

## ***Black queer Literature and Film***

Professor Matt Richardson

SPRING 2015

E376M, AFR 374F, WGS 340

TTH GEA 2-3:30

Office Hours 9-10:30 3.200M (BLS Formerly GRG)

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In recent years the term “queer” has emerged as an identity and an analytical framework that focuses on non-normative ways of being. This seminar will combine elements of critical race theory to investigate the particular experiences and cultural production of Black gender and sexually variant communities. We will analyze written works and films/videos by and about lesbians, bisexual, transgender and gay Black people. Emphasis will be on understanding the historical and theoretical construction of sexual and gender identities and sexual/cultural practices in Black communities. Special attention will be paid to the construction of race, gender and sexual identities in North America, the Caribbean and the United Kingdom .

### **Required Texts**

Audre Lorde Sister/Outsider & Zami: A New Spelling of My Name

Jackie Kay Trumpet

Melvin Dixon Vanishing Rooms

Sharon Bridgforth Love, Conjure, Blues

Samuel Delaney, Times Square Red, Times Square Blue

Films from various artists including Marlon Riggs, Isaac Julien, Yvonne Welbon and Cheryl Dunye.

Films: Even though these are films are not paper reading material, all films are required texts for the class. Students may be required to watch some films outside of class time. At such times, films will be available at the Fine Arts Library.

**Course Reader: Readers are available at Jenn's Copy on Guadalupe and 21<sup>st</sup> St.**

**Course Requirements:**

Requirement Breakdown:

Attendance	10%
Midterm Paper 4-6pgs	20%
Presentation Paper 4-6pgs	20%
Presentation/Blog Posts/Abstract	20%
Final Paper (8-10)	30%

Office Hours: Students are encouraged to come to office hours at least once during the semester to discuss your progress in the class and any additional questions you may have. You are encouraged to take further advantage of office hours and I am also available by appointment.

Attendance and Participation: Students are expected to attend class every session. Participation in all aspects of the class is MANDATORY including short in-class writing assignments that will happen throughout the semester. All readings and assignments should be completed before class meetings and students are responsible for adding to class discussions of material. Please note that attendance and participation is worth 10% of your total grade. Late arrivals are disruptive to class and I will not repeat concepts and assignments given during class, nor will you be able to sign in if you miss the sign-in sheet. If you miss a class or are late, you are still responsible for any announcements, assignments, lecture material and/or deadlines that are made. Your grade will be affected if you have more than two unexcused absences during the semester.

Two Papers: You will be given a prompt relating to the readings and films from class and expected to write a close reading analysis of the text.

Online Blog: When assigned, all students will write a paragraph or two about your observations of the text. A few students will sign up or be assigned the responsibility of starting our class discussion by posting an extended close reading in response to the week's prompt in the comment section of the that week's page and generating discussion questions. Blog posts, like papers, involve doing a close reading of a particular scene and using the essays in the course packet. Close readings are detailed analyses of a particular scene in the film. Students are to post their responses on the website by 6pm the day before we are to discuss them in class and receive written feedback from me and

oral commentary from classmates. Use the feedback as the basis for revising your post into a 4-6 page paper to be handed in at the end of the month. Sign up for presentations can be found at <http://www.mysignup.com/blackqueer>. The password to change your week is "queer." Sign Posts are the basis of our class discussion. **The prompt for each blog is the following: What is a main theme of this film, novel or poem? What is the film, novel or poem's argument about this theme? Choose a scene/passage/line that exemplifies the theme that you have chosen and discuss how and why it is illustrative of the film, novel or poem's argument. How does it relate to the reading?**

**Final Paper:** The final is designed to assess students' accumulated knowledge. Students will hand in an 8pg final paper on a topic of his/her choosing based on the films discussed in class. **The final will be a take home exam.** Papers must be TYPED, double-spaced, with times new roman (or equivalent) 12 point font and 1inch margins.

Course Blog and Blackboard: Please check the course blog frequently! This is the first place that I will post updates to the syllabus and other important information about the class. I will be in contact with you about updates in assignments through Blackboard. It is the students' responsibility to make sure that Blackboard has your updated email address.

### **NO LATE PAPERS. NO COMPUTERS, NO TABLETS, NO CELL PHONES**

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 opinions and 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 that 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 explicit descriptions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender sexual practices and 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.

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.

**Unless otherwise specified all blog posts are due on Mondays at 6pm.**

**DR. RICHARDSON'S REMINDERS:**

Challenge this semester to be conscious of your use of language. Part of this challenge is to not use the word "freedom" in your papers unless quoting. Try being specific in relation to the legal position of the person or the circumstances of the time period:

In relation to slavery:

- Manumission
- Runaway slave
- Formal end of slavery (Emancipation)

Otherwise be creative and careful of the context: (justice, liberation, struggle, etc)

Use more up-to-date language, regardless of the what is in our readings:

- Lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans, queer instead of Homosexual
- “Black women” and “Black men” instead of “the Black man” or “the Black woman.”
- Never use “the N word” unless quoting (even then, try and avoid it).
- Use African American instead of “Negro” or “Colored.”