

Womanism and Black Feminist Thought Fall 2016

Professor Tabitha Jamie Mary Chester

“Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender”. – Alice Walker

“In the comfort of daily conversations, through serious conversation and humor, African-American women as sisters and friends affirm one another’s humanity, specialness, and right to exist.” Patricia Hill Collins

Course Goals and Objectives:

This course is grounded in Alice Walker’s conception of “Womanism” and Patricia Hill Collins’ *Black Feminist Theory*. The goal of the course is to critically and actively examine key issues, assumptions and debates in contemporary post-civil rights Black feminist movements. We will look at a variety of texts including films, novels and music to interrogate how Black feminist thinkers approach specific concepts including religion, sexuality, leadership, crime and punishment, and popular culture. The class will focus on how womanism understands intersectionality and matrixes of oppression. As a class we will examine the ways in which racism, sexism, heterosexism, homophobia, classism and ableism have impacted the lives and experiences of Black Women. We will read Black Feminist writers such as: bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Angela Davis and more.

The goal of this course is to give students an opportunity to critically examine some of the key concepts, theories, issues, people, moments and events related to Black female experience(s) in the United States of America. The course will: 1) help develop the analytical skills necessary to think critically about feminism, race, and gender; 2) pay particular attention to how black feminist theory shapes and is shaped by other hierarchies of power including sexuality and 3) draw on a range of texts and films to situate black feminist theory not only as an intellectual project but as a personal and an activist one.

Required Texts:

Collins, Patricia Hill *Black Feminist Thought*

Lorde, Audre *Zami: A New Spelling of my Name*

Mckenzie, Mia *The Summer We Got Free*

Guy-Sheftall *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*

Morgan, Joan *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*

Selected Readings

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reading assignments: Part of the purpose of this class is to make you a stronger reader, so that you can navigate and analyze a difficult essay or fictional work, and also identify strategies used by writers that you may want to employ. Take time with the readings, read carefully, take reading notes, and be prepared to discuss the reading in class. If there are aspects of the reading that interest you, or ideas you had while you were reading that are relevant to the course, please raise those ideas in class discussion. There may be changes to the calendar; students will be informed ahead of time.

Class Etiquette: Cell phones, iPods and MP3 devices are prohibited. Please leave them turned off (or silent).

Classroom Community: By nature of the course, we will be discussing materials that challenge conventions, question authority and cross boundaries. Be advised. I expect that we all will contribute to an atmosphere of respect. Aggressive, insensitive or judgmental behavior will not be tolerated. Should you, for any reason, feel disrespected please feel free to consult with me directly, or contact me anonymously.

Attendance and Participation: Attendance and participation are required. This course is premised on the active participation of all class members. Students must come to class with the correct course materials and prepared to fully participate. Students are expected to arrive on time. If you have missed a class, it is your responsibility to contact a classmate to get the notes and assignments. The first two absences will incur no penalties. After the first two absences, every absence will bring about a deduction from your class participation grade. Students are allotted one self-care day. Every three late arrivals will count as one absence.

Communication: You must use your Denison email for this class. I will use Google Classroom and emails to share information regarding assignments and requirements. Please make the necessary forwarding arrangements to ensure you check/use your Denison email account. When emailing me please use BFT as the subject and include your full name. I will respond to emails within 48 hours. If there are problems with your Denison account, in that you are not receiving emails, or cannot post properly to the Google Classroom site, you must resolve these issues. If you do not, your Attendance/Performance grade will be lowered.

Technology Issues: Please contact ITS Help Desk at 740-587-6935 for technical/technology questions.

Changes: The course schedule and/or readings are subject to change at the instructor's discretion to enhance learning. Changes will be announced in class and/or via email. Students are responsible for checking their Denison University email regularly and adapting to any changes in

due dates, exams, readings, and schedules.

Current Events: It is important to pay attention to current events and political developments, especially those that pertain to Black life in the U.S. I will use Twitter to share articles and information relevant to our class. https://twitter.com/Docta_Chester

EVALUATION

Cultural Theoretical Critique/Blogs (15%): Students are expected to maintain a weekly blog as a venue to discuss current events in the lives of Black women. Keep a journal/Blog of observations of the representations of women of African descent in films, television, stage/drama, print media, in politics, in the international arena, and in the academy. These should be short - 1-2 pages - with a feminist theoretical analysis and a minimum of ten entries. Be creative.

Podcast (20%): Students will be given guidelines at a later date.

Entertainment/ Performance Analysis (15%): Students will pick a song by woman artists. Students will perform a Black feminist reading of the song. The analysis should situate the song socially, historically and politically. What overt and covert message is the song signaling about Black womanhood? Students should analyze the public reception of the song. I will model this assignment in class. This assignment should be 4-6 pages.

