WGS 399
SEX AND GENDER IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITIES
SPRING 2006

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COURSE DESCRIPTION
WGS 399/Sex and Gender in African-American Communities explores the gender and sexuality issues that influence the social, political, economic and cultural development of African-America. Special attention is given to how racism effects the realization of standard gender conventions within black communities, as well as to myths of black sexuality, black feminism, and queer politics.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
Students will understand 1) how African-American identities and experiences are mitigated by differences in race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, generation, etc., 2) how racism has shaped gender expectations in African-American communities, 3) how racism has affected notions of black sexualities within African-America, 4) the gendered ways racism has been contested politically and culturally by African-American men and women, and 5) African-American contributions to feminist and queer theory and politics.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Two Reflection papers 60%
The purpose of the reflection paper is to create a space for you to apply what you have learned in this course to your own lived experiences, and how this knowledge confirms or contradicts your values, perspectives and/or experiences. While reflection papers privileges the articulation of your experience, they also need to significantly engage course material. These papers should be 3-5 pages in length. There are three opportunities to complete two reflection papers: April 23, May 21, and June 9.

Group Presentation 30%
The group projects will be presented during the final week of class. Each group will stage a 20-minute presentation that should not only reflect an understanding of concepts introduced by course materials, but also build on those concepts, using primary and secondary sources. Performance is welcome. The most successful presentations will include critical analysis, supporting materials, media examples drawn from beyond the course syllabus, as well as some performance.

The written portion of the group project will be an annotated bibliography that needs to include at least ten sources relevant to the issue discussed in
presentation. A clear, concise thesis statement is required along with an introduction that provides an overview of the topic/issue discussed in your annotated bibliography. Each annotation should include: citation, description, critical comment. The description should be two to three paragraphs but no longer than a half a page. For each annotation you should include a synopsis of the author's primary points and a critique of those points. You may include no more than two annotations from news articles and articles from popular press. (For more on annotative bibliographies see: http://www.library.cornell.edu/okuref/research/skill28.htm)

**Class participation 10%**
Class participation (not to be confused with class attendance) is worth 10% of your final grade. Each student is responsible for composing discussion questions that will be posted weekly on Blackboard. These discussion points will assist the group responsible for each respective topic. Questions could explore: underlying value implications of the readings, analogies to other issues discussed in class, the validity of the author’s position.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**
The University of Oregon seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systemic, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services @ http://ds.uoregon.edu/. The Center will work with you and I will gladly make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

**E-MAIL ETIQUETTE**
As a rule, you should understand your relationships to GTFs and professors as professional relationships. When corresponding by e-mail, always include a salutation (e.g. “Dear Prof. Cheney”) and a closing that identifies who you are (“Sincerely, María Rodríguez”). Please also note that I might not check my e-mail more than once per day, or at all on weekends or in the evening, and we might not have time to reply immediately. Please have patience and do not hesitate to follow up with a second e-mail or in person during office hours or before, during, or after class if we have not replied to e-mail.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PLAGARISM**
All work submitted in this course must be your own and produced exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly acknowledged and documented. Violations will be taken seriously and are noted on student disciplinary records. Please review the University’s policies at: http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/judicial/conduct/sai.htm

**TEXTS**
Beverly Guy-Sheftall’s *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, Alice Walker’s *Meridian* and Octavia Butler’s *Kindred* are available at the Campus Duckstore. All other readings accessible on Blackboard.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**APRIL 2: WHAT'S RACE GOT TO DO WITH IT? DEFINING BLACK FEMINISM**
Readings: Alice Walker, *Definition of Womanist* (reserve)  
Patricia Hill Collins, "What's in a Name? Womanism, Black Feminism, and Beyond" (reserve)

**APRIL 4/9/11: THEORIZING RACE AND SEXUALITY: SLAVERY**
Readings: Octavia Butler, *Kindred*  
Film: *The Life and Times of Sara Baartman: The Hottentot Venus*

**APRIL 16/18: BLACK WOMEN SPEAK OUT: BLACK FEMINIST ORIGINS**
Readings: Sojourner Truth, "Woman's Rights" (WOF)  
Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, “Woman’s Political Future” (WOF)

**REFLECTION PAPER DUE APRIL 23**

**APRIL 23/25: WHO SHALL OVERCOME? SEXUAL POLITICS IN THE CRM**
Reading: Alice Walker, *Meridian*

**APRIL 30/MAY 2: RACE FIRST: RACE AND SEX POLITICS IN THE BPM**
Readings: Toni Cade Bambara, "On the Issue of Roles" (BB)  
Michele Wallace, “Black Macho” (BB)

**MAY 7/9: RIDING THE SECOND WAVE: RACISM AND THE WOMEN’S LIBERATION MOVEMENT**
Readings: Donna Kate Rushin, “This Bridge Called My Back” (BB)  
bell hooks, “Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory” (WOF)  
H. Carby "White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood" (BB)

**MAY 14/16: MULTIPLE JEOPARDY: THE BIRTH OF BLACK FEMINIST THEORY**
Readings: The Combahee River Collective, “The Combahee River Collective Statement” (WOF)  
Deborah K. King, "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of Black Feminist Ideology" (WOF)  
Patricia Hill Collins, “The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought” (WOF)
REFLECTION PAPER DUE MAY 21

May 21/23: *Black Women and (Homo/Hetero)Sexuality*
Readings: Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" (BB)
           Cheryl Clarke, "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance" (WOF)
           June Jordan, “A New Politics of Sexuality” (WOF)

May 28/30: *Riding the Third Wave: Black Women and Contemporary Feminism*
Readings: Veronica Chambers, "Betrayal Feminism" (BB)
          Kristal Brent Zook, "A Manifesto of Sorts for a Black Feminist Movement" (BB)
          Danzy Senna, "To Be Real” (BB)
          Joan Morgan, "Hip-Hop Feminist" (BB)

June 4/6: *Group presentations*

Reflection paper due June 8 by noon