If you allow others to define you you might not recognize yourself- Audre Lorde

Instructor: Prof. Michelle Rowley
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Office Hours: Tues 10:00-12:00 and 2:00-4:00 p.m. (Wednesday by appointment only)
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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Construction of Womanhood and Manhood in the Black Community provides us with an opportunity to discuss a number of concepts, popular language and visual representations that we take for granted in our day to day interaction. Each term in the title of this course will be examined. For example, what exactly do we mean when we use the term ‘black?’ Who qualifies to inhabit this location? Similarly, when we use the term “black community” which locales are we invoking? These are not fixed terms and it is important for us to consider a) the multiple meanings conveyed by these words and, b) the politics of the meanings attached to these words. We will examine the ways in which these concepts have been historically constructed. However our analyses and discussions will be set in a contemporary critique of literature, policy analyses, legislation, cultural practices, and visual media.

Constructions of Womanhood and Manhood examines the varied and multiple understandings and experiences of wearing a black identity within the U.S. and to a lesser extent the African Diaspora. The course is divided into three modules:

- In module one, we will take a critical overview of the ways in which systemic racism and racist patterns of behavior are actively involved in writing and enforcing societal constructions of black masculinity and femininity. In this module we will also challenge monolithic ideas of “black identity,” “identity politics,” and “stereotypes.”
- In module two, we will examine how women’s bodies are impacted by dominant representations of black identity both within and external to the black community. We will look at questions of black women’s sexuality, the church, representations of black women within hip-hop. Drawing on a black feminist critique we will challenge some of the assumptions of these representations.
- Similarly, in module three, we will question the representations of black men within the popular media. We will also discuss some of the emerging literature that addresses black masculinity within domain of masculinity studies. In this module we will discuss issues such as sexuality, the criminalization of race, fathering and identity.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing WMST 265 students should be able to
➢ Engage the complexity of terms such as race, identity politics, stereotypes, and systemic racism.
➢ Identify forms of power relations embedded in the ongoing discourses of race within the U.S. and in selected sites globally.
➢ Apply a feminist critique to the ways in which race and racial representation are implicated in economic, literary, visual and political formations.

INSTRUCTORS’ EXPECTATIONS

1. Students should complete assigned readings by the date they are listed on the syllabus.
2. Students should attend all classes and be on time. Three absences will result in a half-grade reduction.
3. Students should turn in all assignments on time. I do not accept assignments submitted by email or fax. Late submissions of final papers will automatically go down a letter grade. Assignments that are three or more days late will NOT be accepted.
4. Students should get class notes from one of their classmates if they must miss a class.

SPECIAL NEEDS
If you have any special needs related to your participation in this course, including identified visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment, communication disorder, and/or specific learning disability that may influence your performance in this course, you should meet with the instructor to arrange for reasonable provisions to ensure an equitable opportunity to meet all the requirements of this course. At the discretion of the instructor, some accommodations may require prior approval by Disability Services. All communication will remain confidential.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
The University Rules, including the Student Code of Conduct, and other documented policies of the department, college, and university related to academic integrity will be enforced. Any violation of these regulations, including acts of plagiarism or cheating, will be dealt with on an individual basis according to the severity of the misconduct. I have enclosed a link regarding UMD’s policy on plagiarism. Please familiarize yourself with its contents: http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/code.html#

REQUIRED READINGS


**Module One: Interrogating Sexuality/Performing Gender**

In this module we examine the main conceptual and historical framework of the course. How do concepts such as “race,” and “blackness” gain variable meaning over time. We will discuss the dominant ideologies that inform these concepts in the U.S. and examine how these ideologies work to construct stereotypical representations of black identities. Key words for this module are “race as a signifier,” “ideology,” “stereotypes.”

**Thursday 25th January, 2007**
Course Overview
Discussion of Assignment Sheet
If you miss this session please visit course site on BkBd

**Tuesday 30th January, 2007**
In-Class Screening of Stuart Hall “Race the Floating Signifier” (If you miss this in-class screening please view on your own at Hornbake. This video will be included in your mid-term assessment).

**Thursday 1st February**
Discussion of “Race: The Floating Signifier”

**Tuesday 6th February**
Bonilla-Silva. Chapters 1-3.  *Racism without Racists* (C.L. 1 any one chapter)

**Thursday 8th February**
Bonilla-Silva. Chapters 4-6. *Racism Without Racists* (C.L. 2 any one chapter)

**Tuesday 13th February**
Bonilla-Silva. Chapters 7- Postscript. *Racism Without Racists* (C.L. 3 any one chapter)

**Thursday 15th – Tues 19th February**
Kennedy, Randall. *Nigger. The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word*. (C.L. 4 Session One, Chapter One/ C.L. 5 Session Two Chapter Four)


http://www.keephopealiveradio.com/ (Michael Richards subsequently appeared on Rev. Jesse Jackson’s radio talk show “Keep Hope Alive”) Listen to the clips attached to these links before class.

