

AAST4990 and WMST4500/5000: Topics in Black Women's History

Fall 2014

September 3rd to December 12th

Wednesday's – 4:10-6:50pm in College of Business Rm. 209

Professor: Kerry Pimblott

Office: Ross Hall 110

(307) 766-3856 / kpimblot@uwyo.edu

Office hours: Monday's from 3-5pm and Wednesdays from 3-4pm.

Course Description:

This is an interdisciplinary readings course focused on Black women's involvement in the US Black Liberation Movement from 1890 to the present. Using Sundiata Cha-Jua's conceptualization of the Black freedom struggle as a series of interconnected but distinct "waves," as opposed to one continuous movement, we will examine the critical role of Black women in building, sustaining, and leading movements across spatial and temporal boundaries.¹

After establishing some key concepts and definitions, we will begin our exploration of Black women's role in six overlapping waves of the Black Liberation movement: (1) Accommodation, 1890-1915; (2) the New Negro Movement, 1904-1935; (3) Gradual Reformism, 1936-1954; (4) Mass Direct Action and Civil Disobedience, 1955-1968; (5) Black Power, 1966-1978; and (6) Electoralism, 1965-Present. For each of these periods, we will use a combination of primary and secondary sources to examine Black women's involvement in a variety of organizations as well as their advocacy of a wide-range of movement ideologies, strategies, practices, and discourses. The goal here is to underscore the heterogeneity of Black women's political imaginings and doings, but also to identify common threads that might serve to distinguish a coherent Black women's organizing tradition.

We will critically discuss the following questions: Is there a broad but distinct Black women's organizing tradition and what are its defining features or hallmarks? How does our study of Black women's activism reinforce or disrupt standard narratives about the twentieth century Black freedom Movement as well as the Women's Rights movement? What specific events or grievances prompted African American women to become involved in social protest? How have Black women activists conceptualized the intersections of racism, sexism, economic inequalities, and in some cases homophobia? How have gender, race, class, nationality, sexuality, religion, and age structured black and multiracial social movements and positioned black women and men differently within them? What personal costs have Black women suffered for their political affiliations and activism? How and why has black women's organizing changed over time?

Course Requirements:

Completion of AAST1000 is a prerequisite for this course, though in some cases an exception can be granted by the instructor. If you are interested in becoming a minor in African American & Diaspora Studies Minor, please speak with me or visit the program website for more information:

<http://www.uwyo.edu/aads/>.

Learning Goals & Objectives:

1. To trace the historical evolution of Black women's activism from 1890 to the present.

¹ Sundiata Cha-Jua, "Rising Tides and Ebbing Waters: The Black Liberation Movement as a Succession of Distinct Waves, 1890-2000," Paper presented at the 94th Annual Convention of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), Cincinnati, Ohio, 2009.

2. To examine the heterogeneous ideologies, strategies, practices, and discourses employed by Black women activists.
3. To explore how identities of gender, race, class, nationality, sexuality, religion, and age have structured and shaped Black women's activism.
4. To identify, if possible, the hallmarks of a broad but distinct Black women's organizing tradition.
5. To assess the ways in which the recovery of a history of Black women's challenges or revises dominant narratives of the Black Freedom Movement and the Women's right's movement.
6. To develop the basic skills of reading, assessing, synthesizing, and critiquing historical scholarship.

Required Texts:

*In order to save you money, all materials that would normally be in a reader are available for free on our WyoCourses website (<http://www.uwyo.edu/wyocourses/>). These materials are electronic and can be read/downloaded by you at any time.

The following books are *required* reading for the course and can be obtained from the University Bookstore in the Wyoming Union:

- ✓ Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011)
- ✓ Danielle L. 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: A. Knopf, 2010)
- ✓ Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011)
- ✓ Beth E. Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 2012)

A number of journal articles in this syllabus are available through an **online library subscription and cannot be placed on our WyoCourses website for copyright reasons. These journal articles can be accessed through the article database at <http://www-lib.uwyo.edu/find/articles.cfm>

Course Films:

Ida B. Wells: A Passion for Justice (Dir., William Greaves, 1989)

Eyes on the Prize (Dir., Judith Vecchione, 1986).

