

[revised 1/4/23]

Sex & Power

AFR 345F (31240) / ANTH 324L 48 (32170) / WGS 340 52 (45605)

Professor Lyndon K. Gill
E-mail: lyndonkgill@utexas.edu

Description

This multi-disciplinary course explores various experiences and theories of sex/intimacy/desire alongside intellectual and artistic engagements with power hierarchies and spirituality across the African Diaspora. Thinking within and beyond the borders of the United States, we will consider the concept of the erotic as a political/sensual/spiritual subjectivity from various theoretical and methodological angles across disciplines and black geographies.

**Please Note:*

1) *This course carries flags for Cultural Diversity in the United States and Global Cultures.*

2) *This course deals with aspects of gender and sexuality in a candid and explicit manner at times. Students who do not feel comfortable with this approach should not take the course. If you choose to take this course, you have agreed to respect our classroom as an accountable space. Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, or- of course- 'erotophobia' of any sort will not be tolerated.*

Requirements & Assignments

1. **Attendance:** Each student is required to attend *every* online class session (with their video cameras on for the duration of the class) and give their undivided attention to each session (i.e. No checking/posting on Facebook/Instagram/Twitter/TikTok etc., No texting/calling/direct messaging, No checking/responding to e-mails, No reading or doing assignments for this class or any other, No listening to music/podcasts or watching music videos, No online shopping, etc.). Students should log on (in as quiet and private an environment as possible) to every class session ready to interact with the professor and your classmates. Unexcused absences are unacceptable. More than one unexcused absence during the term will result in a reduction of the overall course grade for each session missed (A→A-, B+→B, etc.). Excused absences (including for mental health reasons) are unlimited, but must be approved by the professor.

2. **Informed participation:** Each student will complete the assigned readings and have those readings on hand during our class sessions. Students will sign in to virtual class sessions on time and prepared with questions and comments on each reading.

3. Reading responses: Each week, students will post a **one-page response on Canvas to the upcoming week's readings by 11:59pm on the Sunday before class.** These posts are intended to provoke conversation. The week's assigned readings must be addressed directly, but no need to summarize. Critique, compare, and pose questions for discussion or clarification. Each post must comment on at least one other person's reading response (except for the first person to post). **The first reading response is due on Sunday 1/22 by 11:59pm.** These responses will be graded on a credit/no credit basis. Students will receive *no credit* for late posts.

4. Discussion facilitation: Each student will co-facilitate two class sessions. These sessions will be assigned. Students may exchange dates, but must inform the professor of this change at least one week prior to the facilitation. Facilitators are required to meet with the professor during his virtual office hours prior to each facilitation. Facilitators are expected to draft questions for discussion based on the assigned readings and are required to read the reading responses posted for that week. The inclusion of course-relevant audio/visual material as a way to encourage conversation is highly encouraged. Students will receive a grade for these facilitations. **Discussion facilitators are NOT required to write reading responses for the week of their facilitation.**

5. Final project proposal: Students will be assigned final project groups (**shifts are allowed between groups, but the professor must be informed of these changes before Wednesday 2/22**) and write a **2-3-page proposal** (12pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced, Word document) for a final project. This proposal will explain the form of the final project and the texts the group will be using. These texts must include course related materials (**at least one course text per group member**), but may also include outside resources. This proposal will be **accompanied by a brief annotated bibliography** (the bibliography does NOT count toward the minimum page limit). Each group member will receive the same grade.

6. Final project: Each group will complete a **final project to be accompanied by a 4-5 page explanatory essay and non-annotated bibliography** (12pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced, Word document). The project will be **due by 11:59pm on the first day of Final Exams.** Each group members will receive the same grade.

- For the **Final Project** students will produce a creative work in the medium of their choice (performance, film, painting, sculpture, photography, literary text, web, etc. or using multiple media). This work **MUST** engage directly with the materials assigned for the course (**at least one course text per group member**) and themes raised by the course. Outside sources are encouraged but not required.