**Thurs. 22nd February**

**Tues. 27th February**
Module Two: Looking at Black Femininities:

Thursday 1st March

In this module we will examine a range of issues that pertain to how black women’s bodies are manipulated and represented within and external to the black community. We will ground our discussions in the black feminist writings of scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks and Audre Lorde.

Hill Collins Patricia “The Social Construction of Black Feminism Thought” in Feminism and Philosophy ed Rosemary Tong and Nancy Tuana (Bk. Bd) (C.L 8)

Ibid “Womanism and Feminism” Issues in Feminism ed. Sheila Ruth (Bk. Bd)

Tuesday 6th March

Lorde, Audre “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” (BkBd) (C.L.9)

hooks, bell “Sisterhood: Political Solidarity between women” McClintock Dangerous Liaisons (BkBd) (C.L. 10)

Thursday 8th March


Tuesday 13th March

Brown-Douglas, Kelly. Chapter Four or Five Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective. (C.L. 12 Chapter Four)

Thursday 15th March

Mid-term in-class exam review

Spring Break 19th – 23rd March, 2007

Tuesday 27th March, 2007

Mid-Term Exam

Thursday 29th March, 2007

Pough, Gwendolyn. Chapters One-Three. Check It While I Wreck It, Northeastern University Press. 2006. (C.L. 13 Chapter Two)

Tuesday 3rd April, 2007

Pough, Gwendolyn. Chapters Four, Five and Seven. Check It While I Wreck It, Northeastern University Press. 2006. (C.L. 14 Chapter Five)
Module Three: Re-thinking Black Masculinity in the Black Community

In this module we will compare and contrast the representations of black masculinity within popular media and selected black communities (e.g. hip-hop, church, street culture, representations of family life).

Thursday 5th April, 2007


Carbado, Devon. Black Male Racial Victimhood Callaloo – Volume 21, Number 2, Spring 1998, pp. 337-361. (BkBd)

Tuesday 10th April, 2007


Thursday 12th April 2007

In Class Screening and Discussion: Beyond Beats and Rhymes

Tuesday 17th April 2007

In Class Screening: BadAssss Cinema


April 19th  2007

(Read Miller et. al and any one of the following)


Griffin Horace “The Own Received Them Not: African America Lesbians and Gays in Black Churches” The Greatest Taboo. 110-123

Constantine-Simms, Delroy “Is Homosexuality The Greatest Taboo?” Ibid. pp. 76-88

Conerly Gregory “Swishing and Swaggering: Homosexuality in Black magazines During the 1950s” ibid. 384-414. (C.L.19)

April 24th 2007
Course-work Presentations (3 presentations)

April 26th 2007
Course-work Presentation (3 presentations)

May 1st 2007
Course-work Presentation (3 presentations)

May 3rd 2007
Course-work Presentation (3 presentations)

May 11th 2007
Final Papers are due by 4 p.m.
Assignment Sheet

These are the instructions for your course work assignments. Be creative, analytical, and determined to enjoy your work. Approach each assignment with a spirit of intellectual curiosity and excitement. I look forward to hearing and reading your submissions!

The final grade is calculated as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Leadership Exercise</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term Exam</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruminations</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visual/Audio Media Critique</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>170</strong></td>
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See below for grade and evaluation guidelines

Class Leadership Exercise (C.L.)

You will take responsibility for leading one seminar discussions. After our first session read the course outline carefully and choose one of the articles marked C.L. for your in-class leadership. The student with responsibility for leading the seminar discussion should ensure that s/he has identified:

- The authors’ main ideas
- Theoretical and/or methodological framework used by authors
- Relevance of these ideas to the course’s themes?
- Necessary background reading (e.g. authors, historical events etc.). If there are references that are unclear or unknown to you please do the necessary background research.
- Your own perspective and concluding ideas on themes.

