

**SOCY 46 / WGST 33 / AAAS 25**  
**CONSTRUCTING BLACK WOMANHOOD**  
**WINTER 2013 ~ 2 Hour**  
**x-hour: Thurs. 1:00 pm**

*How long shall the fair daughters of Africa be compelled to bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pots and kettles? Until union, knowledge and love begin to flow among us. How long shall a mean set of men flatter us with their smiles, and enrich themselves with our hard earnings; . . . ? Until we begin to promote and patronize each other . . . Do you ask what can we do? Unite and build . . . We have spent more than enough for nonsense, to do what building we should want. . . Possess the spirit . . . bold and enterprising, fearless and undaunted. Sue for your rights and privileges. Know the reason that you cannot attain them. Weary them with your importunities. You can but die, if you make the attempt; and we shall certainly die if you do not.*

Maria Stewart 1831

This course seeks to provide a foundational understanding of the everyday experiences of African American women in the United States, and places Black women's standpoint or perspective at the center of that examination. Central to the concerns of sociology (or what C. Wright Mills calls "the sociological imagination") is relating personal experiences to the broader societal dynamics. Thus, the course will examine the multiple and intersecting social structures (including racial, gender and class hierarchies) that constrain Black women's social location and shape their life chances. Simultaneously, we shall consider the structural and cultural dynamics inform Black women's constructions of their social identities, roles and activism within both African-American communities and the dominant society.

The course surveys the constructions of Black womanhood from the antebellum era of the nineteenth century through the twenty-first century; seeking to understand contemporary issues within a socio-historic context of oppression and resistance. We begin with an exploration of the particular oppressions of female enslavement in relationship to Black women's strategies of survival and making community under slavery and in freedom. A consideration the roots of various stereotypes such as the mammy and jezebel as justifications for slavery will lead to an exploration of their current deployment in media, social discourse, and public policy. We will also attend to the significance of Black families and communities in instilling certain gender expectations for African American girls and women, from the early twentieth century's politics of respectability to the contemporary notion of strong, Black women. The status of African American women in different institutional settings such as the economy, politics and religion will be also examined. This term, we will focus on politics of resistance that occur in unexpected places such as beauty parlors, churches, leisure settings, and the body. The arts and politics are crucial locations of Black women's subordination as well as for their assertions of self-determination. These sites will provide invaluable examples for careful observations and critical analyses.

**Required Books Available for Purchase at Wheelock Books & Dartmouth Bookstore**

Brown, Tamara Mose. 2011. *Raising Brooklyn: Nannies, Childcare and Caribbeans Creating Community*. New York: New York University Press

Camp, Stephanie M. H. 2004. *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press

Gill, Tiffany M. 2010. *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press

Harris-Perry, Melissa. 2011. *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes and Black Women in America*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press

Miller, Jody. 2008. *Getting Played: African American Girls, Urban Inequality, and Gendered Violence*. New York: New York University Press

**Additional Required Readings and Resources**

Other required course readings, links and materials will be on Blackboard or in the Baker Reserve (in-library) as indicated on the syllabus.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### 10% Participation

Students are expected to attend all class sessions as well as any special sessions, to have completed the assigned reading and viewing in a timely fashion, and be prepared to participate actively and meaningfully in discussions. Please arrive on time and remain until the end of the class period. You are encouraged to bring to class written observations, questions and criticisms of the assigned work plus relevant illustrations (i. e. news items, statistics, songs, etc.). Personal opinions, when offered, should be grounded in solid evidence; while personal experiences, when discussed, should be reflective and self-critical.

### 20% Short Exercise

Each student will complete an exercise in the use of the sociological imagination. The exercise will involve analyzing some contemporary aspect of the life circumstances, public discourse, or social policies affecting Black women, and/or their responses to those issues. Completion of one exercise option is required. Detailed descriptions of each option and its due date will be posted on Blackboard. Possible options *may* include:

#### *Black Women's Cultural Resistance*

Analysis of a form cultural expression that Black women have produced (e. g. children's books, visual artists, filmmakers, songwriters, fashion designers, chefs with cookbooks, etc.

#### *Representing Black Women in Public Policy*

Analysis a contemporary U. S. federal policy or program in terms of the explicit as well as implicit assumptions/stereotypes about black women that justify, are incorporated into the specifications or affect its implementation. Possible policy arena include immigration and naturalization, drug sentencing, HIV and other STDs, mortgage lending, small business loans, welfare, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, etc.