Method of Instruction:

People learn in different ways. To optimize your learning experience I adopt a mixed methods approach to instruction. As an upper-division seminar, the primary teaching strategy adopted is the facilitated discussion but you should also expect a variety of other approaches including interactive mini-lectures, audio-visual materials, and group work.

Everyone should come to class prepared to engage in *rigorous* and *respectful* dialogue. Being prepared means bringing your readings to class either in an e-copy or hardcopy format. I allow laptops and pads to be used in the classroom though surfing the internet or checking social media is prohibited unless I state otherwise. The classroom provides an opportunity for us to ask difficult and important

questions, share our collective findings, and engage in critical and informed analysis of alternative perspectives. My goal is for each of you to find your own voice and develop the verbal dexterity and aural skills vital to democratic participation and self-actualization. Student self-reflection and critical analysis of lectures, readings, and audio-visual materials is an especially important component of this course.

Method of Evaluation:

You will be graded on active and informed participation in classroom exchanges, weekly response papers, two critical book reviews, and a longer historiographical paper. Written assignments must be typed (12 point size) and double-spaced, with a maximum of 1-inch margins. **All papers must use the Chicago or Turabian style.** See William Kelleher Storey, *Writing History: A Guide for Students* or Kate Turabian, *Style Manual Sixth Edition*. Papers must be numbered and stapled. No late essays will be accepted unless explicitly stated otherwise. Do not email or fax papers to the instructor. All papers are due in-class in a hard copy.

Attendance: This course is *participation-intensive*. Substantial class participation is expected and regular attendance is mandatory. You may have (2) absences without an excuse, after which you must have a note from a medical doctor or University authorization as outlined on the Dean of Students webpage (<http://www.uwyo.edu/dos/absences/index.html>). For each subsequent unexcused absence, the overall final grade will be lowered by half a letter grade.

Participation (50pts/ 10% of grade). You are expected to contribute to class discussions, both in the regularity and quality of your comments, observations, and questions. In addition, each student will take individual responsibility for offering a general summary of the assigned readings for a selected week, as well as developing discussion questions for that particular session. Summaries should address main arguments, purposes, strengths and weaknesses, and contributions to clarifying (or complicating) the main themes of the course. You are free to use published book reviews to supplement your own reading of the assigned texts, though you should reference those reviews.

Weekly Response Papers (5 response papers @ 20pts each = 100pts / 20% of grade). You are expected to write brief (1-2 page) weekly response papers of our assigned readings. Each response paper is due in class on the day the book/article is scheduled for discussion with the exception of those class sessions in which you are leading discussion or turning in a book review or historiographical paper. Your response paper should not only condense the main points of the given reading, but also interpret its significance in light of the main course themes. You are encouraged, but not required, to draw connections to other course readings we have covered. No late response papers will be accepted.

Critical Reviews (2 reviews @ 100pts each = 200pts / 40% of grade). A goal of this course is for students to master the art of critical reading and review writing. Students are required to write two (2), three to five (3-5) page, double-spaced book reviews during the semester. Reviews should summarize succinctly the text's main research question and arguments, methodology, theoretical perspective, and use of evidence as well as discuss how it relates to the broader topic of African American women's activism. The paper also needs to offer fair and balanced criticisms of the text. The first review of Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom* is due on **OCT. 15** and the second review of Danielle McGuire's, *At the Dark End of the Street* is due on **NOV. 5**.

