

WSS 545 (9358): BLACK DIASPORAS, FEMINISMS, AND SEXUAL POLITICS

<http://www.albany.edu/faculty/jhobson/diasporas/>

This syllabus is subject to change; such changes will be made online.

COURSE INFORMATION

Spring 2008
Mondays | 4:15-7:05 pm
EDU 120

Instructor: Dr. Janell Hobson
Office: Social Science 344
Office Hours: Mondays, 3:00-4:00 pm;
Tuesdays/Thursdays, 4:15-5:15 pm &
by appointment.
Contact: jhobson@albany.edu |
(phone) 442-5575



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. Topics covered may include history-telling and memory-making, cultural representations of the "black" body in arts and popular culture, sex trafficking and migrations, articulations of "black feminisms" and sexual identities, and social crises and social change.

COURSE GOALS

Women's Studies Department Goals and Learning Outcomes:

Students who graduate from our program will:

1. understand Women's Studies as an interdisciplinary field of study and research.
2. understand intersectional feminist theory at an advanced level.
3. apply feminist theory to research, scholarship, and/or creative work that engages gender, race, class, sexuality, and nation as intersectional vectors of feminist analysis.
4. learn concepts and theories of feminist pedagogy and observe feminist pedagogy in practice.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.albany.edu/ws>.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes:

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.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required Texts (available at Mary Jane Books):

- Alexander, M. Jacqui. 2005. *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Cooper, Afua. 2007. *The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montreal*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- Danticat, Edwidge. 1994. *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. NY: Vintage.
- Joseph, May. 1999. *Nomadic Identities: The Performance of Citizenship*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lara, Ana-Maurine. 2006. *Erzulie's Skirt*. Washington, D.C.: Redbone Press.
- Opitz, May et al, eds. 1992 [1986]. *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Sudbury, Julia, ed. 2004. *Global Lockdown: Race, Gender, and the Prison Industrial Complex*. NY: Routledge.

Course Packet (hereafter abbreviated as CP), with additional readings, is also available for purchase at Mary Jane Books.

Requirements

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.
2. Student-Led Online Discussions: On our *Blackboard* online classroom site, you will be expected to contribute to online student-led discussions, an important learning activity in this course. For each reading assigned, you are required to post a discussion question and then facilitate the ensuing discussion. Before you post a question, read the questions already posted, and do not repeat a question asked by another student. Your discussion question should relate directly to an issue raised in the text studied, and it should elicit a thoughtful response. Don't ask a question which can be answered by simply looking the answer up. Your question should require critical thinking and should be provocative in its ability to evoke commentary. In addition to facilitating the discussion on your own topic, for each reading assignment you are also required to be an active participant in at least two of the topics facilitated by other students. It is important to post your discussions as soon as you have completed the reading assignment and to return frequently to facilitate and participate in those discussions. You are expected to reply to all students who have responded to your discussion question and to all those who respond to any of your postings. I will grade these discussions, but I will not be a participant. If the discussion you are leading gets off track, it is your responsibility to refocus it. You are responsible for maintaining the quality of the discussion threads you lead. Every posting to a discussion should add something substantive to that discussion. Be sure to read the detailed instructions provided online for facilitating and posting to student-led discussions. I will close discussion threads 2 weeks after initial posting.
3. Research and Presentation: There are eight presentations scheduled for the semester; 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, the subject of the text, or on a cited work in the text. Be prepared to present more than once this semester. You are not required to post to the online discussions during the week(s) when you are presenting. Instead, you will submit an annotated bibliography, based on your research, and distribute copies of it to your classmates.

4. **Translation Project:** This major project will require you to engage in the issues of this course – diasporic consciousness and global thinking of feminism and/or sexual politics – and to apply these issues to a “translation” project, which can be broadly defined to include A.) literary translations, B.) body language translations, or C.) cultural translations. You will be expected to create either a bilingual/multi-lingual project or a cross-cultural or transnational project. You may approach this project through one of the following options:

- *Literary Translation* – select a work of non-English prose (essay, article, manifesto, short fiction, etc.) that has not yet been translated and provide a written English translation.
- *Web Translation* – create a web-based project (blog or website) that either reflects a bilingual or multilingual fluidity or that creates a global or diasporic presence.
- *Subtitling Project* – create subtitles for a short monolingual digitized film or video.
- *Creative Project* – develop a creative work that explores the politics of translation (language, embodied, or cultural) in forging diasporic or global consciousness.
- *Research Project* – conduct research that explores the politics of translation (language, embodied, or cultural) in forging diasporic or global consciousness; present findings in a research essay (20-25 pages, typed and double-spaced).
- *Grant Proposal* – develop a proposal (min. 5 pages, max. 10 pages, typed and double-spaced) requesting a grant that would fund a non-profit program that offers bilingual, multilingual, or multiracial/cross-cultural activities and/or services.