Zines (5%): A zine is an abbreviation of fanzine, or magazine is most commonly a small circulation self-published work of original or appropriated texts and images usually reproduced via photocopier. Zines have a history of being used by feminist to highlight important issues. Students will be required to work with a group to create a zine for publication. We will decide on a title for our Zine during the first week of the semester and sign up for groups. Students must make copies available for the Denison population and an electronic version of the Zine. More information will be provided at a later date.

Self-Care (5%): “Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.” ~Audre Lorde. Students must keep a journal/list that demonstrates the cultivation of a self-care practice. Students are allowed 2 absences with no penalty and one self-care absence. If you are opt for a self-care absence, you must submit a short reflection on the benefit of the self-care absence. After 3 absences students be deducted from their final grade (i.e. if a student earns an A but has more than 3 absences they will receive an A-)

Activism Project: (10%): Students are responsible for creating an activism project. Further instructions will be given at a later time.

Biomythography: (10%) We will discuss guidelines for this in class. You will be required to write your biomythography (Audre Lorde) similar to writing the personal and the political but with focus on your identity and how that influences and determines your personal, social, and

political thinking and decision making. You may also assume a different identity placing yourself in that particular social, cultural, and political world.

Final (20%): Students will create solo performances.

Late Work Policy: Assignments are due on that date specify. **No late work will be accepted.**

GRADING SCALE

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
94 - 100%	90 - 93%	87 - 89%	84 - 86%	80 - 83%	77 - 79%	74 - 76%	70 - 73%	60 - 69%	<60%

Writing Guidelines:

All written assignments MUST be type and double-spaced All assignments will be graded on both content and writing style. PROOFREAD. Grammatical errors, spelling errors, typos, incorrect punctuation, and the like will be deducted from your total grade for a written assignment. Do not rely on spell-check. Written assignments should follow MLA style. See http://www.denison.edu/library/research/citation_guides.html

Writing Center: The Writing Center (Barney Fourth Floor, 587-5681) is available to assist you with your writing. Please contact them regarding your writing assignments if necessary.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: Proposed and developed by Denison students, passed unanimously by DCGA and Denison's faculty, the Code of Academic Integrity requires that instructors notify the Associate Provost of cases of academic dishonesty. Cases are typically heard by the Academic Integrity Board which determines whether a violation has occurred, and, if so, its severity and the sanctions. In some circumstances the case may be handled through an Administrative Resolution Procedure. Further, the code makes students responsible for promoting a culture of integrity on campus and acting in instances in which integrity is violated.

Academic honesty, the cornerstone of teaching and learning, lays the foundation for lifelong integrity. Academic dishonesty is intellectual theft. It includes, but is not limited to, providing or receiving assistance in a manner not authorized by the instructor in the creation of work to be submitted for evaluation. This standard applies to all work ranging from daily homework assignments to major exams. Students must clearly cite any sources consulted—not only for quoted phrases but also for ideas and information that are not common knowledge. Neither ignorance nor carelessness is an acceptable defense in cases of plagiarism. It is the student's responsibility to follow the appropriate format for citations. Students should ask their instructors for assistance in determining what sorts of materials and assistance are appropriate for assignments and for guidance in citing such materials clearly. For further information about the Code of Academic Integrity, see <http://denison.edu/academics/curriculum/integrity>.

Academic Accommodations: Any student requiring special consideration because of any type of disability must inform me as soon as possible within the first week of the course to discuss her or his specific needs. I rely on the Academic Support & Enrichment Center to verify the need for reasonable accommodations based on documentation on file in that office.

Statement on Appropriate Use of Course Materials: The materials distributed in this class, including the syllabus, exams, handouts, study aids, and in-class presentations, may be protected by copyright and are provided solely for the educational use of students enrolled in this course. You are not permitted to redistribute them for purposes unapproved by the instructor; in particular you are not permitted to post course materials or your notes from lectures and discussion on commercial websites. Unauthorized uses of course materials may be considered academic misconduct.

Statement on Reporting Sexual Assault: Essays, journals, and other materials submitted for this class are generally considered confidential pursuant to the University's student record policies. However, students should be aware that University employees are required to report allegations of sexual assault and suspected child abuse/neglect to the appropriate campus authorities when they become aware of such matters in the course of their employment. More information on sexual assault can be found on MyDenison/Campus Resources/Center for Women and Gender Action/Title IX (<https://webapps-prod.cc.denison.edu/drupalcr/node/1062>).