#### *Black Women's Autobiography: Writing About How A Black Woman Ought to Be*

Select and read an autobiography or biography of an African American woman who was born in 1950 or later. Critically analyze its account of her family and community expectations of her behavior, values and goals. What strategies were used to socialize her and police her behavior?

### 30% Midterm Exam

The in-class, midterm examination will consist of an essay question and may include identifications or short answers. It will cover readings, lectures, discussions, videos, guest presentation, and required special events.

### 40% Take-Home Final Essay Exam and/or Final Project

The completion of a final paper, approximately 7-9 pages in length, will be required. It will emphasize post-midterm, course materials

## COURSE POLICIES

**Honor Principle** Academic work is simultaneously a collaborative and an independent enterprise. Consulting others and using their ideas, findings, and interpretations are integral parts of intellectual inquiry. The laborious, critical and creative work of developing one's own understandings is equally important. In this course, you will have opportunities to engage in both endeavors. Therefore it is essential that you maintain the integrity of each. Class members are encouraged to discuss readings, lectures and other course materials with one another. However in-class and take-home examinations, exercise reports, research papers and/or other assignments must be your own independent work, unless otherwise indicated. By putting your name on an assignment that you turn in, you are indicating to me that the work is your own original work.

## COURSE POLICIES, cont.

**Acknowledgements & Citations** Learning how to acknowledge appropriately the idea, words and work of others is a critical skill for academic as well as other professional fields. Pay close attention to your citations of the intellectual and creative ideas, writings, images and products of others (including other class members, readings, films, government reports, art work, lectures, websites, etc.). Always use a comprehensive reference book on acknowledging sources and/or the links provided on Blackboard. Two useful style guides are *The Chicago Manual of Style* and Diana Hacker's *Research and Documentation Online*. You should also feel free to consult me before submitting work that you think might be improperly cited.

**Classroom Etiquette:** We will cover some complex and controversial subjects. Understandably, disagreement and debate are welcome and integral parts of the learning process. Please extend respect to all members of the class in terms of your verbal and nonverbal communications, listen attentively to their questions and comments as you would the lectures, and offer your informed observations and criticisms in a constructive manner.

**Note for Students who Speak English as a Second Language** Students who speak English as a second language are encouraged to meet with the professor during the first week of the term to discuss any academic accommodations that may be of assistance to you.

**Note for Students with Disabilities and Special Concerns** Students with learning or other disabilities as well as chronic health conditions that may disrupt your studies are encouraged to meet with the professor during the first two weeks of the term to discuss any academic accommodations that may be of assistance to you. *All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Disabilities Coordinator, Dick's House staff or other college officials may be consulted.*

**Students' Religious Observance** Some class members may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term, but which may conflict with your participation in this course. Before the end of the second week of the term, please send me an email detailing the occasion, date and the specific course responsibility that may be affected. I will use this information to determine any appropriate accommodations.

**Missed Classes** As responsible adults, class members should notify the instructor of any anticipated absences. In the event that you miss a class for any reason, you are responsible for getting the lecture notes for that class from another student. As a general policy, I will not make my lecture notes available. I trust that members of the class will be cooperative in sharing their notes, realizing that you may be in a similar position one day. Repeated absences, without documented evidence of illness or family emergency, will adversely affect your participation grade.

**Late Submissions & Make-up Exam** The submission of assignments, exams and paper is expected on the indicated "due date" during that day's class meeting (unless otherwise stated). Requests for extensions beyond the submission date should be made prior to the due date. Please note that grades on non-approved late submissions may be penalized.

**Make-up Exam** Students with legitimate reasons may be entitled to make-up the midterm examination. However, such arrangements are only available for students who inform me at least 48 hours *prior* to the original exam date.

**Electronic Devices** Cell and smart phones, iPods, MP3s, Blackberrys, Bluetooths, etc. must be turned-off and put away during class sessions. Laptop computers and notepads should only be used for note taking. Web browsing, handling email or working on non-course related matters are discouraged, and may be penalized.

**Email Policy** Course assignments, examinations and research papers *may not be submitted* by email, snail mail or fax. Please note that I typically read and answer my email occasionally each day during the work week (i. e. Mon. – Fri.), but not necessarily according to any schedule. As a rule, I am not accessible via email during the weekends.