***Please note for all group work:**

In an effort to keep this online course contactless, students will not be required to meet in person to prepare group facilitations, to prepare final project proposals or to complete final projects. Students may choose to meet in person at their own risk and are highly encouraged to follow proper safety protocols, but cannot require any group member to

participate in person. However, necessary provisions must be made to include all online-only participants, who are required to participate fully in all group work.

***Please note for all assignments:**

* ***Late proposals and projects will be penalized for every day they are late*** (i.e. A → A- if one day late, A → B+ if two days late, etc.). Students are required to ***proofread*** their material prior to submission (ideally, someone else will also read the material for grammatical/spelling/flow errors your eyes might miss). Materials that show evidence of not having been proofread will be returned and marked late. Extensions may be considered only under extenuating circumstances and in emergency situations. When possible, advance notice is encouraged and documentation will be required.

* For assistance with cultivating your ideas, outlining your written work and tips on proofreading/editing your polished writing, please make an appointment at the ***University Writing Center***: www.uwc.utexas.edu

* Students are expected to comply with the University of Texas **Honor Code** and its standards of academic integrity:

<https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/standardsofconduct.php>

<https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/academicintegrity.php>

It is each student's responsibility to become familiar with this code and these university-wide standards; ignorance will be unacceptable as an excuse for violations. All written assignments may be scanned for plagiarism.

* Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the University. To determine if you qualify, please contact the coordinating office at (512) 471-6259 (voice), access@austin.utexas.edu or <https://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>

Course Grade Percentages

Reading responses	10%
Virtual class participation / Discussion facilitation	20%
Final project proposal (due 3/1)	30%
Final project (due 4/27)	40%

Required Books:

Allen, Jafari

2022 There's a Disco Ball Between Us: A Theory of Black Gay Life. Durham: Duke University Press.

[Available online:

https://search.lib.utexas.edu/permalink/01UTAU_INST/be14ds/alma991058284356506011/]

Alexander, M. Jacqui

2005 Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory and the Sacred. Durham: Duke University Press.

[Available online:

https://search.lib.utexas.edu/permalink/01UTAU_INST/be14ds/alma991057925270206011/]

Lorde, Audre

1997 The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde. New York: Norton.

[Available online:

https://search.lib.utexas.edu/permalink/01UTAU_INST/be14ds/alma991057961339206011/]

Lorde, Audre

2007 Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches. Berkeley: Crossing Press.

[Available online:

https://search.lib.utexas.edu/permalink/01UTAU_INST/be14ds/alma991048017049706011/]

Macharia, Keguro

2019 Frottage: Frictions of Intimacy Across the Black Diaspora. New York: NYU Press.

[Available online:

https://search.lib.utexas.edu/permalink/01UTAU_INST/be14ds/alma991058260967106011/]

Thomas, Greg

2007 The Sexual Demon of Colonial Power: Pan-African Embodiment and Erotic Schemes of Empire. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

[Available online:

https://search.lib.utexas.edu/permalink/01UTAU_INST/be14ds/alma991058395212106011/]

Tinsley, Omise'eke

2018 Ezili's Mirrors: Imagining Black Queer Genders. Durham: Duke University Press.

[Available online:

https://search.lib.utexas.edu/permalink/01UTAU_INST/be14ds/alma991057938831406011/]

Wekker, Gloria

2006 The Politics of Passion: Women's Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora. New York: Columbia University Press.

[Available online:

https://search.lib.utexas.edu/permalink/01UTAU_INST/be14ds/alma991015720789706011/]

Reading and Assignment Schedule

**Please Note: It may be necessary to make slight changes to this schedule as the course progresses. You will always receive prior notice of any changes.*

Week #1: Introductions

1/9

Introductions & syllabus review

1/11

Introductions & syllabus review

1/12

Wura Ogunji Artist Talk

Gordon-White Building (GWB) Rm. 2.206 @ 5:30pm

RSVP here:

<https://www.galleriesatut.org/event-details/artist-and-curator-talk-wura-natasha-ogunji>

Week #2: Introductions

1/16

MLK Holiday

1/18

Introductions in Final Project Groups

Week #3: In the Realm of Our Lorde

[First Reading Response due Sunday 1/22 by 11:59pm]

1/23

[29 pgs.]

