

**AADS 330w/ WGS 340**  
**Black Queer Literature and Film**  
**Prof. Young Email: [hbhanayoung@gmail.com](mailto:hbhanayoung@gmail.com)**  
**Course Meets In Person: T 9:30-11:00, Par 201**  
**Zoom Class: Th 9:30-11:00**  
**Zoom Office Hours: Th 2-3:30**

**Course Description:**

This class will look at queer literature and performance of the African Diaspora. Using novels such as *Speak No Evil* by Nigerian author Uzodinma Iweala and *A Visitation of Spirits* by Southern writer Randall Kenan, we will think about how queerness travels. What does it mean to be queer, black and gender variant while belonging to specific communities across the diaspora that struggle with racism and the legacy of colonialism and slavery? This class will focus on literary, performative and visual texts from several countries in Africa, Black America and Black England. We will also read supplemental essays as we attempt to construct new types of queer theory that center processes of racialization, African cosmologies, and the radical potential of being what Hortense Spillers calls “black flesh.”

**Required Texts:**

Films: (To Be Watched On Your Own By Week of Discussion)

1. Marlon Riggs’ *Black Is. . . Black Ain’t* (UT Library Online)
2. Wanuri Kahiu’s *Rafiki* (Amazon Prime)
3. Cheryl Dunye’s *The Watermelon Woman* (UT Library Kanopy)
4. Shirley Clarke’s *Portrait of Jason* (Selections, Amazon Prime)
5. Stephen Frear’s *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Amazon Prime)
6. Annalise Ophelian’s *Major!* (Amazon Prime)

Books to be Purchased: (Reading to be completed by day of discussion)

1. Uzodinma Iweala’s *Speak No Evil*
2. Olumide Popoola’s *When We Speak of Nothing*
3. Randall Kenan’s *A Visitation of Spirits*

The following readings will be provided:

4. E. Patrick Johnson’s “‘Quare’ Studies, or (Almost) Everything I know About Queer Studies I Learned From My Grandmother.”
5. Ashley Currier’s and Thérèse Migraine-George’s “Queer Studies/ African Studies: An (Im)possible Transaction?”
6. Clitha Mason’s “Queering the Mammy.”
7. Saidiya Hartman’s *Wayward Lives*, selections.
8. Vinh Nguyen’s “Queer Intimacy and the Impasse: Reconsidering My Beautiful Laundrette.”

### **Requirements:**

1. Attendance and participation are crucial for both in-person and online classes. For on-line classes, students have to be present with BOTH video and audio. Active engagement such as answering or asking questions is essential. More than two unexcused absences from either format will be penalized. I will be asking for volunteers to look up information throughout the semester and this can boost your participation grade. If you keep up with the reading and viewing, you should do well in this class. (10%)
2. Each week in the Assignment section of Canvas, students will be presented with a series of questions dealing with the film or literary text we are covering. You will be graded on how thoroughly and thoughtfully you answer the question. Wrong answers will not be penalized but careless ones will not be accepted. (20%)

Weeks in which we watch a film: you must answer the questions by Wednesday 8pm regarding the film we are watching that week. This is marked on syllabus.

Weeks in which we read a novel: you must answer the questions Thursday before class.

3. Students will write a short piece on the relationship between your race and your sexuality. How does your understanding of your racial positioning impact the way you think about your body and sexual intimacy? This is a personal reflective essay. (4 pages double spaced). Due date: Thursday 9/22. (10%)
- 4.
5. Working in pairs, students will do one creative performance piece. This may consist of either a creative video or a live performance. If you choose the video option, you cannot simply record your performance. You must engage creatively with video/filmmaking aesthetics. The performance pieces (live or video) must be 7 to 10 minutes long and engage in some way with any of the required texts. Examples would be acting out a scene from a novel, or making a video that utilizes the aesthetics or themes of any of the films we will watch. These are due anytime BEFORE Thanksgiving break. If you wish to do a live performance during one of our in-person classes on Tuesday, please schedule this with me. (25%)
6. 5-8 page final comparative paper, due on Week 16: 12/8. Topics will be distributed later in the semester. There will be no final exam for this class. This is a comparative paper that requires outside sources and must include a bibliography and works cited page. I do not grade late final papers. (35%)

**Code of Mutual Respect:** In general, this is not a lecture class, but one grounded in dialogue. Feel free to be candid and direct in this class. Your insights are important, and your voice needs to be heard, so look forward to the opportunity to chime in. I will respect you as adults and assume that you will treat others in the class with respect as well. Because we will be sharing many personal ideas which may conflict with your own personal ideas and beliefs, it is important that you strive to be considerate, sensitive, and respectful. Be prepared to offer constructive criticism as well as receive it. We will discuss work that includes lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender themes in this course. Students are expected to approach all class material with maturity and academic rigor.

