

...
if we win
there is no telling
we seek beyond history
for a new and more possible meeting.

-Audre Lorde, 1980. From "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference"

INTRODUCTION

This course is an interdisciplinary survey of Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ), and same gender loving (SGL) culture and politics. After a review of key concepts in Black feminism and Black critical cultural theory and methodology, we will survey key texts and concepts of major nodes of Black LGBTQ social formation and intellectual production.

A Genealogy of Black LGBT Culture and Politics facilitates (and demands) close, critical reading of a number of scholarly and popular texts— mostly in writing, but also music, visual art, and film. We begin with foundational Black feminist theory because these scholars, artists, and activists' uninvited interventions in Black politics, arts and letters-- produced at the interstices of violence, silence, invisibility, or forgetting-- exposes and makes available a wider horizon of possibilities than had been proposed before its emergence. The central theoretical innovation of this praxis (later claimed by theorists of various stripes), is the multiple—"interlocking", 'intersectional', 'compounded'-- constitution of "identity," oppression, and therefore of roads toward freedom. The core of the project of our course is to elucidate this concept, along with 'normativity', 'articulation', 'respectability', and 'genealogical' methodology. Following this mostly non-academic insurgent Black intellectual tradition, squarely (or queerly), Black lgbt/sgl/queer artists, activists, intellectuals, and everyday people also produce trenchant critiques, visions, and actual re-constituted spaces to dwell.

In his introduction to *Brother to Brother: New Writing by Black Gay Men*, Essex Hemphill argued that the "creation of evidence of being," through the development of a black gay and lesbian intellectual tradition is "powerful enough to transform the very nature of our existence." This course thus seeks not only to rigorously engage students in critical social and cultural theory, innovative research methodologies, and cutting-edge interdisciplinary and thematically intersectional scholarship and art; but also, to contribute to a transformational "evidence of being" at the Atlanta University Center, and beyond.

Course Objectives:

- Student will hone critical thinking skills;
- Students will learn to critically read a variety of texts;
- Students will become conversant in major texts, themes and theories of black queer studies
- Students will gain preparation for advanced work on gender, sexuality, and race;
- Students will engage a collaborative work ethic, toward community-engaged scholarship, activism and/or artistry

INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS

**All reading assignments are to be completed before class.
This includes the first day. There are no exceptions.**

Weekly Précis

Each student is responsible for composing a one or two paragraph précis of each session's reading. Beyond a "summary," this should raise questions for discussion, or note areas of confusion or provocation. Push toward synthesis. Précis must be uploaded to the class blog before 10 AM of each class day.

Rubric: Précis will be evaluated (on 1-10 scale) on: (1) Completion by deadline (2) Depth of engagement. Did the student demonstrate that ze read the assignment carefully? Did the student add a unique or interesting point to the conversation? The lowest two grades will be dropped. Students earning less than 90% on this assignment will be ineligible to receive the final grade 'A'.

Due: Every Thursday, By 10:00 AM (early entries and cross-blogging encouraged)

Politics of Location Statement

Your first assignment is to write a 1-3 page (no longer, please) "politics of location" statement. Think of this statement as an organic conversation opener, expressing your 'locations' and 'positionality' at this particular moment (in the world, in this country, on campus, in this class, e.g.). Adrienne Rich's "A Politics of Location" (in your reading packet) provides a model for this important exercise. In addition to this, and the previous weeks' reading assignments and conversations, you will find crucial provocations in:

- Yolo Akili, "The Immediate Need For Emotional Justice"; "Gay Men's Sexism and Women's Bodies"
- Devon Carbado, "Privilege." In *Black Queer Studies*

Who are you and how is your 'becoming' shaped? Typically, one addresses issues of class, race, gender, sexuality, religion, ability, nationality, and age in a statement like this. You may find other creative ways to be thoughtful and honest—still, be sure to respond to the suggestions above, and to the issue of (unnamed) privilege. At the end of term, you will revise or re-write this statement, synthesizing what you have learned in the course.

Evaluation Rubric: 1. Does the statement evidence deep reflection on course themes? 2. Is the writing clear and beautiful? 3. Does the statement demonstrate (the potential for) intellectual, personal, and political growth?

First Iteration Due: February 1, 2013 (not graded)

Final Due: May 1, 2013

GROUP WORK

Collaborative Research Project

Each group will complete an in-depth collaborative and interdisciplinary primary social science research project: on a specific aspect of Black LGBTQ/SGL social formation and artistic/intellectual production at the AUC, and in Atlanta. Students will devise research questions and a thesis, with the support of the professor and teaching fellow, based on the following:

How has the Black LGBTQ/sgl “community” developed at (or around) the Atlanta University Center? What were/are some of the key nodes of cultural and political expression on campus? What events, policies, and structures of feeling impelled these? What events, organizations/movements, individuals and discourses circulating in Atlanta, in the US, and beyond contributed to this? In what ways is the “community” on campus or in Atlanta distinct from other populations of LGBTQ/sgl individuals, and what factors are resonant across differences? [How] are these local and translocal discourses and practices related?