Course Schedule

September 5: Intro to Course

September 7: Meet in Higley Auditorium

Read:

- *Brittany Cooper Readings*

September 12:

Read: Chapter 1-The Politics of Black Feminist Thought

September 14:

Read: *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost* 1-81pg

Due: Podcast Evaluation

September 19:

Read: *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost* 82-140pg

Due Zine #1

September 21:

Read:

- *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost* 141-232pg

September 26:

Read:

- Sojourner Truth (WOF)
- Anna Julia Cooper (WOF)
- Mary Church Terrell (WOF)
- Ida Wells-Barnett (WOF)

September 28:

Read:

- Chapter 2- Distinguishing Features of Black Feminist Thought
- Chapter 3- Work, Family, and Black Women's Oppression

October 3:

Meet in Mulberry

Due: Cultural Theoretical Critique/Blogs Check #1

Due Zine #1

Due: Podcast Story script

October 5:

Read:

#FreeBresha Documents

October 10:

Read:

- Chapter 4- Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images
- Chapter 5- The Power of Self-Definition

Due: Podcast Recording

October 12:

Zami 1-14

October 17:

Read: *Zami* 15-22

Due Zine #2

October 19:

Read: *Zami* 23-Epilouge

October 24:

Read:

Chapter 6- The Sexual Politics of Black Womanhood

Chapter 7-Black Women's Love Relationship

Due: Biomythography

October 26:

Read: Religion

- Julia A. J. Foote (WOF)
- Jacquelyn Grant (WOF)
- Women's Spirituality: A Household Act- Luisah Teish (online)
- "Preachers of Detroit" is More Damaging than "Sorority Sisters" –Candice Benbow (online)
- #BlackChurchSex: Taking the Harness Off the Mouths of the Oppressed by Ahmad Greene-Hayes (online)
- Single, Saved, and Sexin': The Gospel of Gettin' Your Freak On (online)

Due: Musical Analysis

November 2: *The Summer We Got Free*

Due: Zine # 3

Due: Cultural Theoretical Critique/Blogs Check #2

November 7: *The Summer We Got Free*

November 9:

- Chapter 8- Black Women and Motherhood

Due: Final/Individual/ Podcast

November 14:

Read:

- Chapter 9- Rethinking Black Women Activism

November 16:

Read:

- #Say Her Name Report

- BLM A Herstory:

November 21: No Class

November 23: No Class

November 28:

Activism Project

Due: Cultural Theoretical Critique/Blogs Check #3

November 30:

Read: Chapter 5- The Body Politic: Sexuality, Violence, and Reproduction (WOF)

Due Zine # 4

December 5:

Read: Chapter 10- U.S. Black Feminism in Transnational Context

Due: Literary Analysis

December 7:

Read:

- Chapter 6- Reading The Academy (WOF)
- Chapter 7- Discourses of Resistances: Interrogating Black Nationalist Ideologies (WOF)

December 12:

Read:

- Chapter 11- Black Feminist Epistemology
- Chapter 12- Towards a Politics of Empowerment

Due: Cultural Theoretical Critique/Blogs Check #4

December 14: Final Project/Paper Due

Issues in Feminism- (WMST-101/ QST-290) Spring 2017

Professor Tabitha Jamie Mary Chester

M/W 9:00-10:20 A.M. Knapp 106

Office Hours: Monday/ Wednesday 11am-Noon or by appointment

Office: Knapp 210B

Phone: 740-587-6594

Class Code: uauao12 (classroom.google.com)

Email: ChesterT@denison.edu

Course Description:

This is an interdisciplinary course that serves as an introduction to feminist and women's studies. The course draws upon feminist ideas and scholarship in developing historical, theoretical and cross-cultural frameworks for the comparative study of women and gender. The course will explore our gendered existence: how we perform femininity and masculinity and how this interacts with other aspects of our identities, such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and sexuality. Within this course students are challenged to question traditional knowledge about women and men and to examine difference among women. By sharpening student's critical awareness of how gender operates in the world, this course gives students opportunities to imagine and participate in social change. Topics will include: health and reproductive rights, systems of inequality, constructions of sexuality and gender, family systems, women in the labor force, violence against women and activism.

This course meets the "P" (Power and Justice), the "I" (Interdisciplinary Studies) as well as the "R" (Oral Communication) GE requirements.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester students should be able:

1. To understand the social construction of gender and the intersection of gender with other systems of inequalities in women's lives.
2. To articulate a sophisticated understanding of the status of women in society and ways to improve that status through individual and collective action for social change.
3. To critique how institutions in society affect individual lives and to be able to think critically about the role of patterns of privilege and discrimination in our own lives.
4. To experience a marked improvement in their writing and speaking skills, gain new insights, and empower self and others.

