact the CARE Team by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNCARE or emailing careteam@rutgers.edu.

For Stress, Worry, or Concerns about Well-being: The Counseling Center has confidential

therapists available to support students. Students should reach out to the Counseling Center to schedule an appointment: counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or (973) 353-5805. If you are not quite ready to make an appointment with a therapist but are interested in self-help, check out TAO at Rutgers-Newark for an easy, web-based approach to self-care and support: <https://tinyurl.com/RUN-TAO>.

For emergencies, call 911 or contact Rutgers University Police Department (RUPD) by calling (973) 353-5111.

Attendance Under ordinary circumstances, students are expected to make every effort to attend class regularly. Again, Canvas provides me with stats regarding how and for how long each student is utilizing the course materials. These stats along with your timely submission of coursework will form the basis of your grade for Attendance/Participation.

Per the University's Course Attendance policy (10.2.7), students are responsible for communicating with their instructors regarding absences. **Under the extraordinary conditions we currently find ourselves dealing with, if circumstances arise that threaten to interfere with or prevent your completion of course work, please contact me ASAP. We must all strive to be flexible, understanding, and compassionate during these times, but I cannot be of assistance or refer you to services that may be of help if I do not know what is happening.**

Communication Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions related to the class. I strongly urge everyone to make plans to meet with me online at least once during the semester. Email me for an office hours appointment and give me several meeting time options. I will do my best to respond to all emails within 24 hours. Please plan ahead if you have a question related to a paper or other matter with a required deadline.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

The Writing Center

The Writing Center (<http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter>), located in Room 126 of Conklin Hall, offers writing tutoring and writing workshops to all undergraduate students currently enrolled in classes on the Rutgers-Newark campus. Their tutors work to help students become more independent readers and writers capable of responding well to the demands of writing within the university. The Writing Center is available to you free of charge. I encourage you to take advantage of their services to strengthen your reading, writing, and research skills.

This class requires a knowledge of the Canvas learning platform. I also assume you have created a Zoom account through Rutgers.

If you require technical assistance, these are sites for help:

- Link to RU-N “Technology LaunchPad”: <https://runit.rutgers.edu/technology-launch-pad/>
- Contact information for OIT-Newark Help Desk: <https://runit.rutgers.edu/hd/>

If you would like to do some additional reading for context about the history of Black women in the United States, the following texts (*not* required) may be of interest. Both of them will be helpful as sources for topics for your final papers/projects:

A Black Women’s History of the United States (with a Revised Afterword), Boston: Beacon Press, 2020 – Daina Ramey Berry and Kali Nicole Gross

A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America, NY: Broadway Books, 1998 – Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson

Many of the assignments for this course are based on lessons designed by Stanford University’s History Education Group, <https://sheg.stanford.edu/>.

For help (beyond the Writing Center) with writing and formatting your papers throughout your academic career: look for used copies of Strunk & White’s *The Elements of Style* – the edition doesn’t really matter. I own a fourth edition (updated 2000), but there are probably later editions now. It’s a classic and a fun read if you like that sort of thing. A small book with a big return. Every student should own and read a copy. That being said, the best writing is often about knowing when to break the rules rather than being a slave to them.

Diane Hacker regularly updates *A Pocket Style Manual* (spiral bound). There are lots of online style manuals, some better than others. I find having Hacker handy when I’m working down to the wire (as usual) is worth the price. Good investment if you expect to have a great many papers in your future. Again, none of the books listed above are required.



One of my favorite online sources of writing assistance (sorry, Rutgers!) is Purdue University's Online Writing Lab at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html. Check it out.

ASSIGNMENTS

The books for this course are listed below.

Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, (Dover Publication, reprint ed., 2001) (ISBN-13: 978-0486419312, ISBN-10: 9780486419312). Also, available at: <https://www.docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jacobs/jacobs.html>

Larsen, Nella (D. Mcdowell, ed.). *Quicksand and Passing* (NJ: Rutgers U Press, 1986) (ISBN-10 : 0813511704, ISBN-13 : 978-0813511702).