Lorde “Uses of the Erotic” in *Sister Outsider* p. 53-59 [7]

Wekker “The Mati Work” in *The Politics of Passion* p. 171-193 [23]

1/25

Watch: Griffin & Parkerson *A Litany for the Survival*

[Available online:

https://search.lib.utexas.edu/permalink/01UTAU_INST/apl7st/cdi_alexanderstreet_marcxml_AcademicVideoOnlinePremiumUnitedStatesASP5053798_marc/

Week #4: Passion, Politics, Poetry

1/30 [29 pgs.]
Wekker “The Mati Work” in *The Politics of Passion* p.193-222

2/1 [18 pgs.]
The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde
“Love Poem” p.127
“Sacrifice” p.151
“Coal” p.163
“On a Night of the Full Moon” p.172
“To a Girl Who Knew What Side Her Bread Was Buttered On” p.211
“School Note” p.217
“Dahomey” p.239
“125th Street and Abomey” p.242
“A Litany for Survival” p. 255
“Meet” p.257
“Fog Report” p.288
“Recreation” p. 296
“Woman” p.297”
“Sister Outsider” p.317
“Never Take Fire from a Woman” p.322
“Call” p.417
“Oshun’s Table” p.453
“Today is Not the Day” p. 471

Week #5: Sacred Lessons

2/6 [25 pgs.]
Alexander “Pedagogies of the Sacred” in *Pedagogies of Crossing* p.287-311

2/8 [22pgs.]
Alexander “Pedagogies of the Sacred” in *Pedagogies of Crossing* p.311-332

Week #6: Race, Sex, Colonialism

2/13 [23 pgs.]
Thomas “Pan-Africanism or Sexual Imperialism” in *The Sexual Demon of Colonial Power* p. 1-23

2/15 [33pgs.]
Thomas “Neo-colonial Canons of Gender and Sexuality” & “Conclusion” in *The Sexual Demon of Colonial Power* p. 129-153, 154-160

Week #7: Black Mirror Gender Theory I

2/20 [27 pgs.]
Tinsley “Bridge” & “Introduction” in *Ezili’s Mirrors* p.1-27

2/22 [34 pgs.]
Tinsley “To Transcender Transgender” in *Ezili’s Mirrors* p.31-64

[Final Day to Make Changes to Final Project Groups]

Week #8: Project Workshops

2/27
Final Project Proposal Workshop

3/1
Final Project Proposal Workshop

**[Email Final Project Proposals (as Word docs) via Canvas by 11:59pm]
(One submission per group)**

Week #9: Black Mirror Gender Theory II

3/6 [32 pgs.]
Tinsley “Mache Ansanm” *Ezili’s Mirrors* p.67-98

Watch: Lescot & Magloire *Of Men and Gods (Des Hommes et Dieux)*

[Available online:

https://search.lib.utexas.edu/permalink/01UTAU_INST/be14ds/alma991058382986406011/]

3/8 [24pgs.]
Tinsley in “Artie’s Song” in *Ezili’s Mirrors* p.171-194

Week #10: Spring Break

3/22
Spring Break

3/24
Spring Break

Week #11: Project Workshops

3/20
Final Project Workshop

3/22
Final Project Workshop

Week #12: Frictions & Intimacy Across Black Geographies I

3/27 [29 pgs.]
Macharia “Introduction” in *Frottage* p.1-29

3/29 [32 pgs.]
Macharia “Ethnicity as Frottage” in *Frottage* p.95-126

Week #13: Frictions & Intimacy Across Black Geographies II

4/3 [20 pgs.]
Macharia “Antinomian Intimacy” in *Frottage* p.127-147

4/5 [20 pgs.]
Macharia “Antinomian Intimacy” & “beginnings” in *Frottage* p.147-167

Week #14: A Theory of AfroQueer Life I

4/10 [28 pgs.]
Allen “Introduction” in *There’s a Disco Ball Between Us* p. 1-24

4/12 [33 pgs.]
Allen “The Anthological Generation” in *There’s a Disco Ball* p.27-60 [34 pgs.]

