

HISTORY 350R:
Black Women in America
AFR 374D and WGS 340
Spring 2012
The University of Texas at Austin

Instructors:

Dr. Tiffany M. Gill & Dr. Daina Ramey Berry
History Department Main Office: Garrison Hall 1.104

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Class: Mondays 3:00-6:00pm
Location: GAR 0.132
Unique: 39395 (AFR 30435 and WGS 47020)

Course Description:

In a *New York Times Magazine* article, Toni Morrison eloquently described the dilemmas of black female identity in a now oft quoted phrase: "...she had nothing to fall back on; not maleness, not whiteness, not ladyhood, not anything. And out of the profound desolation of her reality she may well have invented herself." By examining the ways in which black women in the United States sought to "invent" themselves as historical agents despite economic, social, and political challenges, Morrison's statement will, in many ways, form the basis of our intellectual journey.

To that end, the course will use primary sources, historical monographs, and essays to provide a chronological and thematic overview of the experiences of black women in America from their African roots to the circumstances they face in the present era. This seminar class will be discussion driven and will address the following topics: the evolution of African American women's history as field of inquiry; the trans-Atlantic slave trade; enslavement in the United States; abolition and freedom; racial uplift; urban migration; labor and culture; the modern civil rights movement; organized black feminism; and hip-hop culture. Additionally, the course will draw upon readings written by and about African American women with a particularly emphasis on their approach to gender and race historiography.

Course Objectives:

Students should leave this course with a foundation to understand many of the discussions surrounding contemporary issues about race and gender in American society. Particular attention will be paid to helping students learn to think critically about historical issues. Students will also gain the skills necessary to evaluate the different and sometimes contradictory interpretations offered by historians as well as gain insight into the methods used by historians to interpret the past. Attention will also be paid to strengthening students' oral and written communication skills.

Class Etiquette:

Each student is expected to attend class, participate in discussions, and complete all reading and writing assignments by the deadlines indicated in this syllabus or any written addenda. Class discussions are an important component and students will be graded on their participation, contributions to discussions and engagement with their peers. It is the student's responsibility to come to class prepared to discuss the reading for this course; therefore, each student must arrive with two discussion questions based upon the weekly readings. Students are not allowed to record class interactions unless they have written permission from the professor. Please arrive to class on time and turn off cell phones and all other electronic devices including laptop computers. There will be a break during class in which students can check voicemails, emails, texts, etc.

Grading Policy:

Please note that this class, like other undergraduate courses at UT, will now utilize plus and minus options for final grades. However, class assignments are based on a point system with an overall course total of 100 points (see below). Class attendance is mandatory and late assignments are not accepted. The professors will consider medical or other emergencies with written documentation and/or prior notification on a case-by-case basis.

Assignments/Deadlines/ Grade Percentages:

- 1. Class Participation:** **Every Week** **20%**
We expect that you will attend every class session and always be on time. We also expect that you will do the reading closely and come to class prepared with discussion questions and ways to engage the material. Your participation grade will depend on your active engagement in the class which includes meaningful contributions to the class discussion, peer review activities, and in-class writing exercises. Do not underestimate the importance of this portion of your grade.
- 2. Cultural Critique:** **February 12** **20%**
As a part of this course, you are required to write a 3-5 page critique of a film, play, television episode, advertisement, song or other contemporary cultural artifact authored or performed by an African American woman, or a

cultural artifact where a black woman is the subject or protagonist. You are expected to review the cultural product in light of the issues raised in class readings and discussions concerning African American women's identities. It is also expected that you will offer your personal assessment. As with all good writing, your critique must have a well-defined and clearly articulated thesis.

3. **Research Proposal/Bibliography:** **March 5** **15%**
As part of the requirements for this course, you are required to write a 8-10 page research paper. The topic you choose is up to you, however you must find a historical problem surrounding the role of black women in America that is interesting, significant, and able to speak to larger issues. Keeping that in mind, the topic must also be manageable enough for you to be able to research and analyze in the time period allotted and with the resources at your disposal. You will be required to submit a 2-3 page research proposal where you articulate your paper's thesis as well as submit a preliminary bibliography of primary and secondary sources you will use in your final paper.

4. **Final Research Paper:** **May 9** **30%**
Guidelines will be distributed in class.

5. **Oral Presentation:** **April 26 or May 3** **15%**
During the last three meetings, students will give formal presentations of their final research project to the class. Feel free to use various forms of audio or visual media such as PowerPoint, Keynote, film clips, sound recordings, photographs, etc. Keep in mind, however, that this is an oral presentation and you may not use the entire 15 minutes for this material, rather it should supplement your thoughts, ideas, and thesis. This assignment is worth 15% of the final course grade and will occur on one of the following dates: 4/26 or 5/3.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS ARE NOT ACCEPTED.