Historiographical Paper (150pts/ 30% of grade). A goal of this course is for students to develop deeper knowledge about an aspect of Black women's activism that most interests them. You will therefore write a historiographical essay assessing and synthesizing the extant literature on any relevant topic of your choice. Undergraduates will write a paper of 10-12 pages in length; graduate students a paper of 12-15 pages in length. A written topic statement and preliminary bibliography are due **OCT. 8**. A rough draft of your essay is due **NOV 19**. Your essay must have a clearly stated central argument or arguments, with the

rest of your essay developing and supporting this point. Undergraduate students are required to use a minimum of 6-8 texts and graduate students 8-10 texts, not including class-assigned readings. No more than half of the texts discussed in your essay should be article-length works. Attach a bibliography to the final version of your paper. **FINAL DRAFT DUE 10.**

Grading Rubric

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| Participation | 50 pts |
| Weekly Response Papers (x5) | 100 pts |
| Book Review #1 | 100 pts |
| Book Review #2 | 100 pts |
| Historiographical Paper | 150 pts |

Total Pts: 500 pts

This class utilizes the +/- system that was approved by the University in the Spring 2013 semester for implementation in the Fall 2014 semester. The grading scale is as follows: A = 475-500pts; A- = 450-474pts; B+ = 430-449pts; B = 415-429pts; B- = 400-414pts; C+ = 380-399pts; C = 365-379pts; C- = 350-364pts; D+ = 330-349pts; D = 315-329pts; D- = 313-314pts; and an F = 313pts or less.

WyoCourse Website

Course readings and detailed rubrics for each assignment are available on our course website through WyoCourses which you can access through WyoWeb (wyoweb.uwyo.edu). This website also contains a copy of the syllabus as well as a class grade book where you can keep track of your performance throughout the semester.

Communication:

If you would like to meet with me to discuss your progress in the class or a particular assignment, I strongly recommend that you send me an email using your campus email and schedule to meet with me during my office hours. Please be aware that I only check my email during work hours (8-5pm) and on week days (Monday – Friday). On week days, you can expect a response within 24-hours of your original email. I do not accept assignments turned in over email unless explicitly stated otherwise.

Academic Honesty:

Academic dishonesty is an action attempted or performed that misrepresents one's involvement in an academic endeavor in any way, or assists another student in misrepresenting his or her involvement in an academic endeavor; e.g., cheating, fabrication of information, plagiarism etc. A student who plagiarizes at minimum will receive an "F" in the course and may go before a University board for a hearing on the matter. At maximum the above can occur and you can be dismissed from the University. Please see UW Reg 802.

Examples of acts that constitute cheating include but are not limited to:

Plagiarism: presenting the work (i.e., ideas, data, creations) of another, wholly or in part, as one's own work without customary and proper acknowledgement of sources and extent of use, unless authorized by the instructor; **Cheating:** using information, study aids, notes, materials, devices, or collaboration not explicitly approved by the instructor. For example: doing a class assignment for someone else or allowing someone to copy one's assignment; copying from, or assisting, another student during an examination; or stealing, or otherwise improperly obtaining, copies of an examination before or after its administration; **Fraud:** altering or inventing data, research, or citations for an academic endeavor; fabricating, forging or otherwise misrepresenting to an instructor or an institution one's past or current academic or professional activities; impersonating someone or allowing oneself to be impersonated for an

examination or other academic endeavor; using a ghost writer, commercial or otherwise, for any type of assignment; **Violation of Standards:** violations against ethical and professional standards required by individual University programs, academic courses, and clinical programs that may result in qualification for entry into a profession that maintains standards of conduct; **Multiple Submissions:** submitting, wholly or in part, the same academic endeavor to earn credit in two or more courses without explicit approval by all concerned instructors; **Interference/Obstruction:** interfering with academic efforts of other students to gain unfair advantage for personal academic advancement. Interference may include but is not limited to, sabotage, harassment, tampering, bribery, or intimidation of another student; **Complicity:** assisting another person in any act of academic dishonesty as defined above.

** Academic honesty is expected of all students. Each student has an obligation to act with honesty and integrity, and to respect the rights of others in carrying out all academic assignments. All instances of academic misconduct will be penalized. If, at any time, you are not sure if your actions constitute academic misconduct please see me.

Disability Statement:

If you have a physical, learning, sensory or psychological disability and require accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible. You will need to register with, and provide documentation of your disability to University Disability Support Services (UDSS) in SEO, room 330 Knight Hall.

