

University of Arkansas
Department of English
African & African American Studies

**ENGL 4853/ENGL 5863/AAST 4853 Studies in
African American Literature and Culture
Beyoncé and Black Feminism**

Instructor: Constance Bailey

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Class Meeting Time: Tu/Wed/Th 2:30-4:00

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11:30-1:30; By Appointment

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Location: Memorial Rm 230

Course Description:

During a 2014 panel discussion bell hooks remarked that “part of her sees Beyoncé as ‘a terrorist especially in terms of [her] impact on young girls.’ Devoid of its context, members of the #beyhive heard “bell hooks called Beyoncé a terrorist,” but hooks incendiary claim bears further consideration considering that few music icons have been as influential as Beyoncé Knowles Carter. Using Patricia Hill Collins’ core themes in *Black Feminist Thought*, each week the class will explore topics such as black women’s coming of age (black girl magic), black women’s sexuality, friendships among black women, black love, work and family, and others. In addition to Beyoncé’s music, we will also analyze the films *Eve’s Bayou* and *Waiting to Exhale* for their treatment of course themes. In short, the course serves as a basic introduction to Black Feminist and Womanist criticism.

Course Goals

There are many goals for this class. More than can be listed here; however, some of the major goals for this course are as follows:

- To provide opportunities to hone interpretive and argumentative skills through exposure to a variety of literary works.
- To further develop formal academic writing skills, including drafting and revision, using primary and secondary sources and employing MLA (Modern Language Association) citation methods.
- To gain a greater understanding of the concepts of Black Feminism and Womanism and to understand their connection to larger social justice issues relevant to people and women of color.

Required Texts

Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Second Edition*

Toni Morrison, *Sula*

Gayl Jones, *Corregidora*

Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*

Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Tina McElroy Ansa, *Baby in the Family*

Joan Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*

SUPPLEMENTAL Readings

Other texts will be available via handout or Blackboard. Please be sure to consult your syllabus. You will be required to access and download these materials and bring them to class or have the electronic versions available.

Course Requirements

Assignments-***Denotes graduate modification

Response Papers(25%)

Over the course of the semester, you will write 7 response papers approximately 1 for each week of the semester not including the first and last week of class or the week of the 4th of July. Your responses should be at least 500 words, typed, and double-spaced unless otherwise specified. You will submit an electronic copy via Blackboard. In the absence of a topic, your responses should be analytical, interpretative, or reflective. You might provide a close reading of a passage from one of our fictional texts or you might draw out the implications of a piece by discussing its relevance to some contemporary issue or current event. They **MUST NOT** summarize the work. Responses are due by 12:00 pm the day that the reading will be discussed in class. This will ensure that you've reflected on the reading enough to be able to contribute to class. Late/makeup responses **will NOT be** accepted.

Analytical Essay: You will write a short essay (4-5 pages) in which you apply Black Feminist or Womanist Theory to some contemporary text. This might be a music video, a television or cinematic performance, etc.

OR

Critical Article Response* (25%):** You will be required to submit one article critique that is approximately 3-5 pages long. This paper requires you to read and critique a scholarly journal article about one of the fictional texts for the course.

Group Project (15%): You will complete one group project this semester requiring you to research a literary or social movement inspired by or closely related to Black Feminism. Examples might include Black Male Feminism, Hip Hop Feminism, Crunk Feminist Collective, etc.

Final Exam/Conference Paper (35%): Before the close of the semester you will submit a conference length paper, approximately 8-10 pages. Prior to the final submission, around the middle of the semester, you will submit a topic proposal that will need to be approved. ***Graduates students should submit a longer essay, approximately 12-15 pages.

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

General Classroom Policies: I expect you to be on time, behave professionally, and treat others with respect. Laptops, ipods, cell phones and PDAs are to be off and out of sight at all times even if you keep your calendar in your phone. (Exceptions may be made for students for whom English is a second language who use electronic dictionaries during lecture. See me.) Students texting in class will be asked to leave the classroom and will be counted as absent.

Accommodations

Students who have a special need for accommodations or support to facilitate full inclusion of all aspects of the course should make an appointment with the instructor during the first week of the semester so that necessary classroom adjustments can be made. University of Arkansas Academic Policy Series 1520.10 requires that students with disabilities are provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through the Center for Educational Access (call 575-3104 or visit <http://cea.uark.edu> for more information on registration procedures).

Available Support

The Enhanced Learning Center (ELC) is a campus-wide academic support service for ALL students enrolled at the University of Arkansas. The ELC provides many services, including tutoring, academic success workshops, academic consultation, and supplemental instruction. All of their services are free. The ELC is located in Gregson Hall, garden level. Visit their facilities or their website at <http://elc.uark.edu> to learn more about their programs and services. Also, the Counseling and Psychological Clinic (CAPS) offers a range of mental health services (575- 2277).

Inclement Weather Policy & Class Cancellation

If the university is closed due to inclement weather, we will not have class. Please call the university weather "hotline" at 575-7000 or access the university main webpage (www.uark.edu) for university closing or delay information. Students are expected to use their best judgment in deciding whether they can safely make it to class or not because of weather conditions.

Professional & Respectful Conduct

Students are expected to maintain professional and respectful conduct while in the classroom and group meeting/activities outside of the classroom. This includes respecting the opinions of others and avoiding derogatory or "cutting" statements and body gestures, and refraining from talking while others are talking and working on other assignments while the instructor or others are presenting to the class.