Required Texts:

Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina*

Janet Mock, *Redefining Realness*

Susan Shaw and Janet Lee, *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, 6th ed. McGraw Hill. 2014

Course Requirements

Reading assignments: Part of the purpose of this class is to make you a stronger reader, so that you can navigate and analyze a difficult essay or fictional work, and also identify strategies used by writers that you may want to employ. Take time with the readings, read carefully, take reading notes, and be prepared to discuss the reading in class. If there are aspects of the reading that interest you, or ideas you had while you were reading that are relevant to the course, please raise those ideas in class discussion. There may be changes to the calendar; students will be informed ahead of time.

Class Etiquette: Cell phones, iPods and MP3 devices are prohibited. Please leave them turned off (or silent) AND out of sight for the entire class.

Classroom Community: By nature of the course, we will be discussing materials that challenge conventions, question authority and cross boundaries. Be advised. I expect that we all will contribute to an atmosphere of respect. Aggressive, insensitive or judgmental behavior will not be tolerated. Should you, for any reason, feel disrespected please feel free to consult with me directly, or contact me anonymously.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance and participation are required. This course is premised on the active participation of all class members. Students must come to class with the correct course materials and prepared to fully participate. Students are expected to arrive on time. Students will be given an attendance quiz based on the readings at the start of the class. The quiz cannot be made up, if you arrive after the quiz has been given you will not be permitted to take the quiz. If you have missed a class, it is your responsibility to contact a classmate to get the notes and assignments. The first three absences will incur no penalties. **After the first three absences, every absence will bring about a deduction of 1 point from your final grade.** Every three late arrivals will count as one absence.

Communication: You must use your Denison email for this class. I will send emails via the class Google Classroom regarding assignments and requirements. Please make the necessary forwarding arrangements to ensure you check/use your Denison email account. When emailing me please use WMST 101-02 as the subject and include your full name. I will respond to emails within 72 hours. If there are problems with your Denison account, in that you are not receiving emails, or cannot post properly to the Google Classroom site, you must resolve these issues. If you do not, your Attendance/Performance grade will be lowered. **Before and/or after class is not the appropriate venue to approach the professor with questions concerning your grade,**

please make an appointment.

Technology Issues: Please contact ITS Help Desk at 740-587-6935 for technical/technology questions.

Changes: The course schedule and/or readings are subject to change at the instructor's discretion to enhance learning. Changes will be announced in class and/or via email. Students are responsible for checking their Denison University email regularly and adapting to any changes in due dates, exams, readings, and schedules.

Current Events: It important to pay attention to current events and political developments, especially those that pertain to women and gender while enrolled in the class. There are a variety of online resources that focus on current issues as they relate to women and feminist issues.

Online Resources:

www.salon.com

<http://www.blackgirldangerous.org/>

<http://feministing.com/>

<http://www.crunkfeministcollective.com/>

<http://thefeministwire.com/>

<http://www.msnbc.com/melissa-harris-perry>

Evaluation

Quote of Note (15%): The class text book is *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions*. We will read one to two chapters a week. Students should prepare a 1-2 page response to a quote of their choosing for each assigned chapter. Students should interrogate the concepts in the reading in their responses. How does the quote challenge your understanding of the subject? Responses will be due at 8:59am on Google Classroom. The three responses that receive the lowest grades will be dropped.

Class Participation (15%) You are expected to be engaged and participate in class. This includes (but is not limited to) participating in discussions, in-class activities, coming to class prepared and arriving on time. **Always bring the assigned readings.** Failure to perform the expectations will cause your grade to suffer. I will evaluate your performance and participation at the middle and end of the semester.

Podcast (10%): Further Guidelines will be given at a later date.

Transforming Denison Group Project (15%) In groups of 3-4 you will be responsible for creating a project that addresses gender issues at Denison. The project must be intersectional and aim at making Denison a better place for all. Your group is required to meet with me at least two

times to discuss your project. Further instructions will be given at a later date.

Midterm (15%): Your midterm will be a “gender bender” exercise in which you will write a 5-7 page essay that integrates personal experience with a critical analysis of gender assumptions and cultural norms. You will be asked to perform an activity that goes against “traditional” gender norms and write about the experience. Your “gender bender” exercise must receive approval from the professor by February 15th. Midterms are due online March 8th.