In order to complete this group assignment, students will be required to **show competence in at least three of the following research modalities:** Personal Interviews and Life History Interviews; Archival Research [formal archives, personal archives and Internet research]; Participant-Observation; Textual analysis; Analysis of Sociological Data Sets; Small Scale Surveys; Bibliographic Research. This will result in a collaboratively written research paper (25-35pp. To be submitted with raw data, and publicly presented)

Pay keen attention to opening lectures, for important research provocations and resources for this assignment. For example: Madam Edna Brown; Morehouse Adodi; Venus Landin; Coalition of African Descent; Black Gay and Lesbian Archive; Charles Nelson; Second Sunday; Maurice Franklin; Joan Garner; Craig Washington; Keiron Williams; African American Lesbian and Gay Organization (AALGO); Afrekete; Duncan Teague; Safe Space; Leadership Forum; Lamar Alford; Adodi Muse; National Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Forum; A Deeper Love; Loretta’s. [More details and a research workshop to follow].

Evaluation Rubric: (1) Is the Work Relevant to the Course reading, lectures and discussions? Does it Push it Significantly Forward? (2) Has the Group Deeply and Incisively Engaged the Assignment? (3) Did the group engage sound and solid methodologies? Are the methods employed appropriate to the research questions? (4) Is the Writing and Presentation Clear & Beautiful? (5) Is There Evidence of Collaboration?

Draft Due: March 22, 2013 (not graded)

Final Due: April 26, 2013

EVALUATION & WEIGHTING

Collaborative Research Project	Group Grade 40%
Weekly Précis & Participation	Individual Grade 40%
Politics of Location Statement Revision	Individual Grade 20%

**Professor Allen Will Hold (Virtual) Office Hours Each Week.
Students Are Required to Attend at Least Twice During the Semester.**

READING SCHEDULE

All reading assignments are to be completed before class.
This includes the first day. There are no exceptions.

Asterisk (*) refers to books required to purchase or borrow (place On Reserve at Woodruff)
All other work will be available on course blog. Please order through Shrine of the Black Madonna,
Charis Books, or other local independent bookstores that you support.

Day One: Our Project

1.

- Joy James. "The 'Talented Tenth, Recalled.'" In her *Transcending the Talented Tenth: Black Leaders and American Intellectuals*
- Cathy J Cohen. "Deviance as Resistance: A New Research Agenda for the Study of Black Politics. In *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*.
- Dwight McBride. "Straight Black Studies: On African American Studies, James Baldwin, and Black Queer Studies" in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*
- Marvin K White. Poetry: "Black History," in his *Nothing Ugly Fly*; "First Marc" in his *Last Rights*

Introducing the Rhizome: The social-poiesis of Black LGBTQ/SGL Culture and Politics

(this odd string of signifiers will actually make sense to you by the end of the course!)

2.

- Barbara Smith "Introduction" in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*
- Joseph Beam "Brother to brother: Words from the heart" In *Brother to Brother: New Writing by Black Gay men*.
- Alexis Pauline Gumbs "Feminist Archives: Seek the Roots: An Immersive and Interactive Archive of Black Feminist Practice." In *Feminist Collections*
- Audre Lorde. "A Litany for Survival"
- Look: *Black Nations / Queer Nations*, film by Michelle Parkerson
- Listen: "I was born this way (Better Days Mix)" by Carl Bean

Suggested for Further Study:

Jafari Allen. 2007. "Re-Reading Brother to Brother: Crucial Palimpsest." Introduction to Redbone Press edition of *Brother to Brother: New Writing by Black Gay men*.

Alexis Pauline Gumbs. 2008. "This Instant and This Triumph": Women of Color
American Book Review. May/Jun2008, Vol. 29 Issue 4, p4-5. 2p.

Cheryl Clarke. "The Failure to Transform: Homophobia in the Black Community."

Where and When Black Feminism Enters, to Stay.

3.

- Beverly Guy-Sheftal “The Evolution of Feminist Consciousness among African-American Women” in *Words of Fire*
- Audre Lorde “Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference”. In *Sister Outsider*.
- Combahee River Collective “Combahee River Collective Statement” in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*

Suggested for Further Study:

Kimberlé Crenshaw. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Policies” in *Words of Fire*.

Patricia Hill Collins. “Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought” in her *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*.

Guest Presentation: Archives and Primary Research
Steven G. Fullwood,
Black Lesbian and Gay Archive, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

What sort of moment is this...?

4.

Joy James. “Radicalizing Feminism” In *The Black Feminist Reader*.

Griffin & Parkerson. *A Litany for Survival: The Life and Work of Audre Lorde*

Suggested for Further Study:

Barbara Christian. “The Race for Theory”

Marlon Riggs. *Tongues Untied*. Film

5.