Final Grade Distribution:

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69

- D 63-66
- D- 60-62
- F Below 60 points

Required Readings:

Tera Hunter, *To Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labor After the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

Catherine M. Lewis and J. Richard Lewis, eds., *Women and Slavery in America: A Documentary History* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2011).

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* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010).

Charlene Regester, *African American Actresses: The Struggle for Visibility, 1900-1960* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1985).

Additional readings will be distributed electronically on Blackboard.

Policies and Procedures:

University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Plagiarism

The University's *Institutional Rules* (Section 11-802(d)) define plagiarism as including, "but not limited to, the appropriation of, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any other means material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source . . . and presenting that material as one's own academic work offered for credit." In other words, "**handing in someone else's work and taking credit for it as if it were your own.**" Source: History Department statement on Academic Integrity: <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/history/about/academic-integrity.php>

For examples of plagiarism see the site above or the Student Judicial Services Website.

Documented Disability Statement

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone) or <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd>

Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students

E-mail is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, you are responsible for reading your e-mail for university and course-related information and announcements. You are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to your e-mail address. You should check your e-mail regularly and frequently—the university recommends daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-critical. You can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating your e-mail address at: <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>

Email in recent years has often mistakenly become a substitute for office hours and students sometimes abuse email by the nature of their comments, requests, demands, and questions. This practice will not be tolerated. The professor is an advocate of contact with students through office hours and prefers to meet in person. Therefore, this course will utilize email to post discussion questions for upcoming class meetings, notification of schedule changes, announcements for lectures on campus, or any other miscellaneous issues that relate to the course. Please be courteous over email and try to save questions for class discussions so that all students can benefit from the response.

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD).

Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>

COURSE SCHEDULE:

The professors reserve the right to deviate or modify parts of this schedule. All changes will include advanced written notice.

Readings that are marked with an asterisk (*) are posted on Blackboard under the Assignments tab.

Week 1	No Class	MLK Holiday
Week 2	1/23/12	Black Women's History: Theories and Implications Reading: * Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham , "African American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race." * Association of Black Women Historians , "Statement on <i>The Help</i> "
Week 3	1/30/12	Enslaved Women and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: Myths and Realities Reading: * Jennifer L. Morgan , "'Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder': Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1770" Lewis and Lewis, eds. <i>Women and Slavery in America</i> , pp.2-4; 11-13; 15-27; and 62-64. Deborah Gray White , <i>Ar'n't I a Woman?</i> Chapter 1.
Week 4	2/6/12	Black Womanhood in the Antebellum Era: Slave Networks, Free Blacks & Gender Relations Reading: Deborah Gray White , <i>Ar'n't I a Woman?</i> Chapters 2-5 Lewis and Lewis, eds. <i>Women and Slavery in America</i> , pp. 56-58; 67-68; 106-109; and 115-117.
Week 5	2/13/12	Resistance and Black Women's Quest for Personhood Reading: Lewis and Lewis, eds. <i>Women and Slavery in America</i> , pp. 80-87; 120-122; 136-140; 149-152; and 197-199. * Betty Wood , "Some Aspects to Female Resistance to Chattel Slavery in Low Country Georgia"
Week 6	2/20/12	Black Women, Emancipation, and the Meaning of Freedom Reading:

Lewis and Lewis, eds. *Women and Slavery in America*, pp. 219-233; 249-257; 262-266; and 275-281.
Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom*, Prologue, Chapters 1-2.

Week 7 **2/27/12** **Confronting the Color Line: Black Women's Activism in the Era of Segregation**
Reading:
Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom*, Chapters 3-6.

Week 8 **3/5/12** **Race, Gender, and Representation: Black Women in Hollywood**
Reading:
Charlene Regester, *African American Actresses*, Introduction and Chapters 1-3.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

Week 9 **3/12/12** **NO CLASS ~ SPRING BREAK**

Week 10 **3/19/12** **Race, Gender, and Representation: Black Women in Hollywood**
Reading:
Charlene Regester, *African American Actresses*, Chapters 4-9 and Conclusion.

Week 11 **3/26/12** **Black Women and the Long Quest for Freedom: Rethinking the Civil Rights Movement**
Reading:
Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street*, Prologue and Chapters 1-4.

Week 12 **4/2/12** **Black Women and the Long Quest for Freedom: Rethinking the Civil Rights Movement**
Reading:
Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street*, Chapters 5-8 and Epilogue.

Week 13 **4/9/12** **Black Womanhood in the 21st Century**
Reading:
*Rana A. Emerson, " 'Where My Girls At?': Negotiating Black Womanhood in Music Videos."
*Rebecca Wanzo, "The Era of Lost White Girls."
*Melissa Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen* (Excerpt)

Week 14 4/16/12 Student Presentations

Week 15 4/30/12 Student Presentations

Final Papers Due: Wednesday May 9, 2012