BLACK DIASPORAS, FEMINISMS, AND SEXUAL POLITICS
WSS 545 (9276) / AAS 545 (9842) / LCS 545 (9844) / WSS 498 (8738)
www.albany.edu/faculty/jhobson/diasporas

Spring 2012
Wednesdays
4:15-7:05 pm
Arts and Science 15

Instructor: Dr. Janell Hobson
Office: Social Science 355
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1:00-2:30 pm, & by appointment
Email: jhobson@albany.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This interdisciplinary course will explore feminist thought, action, and sexual politics as they manifest in the Black Diaspora – including the Caribbean, North America, the African continent, and other locations that have come about through migrations and cross-cultural exchanges. We will examine both historical and contemporary narratives and consider how racial, sexual, and gender identities are shaped by national and transnational dynamics. Expect to produce both critical and creative collaborative projects during the semester.

COURSE LEARNING GOALS
During the course of the semester, students will learn to:

1. Intersect categories of race, gender, class, nationality, and sexuality.
2. Analyze black feminisms in global and transnational perspectives.
3. Take charge of their own learning through student-based teaching and projects.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Assigned Readings (available for purchase at Mary Jane Books):


Additional readings are available on Blackboard 9.1.

**Assignments:**

*Class Participation:* You are expected to regularly attend class, to bring reading materials to class the day that we discuss them, and to regularly contribute to discussions and in-class exercises.

*Reader Response:* In preparation for our weekly sessions, you are expected to provide a Reader-Response to required readings on Blackboard during the weeks when you are not serving as a Discussion Facilitator (see below). These responses should be 250-300 words in length, or they may take the form of a creative response (original poetry, artwork, or YouTube video response – original video uploaded onto YouTube).

*Discussion Facilitator:* You are expected to serve at least once as a discussion facilitator. Each session will begin with a student presenter (or presenters), who will review Blackboard Reader Responses and create talking points and discussion questions to raise in class, as well as conduct further research on the author(s) and text(s) that are discussed for that week (e.g. author’s biography, critical and audience reception of the text, events taking place during the time in which the text debuted, review of a main author/text cited in the work, etc.).

*Map Project:* You are expected to collaborate with fellow classmates on a map project, “Middle Passages: Gendered Diasporas.” Specifically, this project will feature a “tour guide” based in black diasporic culture and feminism. Either through a historical, cultural, ecological, or activist framework, you and group members will use Google Maps to map out specific journeys and landmarks outlining a thematic tour that will highlight the connections between Black Diasporas and Feminisms. In addition to the map, you will work on the following narratives:

- **Multimedia** – Create an original video (5 to 15 minutes in length), an original audio podcast, or a hypertext game highlighting a specific theme relating to the “tour.” Students are encouraged to take free tutorials on video, audio, or web production offered at the Interactive Media Center in the basement of the Main Library to prepare for this project. Visit [http://library.albany.edu/imc](http://library.albany.edu/imc).

- **Web Essay** – Compose a 750-1,000-word essay on a specific route, landmark, or region relating to the map featured in your tour guide. The idea behind this article is to provide in-depth information, based on original research of key events, sites, and people from that site.

You are expected to create a preliminary “map” relating to your topic via Google Maps (by preliminary, I am referring to adding “placemarks,” “routes,” and colored “regions” to illustrate your location points for
the project) and to submit a 500-word description of the multimedia project your group expects to develop. The preliminary map and proposal are due on March 7, the date that we will participate in a web design and multimedia workshop to prepare for this collaborative project. The completed multimedia “map” is due April 25, with a celebration on the last day, May 2.

Mock Grant Proposal (545-level students): Graduate students will be expected to work on a grant proposal (min. 5 pages, max. 10 pages, typed and double-spaced) for research, study abroad, community work, or campus leadership, which would expand on the themes explored in the Map Project. The idea of the mock grant proposal is to create a generic proposal which could later be adapted for an actual grant proposal in future. This project is due May 16, 4 pm in my mailbox (Social Science room 353).