Uses (and Pleasures) of the Erotic

Poetry suite:

- Marvin K. White from his *Nothing Ugly Fly*
- Samiya Bashir from her *Where the Apple Falls*
- Sharon Bridgforth from her *The BullJean Stories*; and her *loveconjure/ blues*
- Adrian Stanford from *Brother to Brother*

Audre Lorde. "Tar Beach" excerpt from her *Zami: A New Spelling of my Name*. Reprinted In *Afrekete: An Anthology of Black Lesbian Writing*
James Baldwin Excerpt from Book Three of his *Just Above My Head*
Audre Lorde "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power"
Herukhuti Selection from his *Conjuring Black Funk: Notes on Culture, Sexuality, and Spirituality, Volume I*

Look:

Ajamu X Portfolio

Zaneli Mutholi Portfolio

Suggested for Further Study:

Cheryl Clarke. "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance" in *Words of Fire*

Evelynn Hammonds. Black [W]holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality

Rag/Tag. Film. Adora Nwandu

Guest Presentation:

Marvin K White

Poet/Performer/Activist

Politics of Poetics

6.

Samuel Delany

"Coming/Out." In his *Shorter views: Queer thoughts and the politics of the paraliterary*

James Baldwin

"Here Be Dragons." Reprinted in *Traps: African American Men on Gender and Sexuality*, Rudolph P. Byrd, and Beverly Guy Sheftall, Eds.

Darnell Moore

"The Queer Shamed and Shame Queered". Social Text Online

Suggested for further study:

C. Riley Snorton "A New Hope": The Psychic Life of Passing. In *Hypatia*

Black *Queer/Quare* Studies: Archives, Bodies, and Possibilities

7.

* Roderick Ferguson. 2003.

Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique

M.U. Richardson. 2003

"No More Secrets, No More Lies: African American History and Compulsory Heterosexuality." In *Journal of Women's History*

8.

Selections.

**Black Queer Studies: a critical anthology* Patrick E. Johnson and Mae Henderson, Eds.

Black LGBTQ Challenging Social Exclusions

9.

*Cohen, Cathy. 1999. *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics.*

Black AIDS Institute. “Back of the Line: The State of AIDS Among Black Gay Men in America: 2012”

Suggested for Further Study:

Juan Battle, et al. 2002. *Say it loud, I'm Black and I'm proud: Black pride survey 2000.* New York: Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Black AIDS Institute. “Exit Strategy: Ending the AIDS Epidemic in Black America. The State of AIDS in Black America 2012”

10.

*Moore, Mignon R. 2011. *Invisible Families: Gay Identities, Relationships, and Motherhood Among Black Women*

11.

Confronting Erasures of Black Transgender and GenderQueer People

Guest Presentation:

Prof. Matt Richardson
University of Texas-Austin

Kortney Ryan Ziegler 2012. “Why Centering Race in Transgender Advocacy is Key To Equality for All”; and “Finding Strength in Fragility” From his Blac(k)ademic critical essays.

Matt Richardson 2011. “How Long?; Brother/Sister/Comrade/Friend” and; (with Leisa Meyer) Preface to Special ‘Race and Transgender Studies’ Issue of *Feminist Studies*
2010. (with Enoch Page). “On the Fear of Small Numbers: A 21st Century Prolegomenon on the U. S. Black Transgender Experience” In *Black Sexualities: Probing Powers, Passions, Practices, and Policies.* Juan Battle and Sandra Barnes, Eds.

Intersectional Politics, Remixed

12.

Kenyon Farrow. 2011. SlutWalk NYC Remarks; 2011. Troy Davis Memorial Remarks; 2004. "Is Gay Marriage Anti-Black?" 2012. Preface (Lisa Duggan and Richard Kim); "Afterword: A Future Beyond Equality" In their *A New Queer Agenda. Scholar & Feminist Online*.

Crunk Feminist Collective. Selections. Including: December 2012. "(Un)Clutching My Mother's Pearls, or Ratchetness and the Residue of Respectability."

Edward Ndopu. 2013. "Musings from a Queercrip Femme Man of Color"

Watch:

"The Same Gender Loving Black Men Movement" Cleo Manago, et al.

Suggested for Further Study:

Kenyon Farrow. 2012. Movement Building: Past and Present Strategies" in Resisting the Rainbow: Right-wing Responses to LGBT Gains. A Report by Political Research Associates.

Black/Queer/Diaspora

Guest Presentation:

Vanessa Agard-Jones
Sarah Lawrence College

13.

*Jafari S. Allen 2011. *¡Venceremos?: the erotics of black self-making in Cuba*. Duke University Press.

Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley. 2011. "Songs for Ezili: Vodou Epistemologies of (Trans)gender" In *Feminist Studies*

Watch/Listen:

Zanele Muholi. *Difficult Love*. Film

Selly Thiam. Selections from "None on Record: Stories of Queer Africa"

For further study:

Black/Queer/Diaspora Special Issue of *GLQ* 2012. Jafari S. Allen, Ed

The Professor reserves the right to make amendments to any part of this syllabus, as necessary, to improve the overall quality of the course. Adequate Notice will be given.