**Code of Academic Conduct:** University policy requires that students cite sources they use in their work. THIS INCLUDES PARAPHRASING of materials. Any inclusion of ideas that are not your own will be considered plagiarism. Students who do not properly cite ideas, quotes or paraphrasing of other published or unpublished material will automatically face disciplinary action which will also be reflected in their grade. As a reminder, the honor code of the University is as follows, “As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.” For more information on the Honor Code please see the following link <http://www.utexas.edu/about-ut/mission-core-purpose-honor-code>

**Students with Disabilities:** Any student with a documented disability (physical or cognitive) who requires academic accommodations should contact the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259 (voice) or 471-4641 (TTY) for users who are deaf or hard of hearing) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations.

**Religious Holidays:** If you observe a recognized religious holiday that is in conflict with the university schedule, please come talk to me.

**Writing Center:** I strongly encourage you to use the Undergraduate Writing Center, PCL 2.330 , 471-6222: <http://www.uwc.utexas.edu/>). The UWC offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT undergraduate, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. These services are not just for writing that has "problems": Getting feedback from an informed audience is a normal part of a successful writing project. The UWC's trained consultants work with students from every department on both academic and non-academic writing. Using methods that preserve the integrity of your work, they help you develop strategies to improve your writing and become a more independent writer.

## Schedule

### Week 1:

Thursday, 8/27: Introductions and Syllabus

### Week 2: Marlon Riggs' *Black Is. . . Black Ain't* (UT Library Online)

Tuesday, 9/1:

Reading: E. Patrick Johnson's " 'Quare' Studies, or (Almost) Everything I know About Queer Studies I Learned From My Grandmother"

Thursday, 9/3: questions on Riggs due Wednesday 8pm

Discussion of Film: Marlon Riggs' *Black Is. . . Black Ain't* (UT Library Online)

### Week 3: Wanuri Kahiu's *Rafiki* (Amazon Prime)

Tuesday, 9/8:

Reading: Ashley Currier's and Thérèse Migraine-George's "Queer Studies/ African Studies: An (Im)possible Transaction?"

Thursday, 9/10: Questions on *Rafiki* due Wednesday 8pm

Discussion of Film: Wanuri Kahiu's *Rafiki* (Amazon Prime)

### Week 4:

Tuesday, 9/15:

Reading: Uzodinma Iweala's *Speak No Evil* pg. 1-49

Thursday 9/17: Questions on SNE due before class

Reading: Uzodinma Iweala's *Speak No Evil* pg. 51-101

### Week 5:

Tuesday, 9/22: **Short Assignment Due**

Reading: Uzodinma Iweala's *Speak No Evil* pg. 102-150

Thursday 9/24:

Reading: Uzodinma Iweala's *Speak No Evil* pg. 151-214

### Week 6: Cheryl Dunye's *The Watermelon Woman* (UT Library Kanopy)

Tuesday 9/29:

Reading: Clitha Mason's "Queering the Mammy"

Thursday 10/1: Questions on TWW due Wednesday 8pm

Discussion of Film: Cheryl Dunye's *The Watermelon Woman* (UT Library Kanopy)

### Week 7: Shirley Clarke's *Portrait of Jason* (Selections, Amazon Prime)

Tuesday, 10/6:

Reading: Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives* (297-343)

Thursday 10/8: Questions on POJ due Wednesday 8pm

Reading: Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives* (193-202)

Discussion of Film: Shirley Clarke's *Portrait of Jason*

### Week 8:

Tuesday, 10/13:

Reading: Olumide Popoola's *When We Speak of Nothing*

Thursday, 10/15: Questions on WWSon due before class

Reading: Olumide Popoola's *When We Speak of Nothing*

**Week 9:**

Tuesday 10/20:

Reading: Olumide Popoola's *When We Speak of Nothing*

Thursday 10/22:

Reading: Olumide Popoola's *When We Speak of Nothing*

**Week 10: Stephen Frear's *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Amazon Prime)**

Tuesday 10/27:

Reading: Vinh Nguyen's "Queer Intimacy and the Impasse: Reconsidering My Beautiful Laundrette"

Thursday 10/29: Questions on film due by Wednesday 8pm

Discussion of Film: Stephen Frear's *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Amazon Prime)

**Week 11:**

Tuesday 11/3:

Reading: Randall Kenan's *A Visitation of Spirits*

Thursday 11/5: Questions due Thursday before class

Reading: Randall Kenan's *A Visitation of Spirits*

**Week 12:**

Tuesday 11/10:

Reading: Randall Kenan's *A Visitation of Spirits*

Thursday 11/12: Questions due Thursday before class

Reading: Randall Kenan's *A Visitation of Spirits*

**Week 13: Annalise Ophelian's *Major!* (Amazon Prime)**

Tuesday 11/17:

Film: Annalise Ophelian's *Major!* (Amazon Prime)

Thursday 11/19: Questions on film due Wednesday 8pm

Film: Annalise Ophelian's *Major!* (Amazon Prime)

**Week 14:**

FALL BREAK

**Week 15:**

Tuesday 12/1:

Final paper Workshops

Thursday 12/3:

Individual paper workshops

**Week 16:**  
**Tuesday 12/8: Final Paper Due**