Additionally, although legally Arkansas does not require permission to tape record or videotape, students are not allowed to take pictures of or record (audio or video) the instructor or students during any class meetings, or share information provided in classes, or post on the web any information without expressed and/or written consent.

Electronic Devices

The use of electronic devices (laptops, iPads, kindles, smart phones, etc.) in class is **encouraged for educational purposes** (research, illustration, instruction, note taking, etc.). While cell phones are permitted, students are expected to silence them during class. If an unexpected circumstance arises requiring cell phone attention and action, students are expected to respond with minimal disruption to the class. This policy may be revoked at the discretion of the instructor. The use of electronic devices in class for any other purpose (texting, recording, videotaping, or photographing without written consent, etc.) falls under the guidelines for professional and respectful conduct and will be addressed accordingly.

Email Policy: The best way to contact me outside of class is via email. I check my email frequently Monday-Friday from 9:00AM-5:00PM. Although I may respond on weekends, there is no guarantee that you will receive an immediate response. You should always write to me at my official UARK email account, and remember to **sign your name (first and last)** within the body of the email.

Appropriate uses of email: To cancel or set up an appointment, to contact me in the event of an emergency, to ask for assignment clarification more than 1 day in advance, or to inform me of a problem with the Blackboard site.

Inappropriate uses of email: To find out what you missed when you were absent from class, to receive feedback on essay drafts, to find out your grade or my assessment of your classroom performance. I will happily address all of your concerns and provide assistance outside of class during my scheduled office hours or other appointment times as needed— you need only ask.

Class Netiquette

Your instructor and fellow students wish to foster a safe on-line learning environment. All opinions and experiences, no matter how different or controversial they may be perceived, must be respected in the tolerant spirit of academic discourse. You are encouraged to comment, question, or critique an idea but you are not to attack an individual. Our differences, some of which are outlined in the University's nondiscrimination statement, will add richness to this learning experience. Please consider that sarcasm and humor can be misconstrued in online interactions and generate unintended disruptions. Working as a community of learners, we can build a polite and respectful course ambience.

Grading Scale:

90-100% = A
 80-89% = B
 70-79%= C
 60-69%= D
 Below 60%= F

Course Calendar

PLEASE NOTE: THIS CALENDAR IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP UP WITH ANY MODIFICATIONS TO OUR SCHEDULE.

Date	Class Discussion	Due Dates
5/30	Course Introduction, Review Syllabus, Review Key Terms and Concepts, Adichie’s Ted Talk, “We Should All Be Feminists”/A Brief History of African Feminists	
IN SEARCH OF OUR MOTHER’S GARDENS		
6/6	“In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens” (BB), Collins’ Part I: The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought Lecture Hurston & the Roots of Black Feminist Thought (Dr. Paula White); Introduce Essay Assignment	
6/7	Lorde’s “Scratching the Surface: Some Notes on Barriers to Women and Loving,” “Sexism: An American Disease in Blackface”; Beyoncé “Dangerously in Love”	
6/8	<i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i>	
BLACK GIRL MAGIC		
6/13	Collins’ “Work, Family, and Black Women’s Oppression” Guest Lecture- Dr. Marie Leonard	

6/14	Lecture- Signifying and African American Intertextuality, - Beyoncé's "Love on Top"/ New Edition's "If It Isn't Love"; Begin watching the film <i>Eve's Bayou</i>	
6/15	<i>Eve's Bayou</i> cont., Collins "Black Women's Love Relationships"	
BLACK WOMEN AND MOTHERHOOD		
6/20	<i>Baby of the Family</i> , Chapters 1-12 Introduce Interview/Collection Assignment	
6/21	<i>Baby of the Family</i> , finish novel	
6/22	Collins' "Black Women and Motherhood," Beyoncé's "Blue," Lauren Hill's "To Zion", Beyoncé's 2017 Grammy Performance	
BLACK WOMEN'S SEXUALITY		
6/27	Blues Women in African American Culture, <i>Corregidora</i> , pgs. TBA	
6/28	<i>Corregidora</i> , pgs. TBA	
6/29	Group Work	
T 7/4		
No Class-Independence Day Holiday		
W 7/5	<i>Sula</i> , pgs. TBA	
R 7/6	<i>Sula</i> , pgs. TBA	
PHOEBE & NEL: The Enduring Importance of Female Friendships		
T 7/11	Collins' "Towards a Politics of Empowerment"	
W 7/12	Collins' "The Sexual Politics of Black Womanhood," Lorde's "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" Beyoncé's "Partition," "Drunk in Love," "Blow"	
R 7/13	Lecture-"Sexy or Skank: Foxy Brown, Lil Kim, Nicki Minaj, and Rihanna, Problematic or Transgressive"	
BLACK FEMINISM, KNOWLEDGE, AND POWER		
T 7/18	<i>When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost</i> , pgs. 1-111	
W 7/19	<i>When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost</i> , pgs. 115-232	
R 7/20	Beyoncé Memes and Black Women's Humor	
THE POWER OF SELF-DEFINITION		
T 7/25	Lorde's "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," TedTalk-The Importance of Intersectionality	GROUP I Presentation
W 7/26	Guest Lecture- Dr. Vy Dao ; Collins' "The Power of Self-Definition"; Beyoncé "Flawless Remix"	GROUP II Presentation
R 7/27	Lecture-"When and Where I Enter"; <i>Lemonade</i>	GROUP III Presentation
T 8/1		
TBA		
W 8/2		
TBA		
R 8/3		
TBA		
		Final Exam/Final Paper