## Schedule of Course Readings, Assignments & Related Events

### Part I BUT STILL, LIKE DUST I'LL RISE: Black Women in Slavery and Freedom

Wed., Jan. 4 **Course Overview**

Fri., Jan. 6 **Slavery: Modes of Oppression and the African American Women Experiences**

Camp, Stephanie M. H. 2004. *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South*. Intro, Chaps. 1 & 2

Read this letter from an enslaved woman, "Vilet Lester Letter, 1857." Source: On-line Archival Collection of the Joseph Allred Papers from the Special Collections Library at Duke University (on Blackboard)

"Born in Slavery: WPA American Slave Narratives" in the Library of Congress. Skim the Introduction by Norman Yetman plus read at least two women's narratives, including at least one entry from the "Voices and Faces from the Collection." (on Blackboard)

Mon., Jan. 9 **A Geography of Control: The Exploitation of the Black Female Body**

Guy-Sheftall, Beverly. 2002. "The Body Politic: Black Female Sexuality and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Euro-American Imagination," in *Skin Deep, Spirit Strong: The Black Female Body in American Culture*, edited by Kimberly Gisele Wallace-Sanders. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, pp: 13- 35 (on Blackboard)

Kapsalis, Terri 2002. "Mastering the Female Pelvis: Race and the Tools of Reproduction," in *Skin Deep, Spirit Strong: The Black Female Body in American Culture*, edited by Kimberly Gisele Wallace-Sanders. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, pp: 263- 299 (on Blackboard)

**Website:** Kara Walker, view her biography & parts of her installations work under "Artist Pages" menu. To view other Walker works, see "Websites & Links" folder on Blackboard.

**View:** The Hood Museum's virtual tour of *Black Womanhood: Images, Icons, and Ideologies of the African Body*. March - August 2008. (on Blackboard)

#### Optional Viewing

**Video:** *The Life and Times of Sara Baartman: "The Hottentot Venus"*. Dir. Zola Maseko (1998) 52 min. (on reserve, Jones Media Center - Call No. 3917)

**Wed., Jan. 11**     ***Resistance and Meanings of Freedom During Slave Era***

Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, Chaps. 3 -5, Postscript

Johnson, Whittington, "Free African-American Women in Savannah, 1800-1860: Affluence and Autonomy Amid Adversity," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* v76 n2 Summer 1992: 260-83 (on Blackboard)

of

Glymph, Thavolia. 2008. "'A Makeshift Kind of Life': Free Women and Free Homes," in *Outside the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household*. New York: Cambridge University Press, Chap. 6 (on Blackboard)

MLK Celebration Film  
**SIMPLY RAW: REVERSING DIABETES IN 30 DAYS**  
Thursday, January 12  
6:00 pm  
Vail Chilicott Auditorium, Dartmouth Medical School

**Fri., Jan. 13**     ***Defining Black Middle-Class Womanhood: The Politics of Respectability***

Shaw, Stephanie. 1996. *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers During the Jim Crow Era*, Intro, Chaps. 1-3, Epilogue of Part I, pp: 1-105 (on Blackboard)

Brooks Higginbotham, Evelyn. 1993. Chapter 7 "The Politics of Respectability," in *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (on Blackboard)

**BOB MOSES**  
SNCC Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee &  
Founder & President, Algebra Project  
Community Faith Celebration for the MLK Community Celebration  
**Sunday, January 15**  
2:00 pm ~ Rollins Chapel

**Part II**     **TOWARD A NOMINAL FREEDOM: The Strategies & Contradictions of Resistance**

**Mon., Jan. 16**     **MLK Observance – No class meeting**

**Wed., Jan. 18**     ***More than Looking Good: Hair, Independence and Politics in Unexpected Places***

Gill, Tiffany M. 2010. *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry*. Acknowledgements, Introduction, and Chaps. 1 & 2, pgs. ix-60

**Fri., Jan. 20**     ***Violence, Civil Rights, and Politics in Unexpected Places***

Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics*, Chaps. 3 – 5

Danielle L. McGuire. 2004. "It Was like All of Us Had Been Raped": Sexual Violence, Community Mobilization, and the African American Freedom Struggle," *Journal of American History* 91 Dec.: 906-931 (on Blackboard)

Royster, Jacqueline Jones 1997. "The Wells Campaign as a National and International Cause" and "Neither Victory nor Defeat," in Royster, ed., *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*. Boston: St. Martin's Press, pp. 33-41 (on Blackboard)