Moody, Anne. *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (NY: Bantam Doubleday/Dell, 1968) (ISBN-10 : 0440314887, ISBN-13 : 978-0440314882)

Wells, Ida B. "The Red Record" in Royster, Jacqueline Jones, ed., *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), pp. 69-151. (ISBN-10 : 1319049044, ISBN-13 : 978-1319049041). Also available online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14977/14977-h/14977-h.htm>

These books are available as print copies or as ebooks, and can be purchased at the campus bookstore or online. I have included links to online versions where they exist. Cheaper, used copies of most of these books are available from a variety of sources. Of course, all of these books can be requested free of charge through Dana Library, but allow time for the library to secure the text for you. I will see about putting books on reserve for you as well.

Additional readings or visual materials marked with an asterisk (*) for this course will be available on Canvas or via an online link.

Getting Started!

Your first assignment, **due by 11:59pm on Monday, July 12**, is 1) one discussion board post: tell the class about yourself by posting a one paragraph introduction. You can add a photo or any other media you desire by way of introduction.

2) NOTE WELL: **READ THE SYLLABUS!** SPEND NO MORE THAN 10-15 MINUTES OR SO ON THIS. LOOK IT OVER QUICKLY TO ORIENT YOURSELF. THEN GO BACK AND READ THROUGH IT MORE CAREFULLY. THEN ANSWER THE SURVEY QUESTIONS, ALSO BY 11:59PM ON MONDAY, JULY 12.

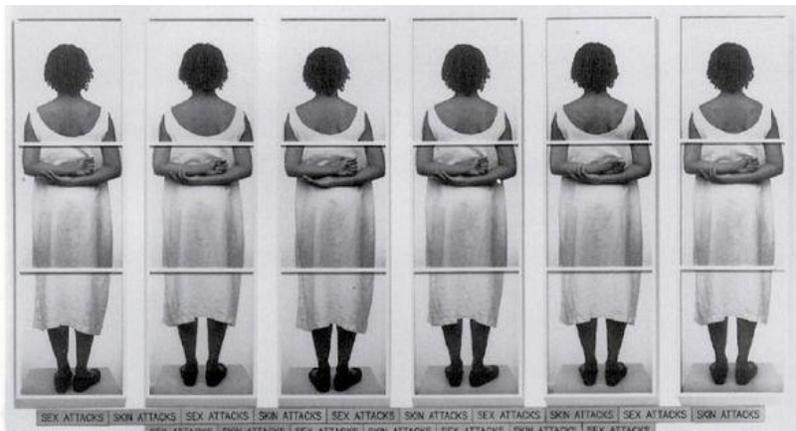
1) For week beginning Monday, July 12:

Required Reading:

*1. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* (1845): Chapter 10 (split into two pdf docs, pp173-191, pp192-216).

*2. WATCH: the first 10-15 minutes of Ava DuVernay's "13th" (2016). Feel free to watch the entire documentary if you have the time. It is available on Netflix. I will provide a video excerpt or link to the documentary.

Discussion Board: Due Friday, July 16 – Big Idea: Adding Black women to the mix requires us to tell U.S history in a different way; it's NOT just about "add women and stir." After reading the Douglass excerpt and watching the clip from *13th*, how do you imagine a consideration of the experience of black women would change these two narratives. Post one original response and respond to at least two other posts from your colleagues by Friday. **Do not spend more than 10-15 minutes on your post or your responses.** This is informal. You will *not* be graded on your spelling, formatting, or the amount of added research you have done. I am looking for the effort you put into thinking about this and in responding to other students. I don't expect a piece of polished writing for what is essentially a blog post. This will remain true for all *discussion board* assignments.



*3. Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (get a start on reading this. It may take you awhile to get used to the writing style.)

<https://www.docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jacobs/jacobs.html>

Reading response for 1st half of book through Chapter entitled, "The Loophole of Retreat," due Sunday, July 18.



2) For week beginning Monday, July 19

Discussion Board: Due Friday, July 23 – Big Idea: “The Loophole of Retreat” – “She dreams of possibility from within impossible strictures of enclosure and confinement.” – Tina Campt

Required Reading:

*1. Sojourner Truth: “Ain’t I a Woman,”

<http://www.blackpast.org/1851-sojourner-truth-arnt-i-woman>

*2. Harriet Beecher Stowe: “Sojourner Truth, The Libyan Sibyl,”

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1863/04/sojourner-truth-the-libyan-sibyl/308775/>

*3. Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (finish book)

<https://www.docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jacobs/jacobs.html>

Reading response for 2nd half of book through Chapter entitled, “Free At Last,” due Sunday, July 25.