You may collaborate with a person(s) fluent in a foreign language while working on this project. You will first need to submit a proposal for this project, due in class on **February 25**. A rough draft/early version of the project is due in class on **March 31**. Be prepared to present your project in class on **May 5** and to submit the final draft by **May 12**.

HOW YOUR GRADES ARE DETERMINED

ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS	% OF FINAL GRADE	DUE DATES
Class Participation	20%	ongoing
Student-Led Online Discussions	25%	ongoing
Research and Presentation	15%	ongoing
Translation Project	40%	Proposal (Feb. 25) First Draft (Mar. 31) Presentation (May 5) Final Draft (May 19)

EXPECTATIONS

Excused absences and make-up assignments are only granted in cases of emergency and grave illnesses. As previously mentioned, you are allowed 1 unexcused

absence. 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 "0" 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:

1. Buying a paper from a research service or term paper mill.
2. Turning in a paper from a "free term paper" website.
3. Turning in a paper someone else has written for you.
4. Copying materials from a source without proper citation.
5. Using proper citation but leaving out quotation marks.
6. Paraphrasing materials from a source without appropriate citation.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Jan. 28 Course overview and introduction.
Screening: "And Still I Rise" (Onwurah, 1993).

Unit One: The (Black) Body Politic

Feb. 4 CP: Edwards, "The Uses of Diaspora"; Kraut, "Between Primitivism and Diaspora"; Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance"; Armstead, "'Growing the Size of Black Women': Feminist Activism in Havana Hip Hop"; Caldwell, "Racialized Boundaries"; Huggins and hooks, "Are All the Women White?"
Screening: "Nice Coloured Girls" (Moffatt, 1987).

Presentation 1: Research a cited source from Edwards' essay.

Feb. 11 Online: Raissiguier, "Troubling Mothers."
CP: Oyewumi, "Family Bonds/Conceptual Binds"; Amadiume, "Bodies, Choices, and Globalizing Neocolonial Enchantments"; hooks, "Naked without Shame"; Nourbese-Philip, "Dis Place: The Space Between"; Sutton, "Naked Protest."
Screening: "Reassemblage" (Trinh, 1982) and "To Walk Naked" (Maingard et al, 1995).

Presentation 2: Research the 2002 stand-off between Nigerian women and Chevron-Texaco and Miss World 2001-2002.

Feb. 18 Winter Break.

Unit Two: Coming Together, Oceans Apart

Feb. 25 *The Hanging of Angelique.*
Due: Proposal for Translation Project.

- Mar. 3 *Global Lockdown.*
Presentation 3: Do further research on a selected subject discussed in this volume.
- Mar. 10 *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out.*
Presentation 4: Research Afro-German feminism.
- Mar. 17 *Nomadic Identities.*
Presentation 5: Research a cited source in Joseph's book.

Spring Break, March 21-28, 2008.

Unit Three: Thinking Globally – Articulating Diaspora

- Mar. 31 Screening: "Daughters of the Dust."
Due: Rough Draft/Early Version of Translation Project.
- Apr. 7 *Breath, Eyes, Memory.*
 CP: Dayan, "Erzulie: A Women's History of Haiti."
Presentation 6: Do further research on Edwidge Danticat
- Apr. 14 *Erzulie's Skirt.*
 Screening: "The Sign of the Loa" (Mohammed, 2006).
Presentation 7: Do further research on Erzulie's role in the Haitian revolution.
- Apr. 21 holiday (no class).
- Apr. 28 *Pedagogies of Crossing.*
Presentation 8: Do further research on a selected subject discussed in this essay collection.

Conclusion

- May 5 Presentations of Translation Projects.
- May 12 **Final Drafts Due!**