View: Fannie Lou Hamer "Testimony" at the Democratic National Convention in 1964 (on Blackboard)

Optional viewing:

View: *4 Little Girls*. 1997. Directed by Spike Lee. 102 min. (on Reserve Jones Media Center - Call No. 701)

**Mon, Jan. 23**    **"No Mirrors in My Nana's House:" Beauty and Black Women**

Rooks, Noliwe. 2001. "Wearing Your Race Wrong: Hair, Drama and a Politics of Representation for African American Women at Play on a Battlefield," in *Recovering the Black Female Body: Self-Representations of African American Women* edited by Michael Bennett and Vanessa Dickerson. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers: 279 - 295. (on Blackboard)

Read & view:    "I Love My Hair': A Father's Tribute To His Daughter" 2010. PBS *All Things Considered*, October 18. Read/listen to story and view Sesame Street video "I Love My Hair" 3:12 min. (on Blackboard)

View video:    Indie Aire, "I'm Not My Hair" (on Blackboard)

Optional viewing

View: *Good Hair* (2009). Directed by Jeff Stilson. 96 min. (on Reserve Jones Media Center, Call No. 10749)

**Tuesday, January 24**  
Film: **"FREEDOM RIDERS"**  
12:00–2:00 pm ~ 324 Blunt Alumni Center

**Wed., Jan. 25**    **Gender Politics in Unexpected Places: Salon, Sanctuaries, and Healthy Black Bodies**

Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics*, Chap. 6

Murrock, Carolyn J. and Gary, Faye A. 2010. "Culturally Specific Dance to Reduce Obesity in African American Women," *Health Promotion Practice*, v11 n4 July: 465-473 (on Blackboard)

**Fri., Jan. 27**    **No new readings**

**Friday, January 27**  
**"THE HELP"**  
Hopkins Center Film  
7:00 pm ~ Spaulding, Hopkins Center    \$

**Part III**    **ECONOMIC OBSTACLES & OPPORTUNITIES: Black Women at Work**

**Mon., Jan. 30**    **Forced to Care: Negotiating Paid Domestic Labor**

Brown, Tamara Mose. 2011. *Raising Brooklyn: Nannies, Childcare and Caribbeans Creating Community*. Intro, Chaps. 1-3

View: "America's Supernanny" on Lifetime Tuesdays at 9:00 pm You may also view episodes online. (on Blackboard))

**Wed., Feb. 1**    Brown, *Raising Brooklyn*, Chaps. 4-7 and the Conclusion  
Reading TBA (on Blackboard)

**Fri., Feb. 3**    **Twice as Good: Black Middle-Class Woman at Work**

Dozier, Raine. 2010. "The Declining Relative Status of Black Women Workers, 1980-2002." *Social Forces* v. 88 no. 4 June: 1833-57 (on Blackboard)

Durr, Marlese and Wingfield, Adia M. Henry. 2011. "Keep Your 'N' in Check: African American Women and the Interactive Effects of Etiquette and Emotional Labor," *Critical Sociology* v37 n5 September: 557-571 (on Blackboard)

**Mon., Feb. 6**

***Wealth, Poverty and Black Women's Life Chances***

Phillips, Sandra. 2011. "The Subprime Mortgage Calamity and the African American Woman," *Review of Black Political Economy*, v38 n4 December

Reading TBA (on Blackboard)

**Wed., Feb. 8**

**MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

**Fri., Feb. 10**

**No classes - Winter Carnival**

**Part IV**

**WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?: Controlling the Bodies of Black Women**

**Mon., Feb.13**

***Battling in the Streets: Black Girls in Violent Communities***

Miller, Jody. 2008. *Getting Played: African American Girls, Urban Inequality and Gendered Violence*. New York: New York University Press. Foreword, Preface, Chaps. 1 - 3" plus Appendix: Study Participants pp. 223-225

Optional viewing

*Precious* (2010). Produced by Lee Daniels. 109 min. (on Reserve Jones Media Center - Call No. 9672)

**Wed., Feb. 15**

***Battling in the Streets: Gendered Violence in Black Girls' Lives***

Miller, *Getting Played*, Chaps. 4 - 6

Miller-Young, Mireille. 2008. "Hip Hop Honeys and Da Hustlaz: Black Sexualities in the New Hip Hop Pornography," *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*, v8 n1: 261-292 (on Blackboard)