Week #15: A Theory of AfroQueer Life II

4/17 [21 pgs.]
Allen “Disco” in *There’s a Disco Ball* p.118-138

4/19 [34 pgs.]
Allen “Come” in *There’s a Disco Ball* p.221-244

Week #16: Project Workshop

4/24
Final Project Workshop

4/27 (*First Day of Final Exams*)
[Email Final Projects via Canvas by 11:59pm (one submission per group)]

Grading Schema

(Informed by “Grading Standards II” by Maxine Rodburg)

The following are the standards I adhere to when I grade essays. Pluses and minuses represent shades of difference. I assign grades on the evidence of the essay submitted, not on effort or time spent.

A: An excellent piece of writing (this is not the same as perfect). This is an ambitious, perceptive essay that grapples with interesting, complex ideas, responds discerningly to counter-arguments, and explores well-chosen evidence revealingly. The discussion enhances— rather than underscores— the reader’s and writer’s knowledge (it doesn’t simply repeat what has been discussed in class). There is a context for all the ideas; someone outside the class would be enriched, not confused, by reading the essay. Its beginning opens up— rather than flatly announces— its thesis. Its end is something more than a summary. The language is clean, precise, often elegant. As a reader I feel surprised, delighted, changed. There’s something new here for me, something only the essay’s writer could have written and explored in this particular way. The writer’s stake in the material is obvious.

B: This is a piece of writing that reaches high and achieves many of its aims. The ideas are solid and progressively explored but some thin patches require more analysis and/or some stray thoughts do not quite fit together well. The language is generally clear and precise but occasionally not. The evidence is relevant, but there may be too little. The context for the evidence may not be sufficiently explored, so that I have to make some of the connections that the writer should have made clear for me.

OR This is a piece of writing that does not reach as high as an ‘A’ essay, but thoroughly achieves its aims. This is a solid essay whose reasoning and argument may nonetheless be rather routine— in this case the limitation is conceptual.

C: This is a piece of writing that has real problems in one of these areas: 1) conception (there is at least one main idea but it is obscure and hard to get to); 2) structure (the logic behind the ordering of the text is far from clear); 3) use of evidence (there is no evidence presented or that which is provided is weak and/or the connections among the ideas are unclear or without context; the text is plagued by generalizations and absent substantial proof); 4) language (the writing is awkward and generally stands in the way of comprehension). Overall, the essay may be repetitive, poorly organized, and/or superficial in its treatment of the subject matter. In addition, punctuation, spelling, grammar, citations, and transitions may be problems as well.

OR This is an essay that largely summarizes any given text or other work (of art or analysis), but is written without too many major problems.

OR This is an essay that is chiefly a personal reaction to something. This is perhaps well written, but there is scant engagement with course content or other scholarly material; it is mostly opinion.

D: This is an essay that demonstrates very little effort to grapple seriously with the ideas it hopes to explore.

- OR** This is a piece of writing that is extremely problematic in many of the areas mentioned above: conception, structure, use of evidence, language, etc.
- OR** This is writing that does not come close to meeting the expectations of the assignment.
- F:** This is a piece of writing that should most definitely be re-conceptualized and revised drastically so that it can be re-submitted if that option is available.

Grading Scale

A+	100
A	99 – 95
A-	94 – 90
B+	89 – 85
B	84 – 80
B-	79 – 75
C+	74 – 70
C	69 – 65
C-	64 – 60
D+	59 – 55
D	54 – 50
D-	49 – 45
F	44 or less