Syllabus Changes:

The instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus during the course of the semester should it become necessary.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Indicates additional **required readings for graduate students.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Week 1

Sept. 3 (W): **Theorizing Black Women's Activism, Black Feminism, and Womanism**

Readings: Michael C. Dawson, "A Vision of Their Own: Identity and Black Feminist Ideology," in *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001): 135-171. **(WyoCourses)**

Patricia Hill Collins, "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought," *Signs* 14:4 (1989): 745-773. **(Online Subscription)**

Roberta Garner, *Contemporary Movements and Ideologies* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996), 11-39. **(WyoCourses)**

Roberta Garner, *Contemporary Movements and Ideologies* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996), 41-67. **(WyoCourses)

Document: Alice Walker, "Womanist" in *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1983): xi-xii. **(WyoCourses)**

WAVE I: ACCOMODATION, 1890-1915

Week 2

Sept. 10 (W): “Uplifting the Race”: Black Women’s Activism during the Nadir, 1880-1920

In-Class Film: *Ida B. Wells: A Passion for Justice* (Dir., William Greaves, 1989) [52 mins]

Readings: Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994* (New York: WW. Norton, 1999), 21-55. **(WyoCourses)**

Elsa Barkley Brown, “Womanist Consciousness: Maggie Lena Walker and the Independent Order of Saint Luke,” *Signs* 14, 3 (Spring 1989): 610-633. **(Online Subscription)**

Deborah Gray White, “The Cost of Club Work, the Price of Black Feminism,” in Nancy A. Hewitt and Suzanne Lebsack, eds., *Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 247-269. **(WyoCourses)**

Stephanie J. Shaw, “Black Club Women and the Creation of the National Association of Colored Women,” *Journal of Women’s History* 3:2 (Fall, 1991): 11-25. **(Online Subscription)

Documents: Mary Church Terrell, “What Role Is the Educated Woman to Play in the Uplifting of Her Race?” (1902) in *Crossing the Danger Water: Three Hundred Years of African-American Writing*, ed., Deidre Mullane (New York: Random House, 1993): 404-408. **(WyoCourses)**

Ida B. Wells-Barnett, “from *A Red Record*,” in *Crossing the Danger Water: Three Hundred Years of African-American Writing*, ed., Deidre Mullane (New York: Random House, 1993): 495-401. **(WyoCourses)**

Response Paper 1 Due

| |
|---|
| WAVE II: THE NEW NEGRO MOVEMENT, 1904-1935 |
|---|

Week 3

Sept. 17 (W): “Ethiopia’s Queens Will Reign Again”: Black Women in the Garvey Movement

Readings: Ula Y. Taylor, “‘Negro Women Are Great Thinkers as Well as Doers’: Amy Jacques-Garvey and Community Feminism in the United States, 1924-1927,” *Journal of Women’s History* 12, no.2 (2000): 104-126 **(Online subscription)**

E. Frances White, “Africa on My Mind: Counter Discourse and African-American Nationalism,” *Journal of Women’s History*, 2:1 (Spring 1990): 73-97 **(Online subscription)**

Barbara Bair, “True Women, Real Men: Gender, Ideology, and Social Roles in the Garvey Movement,” in *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private Women’s History: Essays from the Seventh Berkshire Conference on the History of Women* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990): 154-166 **(WyoCourses)

Documents: Amy Jacques Garvey, “Women as Leaders,” in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, ed., Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: The New Press, 1995): 93-94. **(WyoCourses)**

Response Paper 2 Due

Week 4

Sept. 24 (W): **NO CLASS – Dr. Pimblott @ ASALH in Memphis, TN**

Please read the following chapters in preparation for our discussion next week.

Readings: Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 1-90.

Documents: Ella Baker and Marvel Cooke, “The Bronx Slave Market,” *Crisis* 42 (Nov., 1935): 330-331, 340. Available online at: http://1.scds.org/resources/US-History/1935_Ella%20Baker%20and%20Marvel%20Cooke,%20The%20Slave%20Market.pdf

Week 5

Oct. 1 (W): **“Toward a Brighter Dawn”: Forging a Black Popular Front during the Great Depression and WWII**

Readings: Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 91-159.

