

## **BLACK DIASPORAS, FEMINISMS, AND SEXUAL POLITICS**

*Revised Syllabus: Updated 1/28/09 (This syllabus is subject to more changes)*

Course Number: WSS 545 (8393)

Shared Resource: WSS 498 (9149)

Cross-Listed Course: LACS 545 (9507)

Term: Spring 2009

Instructor: Janell Hobson

Class Time: Wednesdays, 5:45-8:35 pm

Location: Fine Arts 114

Office: Social Science 341

Hours: Mon & Wed 10:30-12 noon; Tue & Thur 2:30-4:00 pm; by appointment.

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### **Course Description**

This course will explore in global perspective concepts of blackness and its relationship to feminist and other women-led and gender-based political movements that have shaped complex discourses on the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and nationality. Challenging such terms as the “African Diaspora” – a reference to the dispersed locations of African-descended people across the globe – or even the “Black Atlantic” – as coined by Paul Gilroy – we will expand the geopolitical spheres of Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean to traverse different oceanic spaces that include “Black Australia” and Afro-Asia. Through these transnational lenses, we will question how blackness, and black femininity in particular, shift meanings in varied locations but also converge in formations of global identities, marginalized experiences, and political movements.

### **Course Goals**

This course will parallel departmental goals and objectives in that students will:

1. apply skillful integration of methods from different disciplines.
2. apply analyses that intersect gender, race, class, sexuality, and nation.
3. engage the classroom community with other types of communities.
4. fully participate in the teaching process as active learners, peer educators, and public scholars.

**Required Texts** (available at the University Bookstore):

Cooper, Afua. 2007. *The Hanging of Angelique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montreal*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Hartman, Saidiya. 2007. *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux.

Joseph, May. 1999. *Nomadic Identities: The Performance of Citizenship*. Minneapolis: University of Michigan Press.

Kempadoo, Kamala and Jo Doezema, eds. 1998. *Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition*. New Yorker: Routledge.

Lara, Ana-Maurine. 2006. *Erzulie's Skirt*. Washington, D.C.: Redbone Press.

McClintock, Anne. 1995. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge.

Additional Readings and Audio are available on Blackboard:

Zap Mama. 1997. *Adventures in Afropea*.

M.I.A. 2007. *Kala*.

**Recommended Text** (also available at the University Bookstore):

Gilroy, Paul. 1992. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

### Activities & Assignments

1. Attendance and Participation: fully expected of every student in order for this seminar to run successfully. You are allowed 1 unexcused absence; however, if you accumulate three unexcused absences, then the highest grade that you can earn for the course will be a B-. The same holds true if you fail to participate in class discussions. (30% of grade)

2. Research/Presentation/Blog: You will be expected to give a presentation at least once in this course. You will need to give a 5-10-minute presentation based on research conducted on either an author, text, or the subject of the text. Be prepared to present more than once this semester. During the week that you are giving a presentation, you are expected to post "Talking Points" on our Classroom Blog as a "preview" for in-class discussions (please post before midnight, the day before our class meeting). During the weeks when you are not presenting, you are expected to post comments to these Talking Points on our blog. When blogging your "Talking Points," please sign your name at the end of the blog post. (30% of grade)

3. Middle Passages Diaspora Map Project: A major project for this course is the use of Google Maps/Earth to map black women's lives. You may select a text, a historical or contemporary figure, or an issue and locate the subject in both a local and global context. You will be expected to develop an analytical essay or creative work pertaining to this subject. This project is a collaborative class project, in which each student's contribution will combine to tell a cohesive and transnational story pertaining to the Middle Passage and parallels in our own present age. Graduate students in the 500-level sections will be expected to develop a longer research paper of this work at the end of the semester (min. 15 pp, max. 25 pp, typed and double-spaced). (40% of grade)

- Proposal/Annotated Bibliography (of at least 5 sources) - Due **March 11**.
- Draft – Due **April 15**.
- Final Map Project - Due **April 29**.
- Graduate Research Paper - Due **May 13** (no later than 5 pm in my mailbox: SS 341).

### Expectations

As previously mentioned, you are allowed 1 unexcused absence. Excused absences and make-up assignments are only granted in cases of emergency and grave illnesses. If you accumulate three unexcused absences, then the highest grade that you can earn for the course will be a B-. If you miss 5

or more classes, you will receive an automatic “E” for the course. Late assignments will result in a letter-grade reduction for each day late. After two days late, you will receive a “O” for that assignment.