**Fri., Feb. 17**

***In Love and Trouble: Contesting Black Women's Sexuality***

Barnes, Sandra L. and Smith Bynum, Mia. 2010. "An Examination of the Sexual Behavior of Middle-Class African American Female College Freshmen," *Black Women, Gender & Families* Volume 4, Number 2, Fall: 1-30 (on Blackboard)

Moore, Mignon R. 2008. "Gendered Power Relations among Women: A Study of Household Decision-Making in Black, Lesbian Stepfamilies." *American Sociological Review* v 73, n2 April: 335-356 (on Blackboard)

**Mon., Feb. 20**

***Is Marriage Just for White People?***

Burton, Linda M. and Tucker, M. Belinda. 2009. "Romantic Unions in an Era of Uncertainty: A Post-Moynihan Perspective on African American Women and Marriage," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* vol. 621 no. 1 January: 132-148 (on Blackboard)

**Part V**

**WHAT TODAY'S BLACK WOMAN OUGHT TO BE & TO DO**

**Wed., Feb. 22**

***Contemporary Interventions: Shame on Us (Black Women) or on the U.S.***

Harris-Perry, Melissa. 2011. *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes and Black Women in America*. Intro and Chap. 1 plus pages 134- 157 of Chap. 4

Brooks, Daphne A. 2008. "All That You Can't Leave Behind?: Black Female Soul Singing and the Politics of Surrogation in the Age of Catastrophe," *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*, v8 n1: 180-204 (on Blackboard)

**Sandra Barnes**  
**THE BIBLE, THE BLACK CHURCH & SEXUALITY**  
Thurs., Feb. 23 ~ 4:00 pm  
007 Kemeny

**Fri., Feb. 24**     **No class meeting today**

**Mon., Feb. 27**     ***Contemporary Interventions: Reclaiming or Reproducing the Mammy Myth***  
Harris-Perry, Melissa. 2011. *Sister Citizen*, Chaps. 2, 3 and pages 157-179 of Chap. 4

Fuller, Lorraine 2001. "Are We Seeing Things? The Pinesol Lady and the Ghost of Aunt Jemima"  
*Journal of Black Studies*, v32 n1 September: 120-31 (on Blackboard)

View: at least four Pine Sol commercials (on Blackboard)  
Explore: Clorox Website for Pine Sol Lady (on Blackboard)

Website: Bettye Saar, "The Liberation of Aunt Jemima" (1972) (on Blackboard)

**Wed., Feb. 29**     ***Contemporary Interventions: Strong Black Woman, Strong Faith***  
Harris-Perry, Melissa. 2011. *Sister Citizen*, Chaps. 5 - 7

Pattillo-McCoy, Mary 1998. "Church Culture as a Strategy of Action in the Black  
Community," *American Sociological Review* 63 (6): 767-784 (on Blackboard)

Fannie Lou Hamer "Testimony" at the Democratic National Convention in 1964 (on Blackboard)

**Fri., Mar. 2**     ***Controlling Our Own Bodies: Black Women and Reproductive Justice***  
Price, Kimala. 201. "What is Reproductive Justice?: How Women of Color Activists Are Redefining the  
Pro-Choice Paradigm," *Meridians: race, feminism, transnational*, v10, n 2 April: 42-65 (on Blackboard)

Loretta     Jennifer Nelson, Jennifer. 2010. "All this that has happened to me shouldn't happen to nobody else":  
Ross and the Women of Color Reproductive Freedom Movement of the 1980s" *Journal of Women's History*,  
v 22, n3, Fall: 136-160 (on Blackboard)

View Materials on 'Black Children Are an Endangered Species?' Anti-Abortion Campaign (on Blackboard)

**Mon., Mar. 5**     ***Mass Incarceration and Black Women:***  
Christian, Johnna & Thomas, Shenique S. 2009. "Examining the Intersections of Race, Gender, and Mass  
Imprisonment," *Journal of Ethnicity in Criminal Justice*, v7, n1: 69-84 (on Blackboard)

Reading TBA (on Blackboard)

**Wed., Mar. 7**     ***Course Overview - Last day of classes***

**MONDAY MARCH 12TH**     **FINAL COURSE PROJECT**



**Due no later than 6:00 p. m.**

Please deposit a hard copy at either my departmental mailbox in 111 Silsby Hall or in the box outside my office, 107 Silsby.

***Email, Blackboard, fax, or mail submissions will not be accepted.***