Figure 2 Simone Leigh - *The Waiting Room*

3) For week beginning Monday, July 26

Discussion Board: Due Friday, July 30 – Big Idea: Intersectionality

Required Reading:

*1. Constitutional Amendments, 13-15 (Reconstruction-era amendments):

<http://www.blackpast.org/?q=primary/reconstruction-amendment>

*2. Wells, Ida B. “The Red Record” in Royster, Jacqueline Jones, ed., *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), pp. 69-151. Also available online at

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14977/14977-h/14977-h.htm>

Reading response for "The Red Record" due Sunday, August 1.

*3. Cooper, Anna Julia, "Womanhood a vital element in the regeneration and progress of a race," (excerpt) in *A Voice from the South* (1892)



Figure 3 Black Women's Club Movement

4) For week beginning Monday, August 2

Discussion Board: Due Friday, August 6 – Big Idea: The Politics of Respectability

*You've had your chance and proved unfaithful
So now I'm gonna be real mean and hateful
I used to be your sweet mama, sweet papa
But now I'm just as sour as can be.
(--"Used to be Your Sweet Mama")*

Required Reading:

1. Larsen, *Quicksand*

Reading response for *Quicksand* due Sunday, August 8.

*2. Mary Church Terrell, "The Progress of Colored Women" (1904),
<http://www.blackpast.org/1904-mary-church-terrell-progress-colored-women>

*3. Elise Johnson McDougald, "The Task of Negro Womanhood"

*4. Handouts: Misc. Blues lyrics

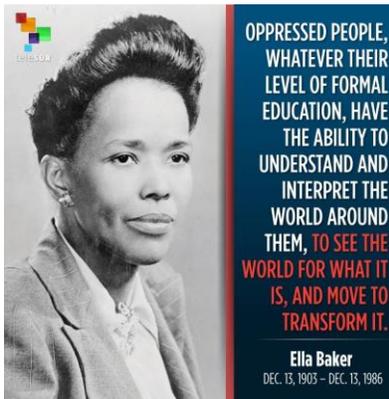
5) For week beginning Monday, August 9

Discussion Board: Due Friday, August 13 – Big Idea: “I question America. Is this America?” (- Fannie Lou Hamer) - The Long Civil Rights Movement – Not just about Great Men

Required Reading:

*1. Ella Baker & Marvel Cooke: “The Bronx Slave Market”

*2. Ella Baker: “We Need Group-Centered Leadership”



3. Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* – don’t be intimidated by the page length of this book. It is a quick and interesting (IMHO) read.

Reading response is due Sunday, August 15.

*4. Listen: Fannie Lou Hamer, speech to the credentials committee and the Democratic National Convention (1964): <https://youtu.be/KpIII09Lxe8>

(The text of Hamer's speech is at: <http://www.infoplease.com/t/hist/hamer-dnc1964/>).

Watch: A 10 minute documentary providing more historical context is at

<https://youtu.be/Rf8ob3tKXf0>

6) For week beginning Monday, August 16

Discussion Board: Due Friday, August 18 – Big Idea: Black Feminisms/Black Radicalism:

“We realize that the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy. We are socialists because we believe that work must be organized for the collective benefit of those who do the work and create the products, and not for the profit of the bosses. Material resources must be equally distributed among those who create these resources. We are not convinced, however, that a socialist revolution that is not also a feminist and anti-racist revolution will guarantee our liberation.” (-Combahee River Collective)

Required Reading:

*1. The Combahee Collective River Statement (1977)

<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/combahee-river-collective-statement-1977/>

*2. Angela Davis, "Racism, Birth Control and Reproductive Rights" (1981)

*3. Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (1984)

*4. Audre Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic" (1984)

*5. Kathleen Cleaver, "Women, Power & Revolution" (1998)

<http://historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/cleaverwomenpowerrev.html>

No reading response paper this week, but I will post a discussion board question to engage your reading of the above documents.



RESEARCH PAPER/FINAL PROJECT - DUE DATE T/B/A