Plagiarism is a university offense and will result in failing grades.

### **TO AVOID PLAGIARISM:**

Understand what it means: plagiarism results when someone uses the ideas or writings of another and presents these ideas or writings as his or her own. Examples include:

- Buying a paper from a research service or term paper mill.
- Turning in a paper from a “free term paper” website.
- Turning in a paper someone else has written for you.
- Copying materials from a source without proper citation.
- Using proper citation but leaving out quotation marks.
- Paraphrasing materials from a source without appropriate citation.

When citing sources, it is best to present ideas using your own original words. If you fully understand a source, you will be able to completely describe its themes and ideas in your own words and from your own perspective. However, if you copy a passage that someone else wrote and only change a few words around, it becomes plagiarism.

When quoting directly from sources, it is best to use direct quotes only if the phrasing is apt and powerfully stated; be sure to include proper citation. If the quote is not revelatory or eloquent but simply provides some useful information, then it is best to explain the information completely in your own words while providing proper citation.

### **Course Schedule**

\*Readings are available on Blackboard.

### **INTRODUCTION: THEORIZING THE BLACK DIASPORA**

#### January 21

Course overview and Introduction.

SCREEN: “Nice Coloured Girls” (Tracey Moffatt, 1988) & “Eyes of the Rainbow” (Gloria Rolando, 1997).

#### \*\*January 28

Classes Cancelled Due to Weather.

### **UNIT ONE – MAPPING HISTORIES, LOCATING DIASPORAS**

#### \*\*February 4 (revised class meeting)

\*Brent Hayes Edwards, “The Uses of Diaspora.”

\*Toni Morrison, “Black Matters.”

\*Anthea Kraut, “Between Primitivism and Diaspora: The Dance Performances of Josephine Baker, Zora

Neale Hurston, and Katherine Dunham.”

\*Patricia de Santana Pinho, “Decentering the United States in the Studies of Blackness in Brazil.”

ADVENTURES IN AFROPREA (Audio).

VIDEO (on Blackboard): “The Language You Cry In.”

*Presentation/Blog: Research – Paul Gilroy’s The Black Atlantic (introduction and additional chapter).*

### February 11

LOSE YOUR MOTHER.

*Presentation/Blog: Research Cheryl Finley, “The Door of (No) Return.”*

### February 18

Winter Break

### February 25

THE HANGING OF ANGELIQUE.

*Presentation/Blog: Research author Afua Cooper.*

### March 4

IMPERIAL LEATHER.

*Presentation/Blog: Research Sara Baartman, the “Hottentot Venus.”*

## **UNIT TWO – BODIES IN TRANSITION**

### March 11

Web Workshop: Part One (Dreamweaver) & Part Two (Google Earth). Location: TBA.

*Due: Interactive Map Proposal .*

### March 18

\*Amina Mama, “Sheroes and Villains: Conceptualizing Colonial and Contemporary Violence against African Women.”

\*M. Jacqui Alexander, “Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: Feminism, Tourism, and the State in the Bahamas.”

\* \_\_\_\_\_, “Transnationalism, Sexuality, and the State: Modernity’s Traditions at the Height of Empire.”

SCREEN: “Rape for Who I Am” (Lovinsa Kavuma, 2005) & “The Darker Side of Black” (Isaac Julien, 1994).

*Presentation/Blog: Research select essays in Boy Wives and Female Husbands.*

### March 25

ERZULIE’S SKIRT.

SCREEN: “Sign of the Loa” (Patricia Mohammed, 2006).

*Presentation/Blog: Research Joan Dayan’s “Erzulie: A Women’s History of Haiti.”*

April 1

GLOBAL SEX WORKERS.

Presentation/Blog: Research Marian Douglas's "International Trafficking of Black Women, "La Africana" and "La Mulata" Out in the World."

April 8

Spring Break

### **UNIT THREE – (RE)LOCATING DIASPORAS**

April 15

NOMADIC IDENTITIES.

KALA (Audio).

*Presentation/Blog: Research May Joseph and M.I.A.*

*Due: Draft of Map Project.*

April 22

Web Workshop: Interactive Map Project. Location: TBA.

### **CONCLUSION**

April 29

Course Review: Celebration of Diaspora Map Project.