Please feel free to be as creative and as innovative as possible. Each presentation should be no longer than twenty minutes and incorporate some form of visual stimulus. You should feel free to incorporate poetry, music, clips of audio-visual media, handouts summarizing points, or power point presentations that may enhance your presentations. (40 points)

Ruminations (RR)

You will be required to write THREE formal thought pieces on any article(s) or video (10 pts each) listed on the course-outline. You should submit your written response to me (hardcopy only/no emails) no later than two days after the session or screening. Your rumination should highlight the main ideas of the text, class discussion, and/or film screening and your own analytical response to these issues. Do remember that it is a good idea to use your C.L. article as one of your ruminations. **I will not grade or respond to any rumination submitted more than two days after we have dealt with the material in class.** (Total: 30 points)

Visual/Audio Media Critique

In groups of two apply the ideas/arguments of **three or more** of the authors you have read in your critique of the representation or assumptions of black women and men within any of the following visual and audio media

- Situational comedies
- Popular black magazines (e.g. Essence, Ebony, Jet)
- Musical genre (e.g. hip-hop, dance-hall)
- Photography
- Advertisements
- Selected holidays or commemorative celebrations (e.g. Black History Month, Thanksgiving, Valentines Day, July 4th)
- Movie: e.g. Crash,
- Any noted U.S. figure who is some way you think is atypical in her/his performance of black masculinity/femininity e.g. Denis Rodman, Little Richard, Condolezza Rice, Michael Jackson, O.J. Simpson, Colin Powell, Bayard Rustin)

In your presentation I expect you to:
- Have a clear thesis or position. You MUST have an argument that grounds your presentation.
- Draw on one or more of the media above as the visual/audio text that supports your position. There MUST be a visual and/or audio component to your presentation
- Support your discussion by drawing on no less than three of the authors that we have read for this semester

**Final Paper**

This is your final writing assignment which will assess the extent to which you are able to formulate and engage the ideas and themes raised throughout the semester. Allow the module/topic themes to guide your thinking on possible topics for your final research paper. Your choice should reflect the issues and analytical frame that we engage in sessions. Please pay attention to the grade sheet guidelines that follows before you submit your final paper.

Your final paper will be graded in the following three stages:
- Mandatory office-hour session (5 points)
- Class Presentation of Final Paper Topic (5 points)
- Final submission (20 points)

**Office-hour Session**

Each student should meet with one of the course’s instructors to discuss their thoughts for their final paper (8-10). Please come to this session with a clearly outlined (written) plan, which highlights your primary argument or thesis sentence, four of your supporting arguments and no less than four of the texts that you will use to inform the writing of your paper. This meeting should occur before 24th April, 2007.

**Class Presentation**

You will be asked to share your final paper with your colleagues. Your class-presentation should follow the outline discussed in your office-hour session and incorporate any feedback that you received from that session.

**Final Submission Date: May 11th 2007**

Please do not hesitate to use our office hours if you have ANY questions pertaining to the course or any of the assignments. M.R. Spring 2006/7
Grading and Evaluation

100 – 95 = A +
94 – 92 = A
91 – 89 = A –
88 – 87 = B+
86 – 82 = B

81 – 79 = B-
78 – 77 = C+
76 – 72 = C
71 – 69 = C-
68 – 67 = D+

66 – 62 = D
61 – 59 = D-
58 and below = F

Undergraduate paper grades

Following are the meanings of the available letter grades for undergraduates. BEFORE you submit your paper assess your own work using the guidelines below:

A superior paper. Well-written with an interesting and insightful argument and a clear central thesis. A serious attempt to use reliable evidence. Use of sources to buttress your argument; these sources must extend beyond the material of the course. An “A” paper makes your understanding of the material clear and shows that you have an innovative perspective.

A- An excellent paper written in a clear style. The argument is interesting and generally sound, but less insightful than an A paper. Some use of appropriate material beyond the class.

B+ A very good paper with a reasonably clear argument. The ideas are not as original or clearly expressed as in A and A- papers, but there are some interesting points. More actual research and thinking would have been desirable.

B A good paper, but with an argument that is not as well-structured as it should be. A few interesting ideas, but the paper could have been improved with more thought, organization, and imagination. Little actual research. Minor problems of structure and organization.

B- Based mainly on sources drawn from the course, but with generally clear writing. Some problems of structure and organization. Argument often not sustained.

C+ A marginally above-average paper. Based on few sources generally confined to one part of the course. Writing often unclear. Some problems of structure and organization. Central thesis either absent or unclear.

C An average paper, with sometimes unclear and uninspired writing. No real central thesis. A few major problems of structure and organization.

C- A below-average paper. Based on inadequate reading of secondary sources. Writing style is unclear, with errors of grammar and syntax. No discernible argument.

D+ A poor paper. Based on reading of only a few sources. Serious problems of grammar and expression. No attempt at arguing a central point. Structure is random.

D A very poor paper. Often opinionated, anecdotal and descriptive. Serious problems of expression, with numerous passages that are simply not understandable. No central argument.

F An unacceptable paper. Based on few or no secondary sources, or parroting of one or more secondary sources bordering on plagiarism. I will automatically apply a fail grade to plagiarized papers.