Film Series (5%): There are several film series held at Denison throughout the year. Students must attend at least 2 films from approved list. Students should compare and contrast the Feminist Themes embedded in each film. Students should critique the films from an intersectional lens. Responses should be 4-6 pages. Papers are due April 12th

Laura C. Harris Symposium (5%): Students are required to attend one of the Laura C. Harris Symposiums Monday, January 23rd, 7:00 pm in Swasey Chapel; Thursday, February 16th, 7:00pm in Burton Morgan Lecture Hall; Thursday, March 2nd, 4:30pm in Burton Morgan Lecture Hall. Students must write a 3-5 page response due no later than April 5th.

Final (20%): The final will be done orally. Students will be given a question at random comparing and contrasting girlhood in *Bastard out of Carolina* and *Redefining Realness*. Students will be graded using peer review. Student should use the language and vocabulary learned during the semester. Students should provide complex and complete analysis with their answers. I will provide a handout with more specific instructions before Spring break.

Extra Credit: Extra credit opportunities will be made available several times during the semester. In order to be eligible to complete the extra credit assignments you must have completed all regular assignments.

Late Work Policy: Assignments are due on that date specify. No late work will be accepted.

GRADING SCALE

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
94 - 100%	90 - 93%	87 - 89%	84 - 86%	80 - 83%	77 - 79%	74 - 76%	70 - 73%	60 - 69%	<60%

Writing Guidelines: All written assignments MUST be type and double-spaced All assignments will be graded on both content and writing style. PROOFREAD. Grammatical errors, spelling errors, typos, incorrect punctuation, and the like will be deducted from your total grade for a written assignment. Do not rely on spell-check. Written assignments should follow MLA style. See http://www.denison.edu/library/research/citation_guides.html All written assignments are due on Google Classroom before the class session.

Quote of Note	#1 ___ #2 ___ #3 ___ #4 ___ #5 ___ #6 ___ #7 ___ #8 ___ #9 ___ #10 ___ #11 ___ #12 ___ #13 ___	Total possible points 30, divided this number by two to get correct percentage points. ___% 2= ___/15
Class Participation	Check #1 ___ Check #2 ___	___/15
Podcast		___/10
Transforming Denison Group Project		___/15
Midterm		___/15
Film Series		___/5
Laura C. Harris Symposium		___/5
Final		___/20
Extra Credit		
		___/100

Course Schedule

Monday, January 16: Course Introduction

Wednesday, January 18: The “F” Word-

Read: Chapter 1: Women’s Studies: Perspectives and Practices (1-48)

Monday, January 23: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Observed NO CLASS

Wednesday, January 25: Systems of Privilege and Inequality

Read: Chapter 2: Systems of Privilege and Inequality (49-115)

Monday, January 30:

Read: Chapter 3: Learning Gender (116-180)

Wednesday, February 1:

Monday, February 6:

Read: Redefining Realness Chapter 1-10

Wednesday, February 8

Read: Redefining Realness Chapter 11-17, Epilogue

Due: Group Campus Organization Report Due

Monday, February 13:

Read: Chapter 4: Inscribing Gender on the Body (181- 249)

Wednesday, February 15: TBA

Due: Midterm Topic

Monday, February 20:

Read: Chapter 5: Media & Culture (250-312)

Wednesday, February 22:

Watch: No: The Rape Documentary

Monday, February 27:

Read: Chapter 6: Sex, Power, and Intimacy (313--361)

Wednesday, March 1:

Monday, March 6:

Read: Chapter 7: Health and Reproductive Justice (362-432)

Wednesday, March 8:

Due: Midterm- Gender Bender

Monday, March 20

Read: *Bastard Out of Carolina* Chapters 1-11

Wednesday, March 22:

Read: *Bastard Out of Carolina* Chapters 12-22

Monday, March 27:

Read: Chapter 8: Family Systems. Family Lives (433-469):

Wednesday, March 29:

Due: Final Group Proposal (2-3 pages)

Monday, April 3

Read: Chapter 9: Work Inside and Outside the Home (470-536)

Wednesday, April 5:

Due: Laura C. Harris Response

Monday, April 10:

Read: Chapter 10: Resisting Gender Violence (537-581)

Wednesday, April 12:

Due: Film Series Paper

Monday, April 17:

Read: Chapter 11: State, Law, and Social Policy (582-634)

Wednesday, April 19

Monday, April 24:

Read: Chapter 12: Religion and Spirituality (635-691)

Wednesday, April 26:

Read: Chapter 13: Activism, Change and Feminist Futures (692-727)

Monday, May 1:

Group Projects Presentations

Tuesday, May 4: Oral Final (9am-11am)

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Students with Disabilities: Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately as soon as possible to discuss his or her specific needs. I rely on the Academic Support & Enrichment Center in 104 Doane to verify the need for reasonable accommodations based on documentation on file in that office