HOW GRADES ARE DETERMINED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REQUIREMENTS</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
<th>DUE DATES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Each session</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reader-Response/Discussion Facilitator</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Each session</td>
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| Map Project                               | 40% (498-level students)  
20% (545-level students) | March 7 (preliminary map and proposal)  
April 25 (map project) |
| Mock Grant Proposal (545-level students)  | 20%        | May 16, 4 pm                                   |

EXPECTATIONS
You are expected to attend these weekly seminars on a regular basis. Once you miss two sessions, you will not earn higher than a “B” for this course. Exceptions will be made for illnesses and family emergencies. Keep in mind that graduate students need a “B-” to pass a course. Once you miss four sessions or more, you will receive an automatic “E” for this course.

You are also expected to submit assignments on time. Late assignments will receive a letter grade reduction for each day late, with an “E” grade administered after two days late.

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 her or his own.

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.
TO AVOID COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT:
You will need to familiarize yourself with copyright policies on “fair use” of others’ creative works. Copyright “fair use” laws allow you to reproduce copyrighted work only if your use of such work is “transformative” of the original or if it contains a small portion of it. It is often difficult to determine the nature of such transformations and portions, so when in doubt, it is safest to seek permission from the copyright owner for free use (if your work is for educational rather than commercial purposes) or to pay a licensing fee. For more information, please visit Stanford University's website on copyright fair use laws: http://fairuse.stanford.edu/.

COURSE SCHEDULE

UNIT ONE: TOWARD A THEORY OF DIASPORA AND FEMINISM

Jan. 18  Course overview and introduction.
SCREEN: The Eyes of the Rainbow (Rolando, 1997).

SCREEN: The Sign of the Loa (Mohammed, 2006).

Presentations: Mammy Water and Erzulie.

UNIT TWO: MAPPING BLACKNESS

Feb. 1  The Black Atlantic.
SCREEN: And Still I Rise (Onwurah, 1993).

Presentations: Paul Gilroy, Ngozi Owuwrah, and Sankofa Film and Video Collective.

Feb. 8  Darkening Mirrors.

Presentation: Anthea Kraut’s “Between Primitivism and Diaspora” (Blackboard).

Feb. 15  Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out.
SCREEN: Bell Boys in the Dream Factory (Wangenheim, 2000).

Presentation: Audre Lorde’s Berlin Years.

UNIT THREE: MAPPING HISTORIES


Presentation: Julie Dash.
Feb. 29  
*Free Enterprise.*

Presentations: Michelle Cliff and Mary Ellen Pleasant.

Mar. 7
WORKSHOP: Introduction to Dreamweaver and Multimedia Storytelling.
Due: Map Project Proposals.

Spring Break

**UNIT FOUR: MAPPING BODIES**

Mar. 21  
*A Map to the Door of No Return.*

Presentation: Dionne Brand.

Mar. 28  
*Mama Africa: Reinventing Blackness in Brazil.*

Presentation: “Carnival” in *Black Orpheus*, Michael Jackson’s “They Don’t Care about Us;” and the making of Beyonce and Alicia Keys’ “Put it in a Love Song.”

Apr. 4  
*The Politics of Passion.*

Presentations: Gloria Wekker and Natasha Tinsley’s “Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic” (Blackboard).

Apr. 11  
(start at 5:15 pm) WORKOUT: Zumba, Black Diasporas, and Feminisms.

Apr. 18  
*Black Venus 2010.*

Presentation: Sara Baartman, the “Hottentot Venus.”

**UNIT FIVE: MAPPING FUTURES**

Apr. 25  
Due: Map Project.

Presentations: Wanuri Kahiu and Wangari Maathai.

May 2  
Gendered Diasporas Map Project: A Celebration.

May 16  
Mock Grant Proposals Due (545-level students).