Response Paper 3 Due

| |
|---|
| WAVE III: GRADUAL REFORMISM, 1936-1954 |
|---|

Week 6

Oct. 8 (W): **Sexual Violence, the Culture of Dissemblance, and Preludes to Civil Rights**

Readings: Danielle L. 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: A. Knopf, 2010): 3-83.

Darlene Clark Hine, “Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance,” *Signs* 14:4 (Summer, 1989) 912-920. (**Online Subscription**)

Topic Statement and Preliminary Bibliography Due Today

Week 7

Oct. 15 (W): **Red Scares, Halted Movements, and the Costs of Black Women’s Activism**

Readings: Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 160-220.

Mary L. Dudziak, “Josephine Baker, Racial Protest, and the Cold War,” *Journal of American History* 81, no.2 (Sept., 1994): 543-570. (Online Subscription**)

Documents: Claudia Jones, “An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman!” in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, ed., Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: The New Press, 1995): 108-124. (**WyoCourses**)

Book Review #1 Due Today

WAVE IV: MASS DIRECT ACTION & CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, 1955-1968

Week 8

Oct. 22 (W): Alternative Beginnings: From Montgomery to Massive Resistance

In-Class Film: *Eyes on the Prize*

Readings: Danielle L. 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: A. Knopf, 2010): 84-159.

Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long? African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 3-35. **(WyoCourses)**

Response Paper 4 Due

Week 9

Oct. 29 (W): The Other Civil Rights Campaign: The Battle Against Racial and Sexual Abuse

In-Class Film: *Eyes on the Prize*

Readings: Danielle L. 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: A. Knopf, 2010): 160-284.

Documents: SNCC 1964 Position Paper on Women **(WyoCourses)**

No Response Paper Due

WAVE V: BLACK POWER, 1966-1978

Week 10

Nov. 5 (W): Black Power and Black Feminism

Readings: Kimberly Springer, “Black Feminists Respond to Black Power Masculinism,” in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, ed., Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006): 105-118. **(WyoCourses)**

Stephen Ward, “The Third World Women’s Alliance: Black Feminist Radicalism and Black Power Politics,” in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, ed., Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006): 119-144. **(WyoCourses)**

Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), preface and pages 1-22.

Documents: Frances Beale, “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female,” in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, ed., Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: The New Press, 1995): 146-155. **(WyoCourses)**

The Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, ed., Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: The New Press, 1995): 229-230. (WyoCourses)

Book Review #2 Due Today

Week 11

Nov. 12 (W): Survival Politics: The BPP and the Battle Against Medical Apartheid

Readings: Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 23-74.

Tracye Matthews, "'No One Ever Asks What a Man's Role in the Revolution Is:' Gender Politics and Leadership in the Black Panther Party, 1966-1971," in *Sisters in the Struggle: Black Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*, ed. V.P. Franklin and Bettye Collier-Thomas (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 230-256 (WyoCourses)

Response Paper 5 Due

Week 12

Nov. 19 (W): Survival Politics: The BPP and the Battle Against Medical Apartheid

Readings: Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 75-196.

Rough Draft of Historiographical Essay Due Today

| |
|---|
| WAVE V: ELECTORALISM, 1965-Present |
|---|

Week 13

Nov. 26 (W): No Class – Holiday Break

Readings: Beth E. Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 1-64.

Week 14

Dec. 3 (W): Contemporary Black Women's Protest: Prison Abolition

Readings: Beth E. Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 65-124.

No Response Paper Due

Week 15

Dec. 10 (W): Contemporary Black Women's Protest: Prison Abolition

Readings: Beth E. Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 125-167

Barbara Ransby, "Fear of a Black Feminist Planet," *In These Times*, July 12, 1998, pp. 20-22. Available online: <http://www.unz.org/Pub/InTheseTimes-1998jul12-00020>

Final Draft of Historiographical Paper Due Today