

## Black Feminist Politics



### **Instructor:**

Professor Davies

### **Course Description**

This course draws upon a number of texts to think about the ways Black women seek to re-make themselves and the world, beginning with slavery and its afterlives—to Black girlhood, truth telling and political organizing with Black women at the center. We then turn to the Black feminist foundations of the Movement for Black Lives. While this course is constructed to build understanding of core concepts in Black Feminist Politics—including bodily autonomy, systems of domination, identity politics, and intersectionality, this course also offers a critical standpoint towards Black feminisms, asking how identity-driven political praxes both improve and/or challenge a diverse liberatory political project. That is, while we may find value in Black feminism in bringing the marginalized to the center of political advocacy, we will also ask in what ways identity can be used as either a boon or a cudgel in social movements.

### **Week 1: Gender, Slavery, and Violence**

#### **Class 1**

- Syllabus Review
- Sojourner Truth, 1851. Speech to Women's Convention.

- Beal, Frances M. 1969. “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female.” Reprinted in *Meridians*. Vol. 8, No. 2 (2008), pp. 166-176.

### Class 2

- Jacobs, Harriet. 2001. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. “Childhood”- “The Lover.”pp. 8-39
- Davis, Angela 1971. “Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves” *The Massachusetts Review* , Vol. 13, No. 1/2, pp. 81-100.

*Additional Resources:*

[Women’s Experience Under Slavery Video](#)

## Week 2: The Body

### Class 3

- Threadcraft, Shatema. 2016. *Intimate Justice*, Preface and Chapter 1: “Introduction: Black Female Body Politics.” vii-33.
- Hartman, Saidiya. 2016. “The Belly of the World.” *Souls*. Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 166–173.

### Class 4

- Morrison, Toni. 1987. *Beloved*. Preface and pp 1-75

## Week 3: Black Girlhood

### Class 5

- Chatelain, Marcia. 2015. [Southside Girls: Growing Up in the Great Migration](#). Introduction, pp. 1-18 & Chapter 4 “Did I do Right?: The Black Girl Citizen,” pp. 130-166

### Class 6

- Cox, Aimee Meredith. 2015. [Shapeshifters: Black Girls and the Choreography of Citizenship](#). Preface, pp xii-ix & Chapter 4 “Sex, Gender, and Scripted Bodies” pp. 155-185.
- Hartman, Saidiya. 2018. [“The Anarchy of Colored Girls Assembled in a Riotous Manner.”](#) *South Atlantic Quarterly*. 117 (3): pp. 465–490.

## Week 4: Black Women In 20th Century Social Movements

### Class 7

- Ida B. Wells, [The Red Record](#), “The Case Stated” and “History of Some Cases of Rape”
- Hamlin, Françoise N. 2012. [Crossroads at Clarksdale](#), Chapter 2, “M is for Murder...and Mother,” pp. 42-72.

**Class 8**

- Ransby, Barbara. 2003. *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*. Chapter 8, “Mentoring a New Generation of Activists.”
- Burden-Stelly, Charisse and *Organize, Fight, Win: Black Communist Women’s Political Writing*. Chapter 16. “The Negro Woman Domestic Worker in the United States.”

**Week 5: Radical Politics, Womanism, and Women of Color Feminisms****Class 9**

- McGuire, Danielle L. 2010. *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance*. Prologue & Chapter 8, pp. 246-278.
- Springer, Kimberly. *Living for the Revolution*, Chapter 4: Black Women’s Issues As Feminist Issues, pp. 88-112.
- [Combahee River Collective Statement](#)

**Class 10**

- Walker, Alice. 1983. *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*. [Womanist definition](#), “In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens,”
- hooks, bell. *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*, Preface & Chapter 1: Black Women Shaping Feminist Theory.
- Gloria Anzaldúa, “Speaking in Tongues: A Letter To 3rd World Women Writers,” *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. pp. 165-174.

**Week 6: Solidarities****Class 11**

- Johnson-Reagon, Bernice. 1983. “Coalition Politics: Turning the Century” in *Homegirls: A Black Feminist Anthology*. 356-368.
- hooks, bell. “Sisterhood: Political Solidarity between Women.” *Feminist Review*, no. 23 (1986): 125–138.

**Class 12**

- James, Joy. 1992. “Anita Hill: Martyr Heroism & Gender Abstractions,” *The Black Scholar*, 22:1-2, 17-20.
- Carby, Hazel. 1997. “White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood.” 45-52.
- Lorde, Audre. 1979. “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master’s House” & “Age, Race, Class, and Sex” in *Sister Outsider*, Crossing Press, Berkeley: pp. 110-123.

## Week 7: Black Queer Politics and Sexuality

### Class 13

- Lorde, Audre. 1978. "Uses of the Erotic" in *Sister Outsider*, Crossing Press, Berkeley: pp. 53-59. [Listen](#) here.
- Cohen, Cathy. "Punks, Bulldaggers and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?," *GLQ*, Vol. 3. pp. 437-465.

### Class 14

- Snorton, C. Riley. 2017. *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*. Chapter 1: Anatomically Speaking: Ungendered Flesh and the Science of Sex and Chapter 2. Trans Capable: Fungibility, Fugitivity, and the Matter of Being.

## Week 8: Standpoint Theory and Intersectionality

### Class 15

- Hill Collins, Patricia. 1989. "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought." *Signs*, Summer, 1989, Vol. 14, No. 4, Common Grounds and Crossroads: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in Women's Lives. pp. 745-773.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum*. Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8. Available at: <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>. pp. 139-167.

### Class 16

- Nash, Jennifer. 2019. *Black Feminism Reimagined*, "Introduction: Feeling Black Feminism" 1-32 and Chapter 1 "A love Letter from a Critic, or Notes on the Intersectionality Wars," 33-58.

## Week 9: Black Women in Politics

### Class 17

- Brown, Nadia. 2014. *Sisters in the Statehouse: Black Women and Legislative Decision Making*. Chapter 2: "Formative Experiences."
- Junn, Jane. 1997. "Assimilating or Coloring Participation? Gender, Race, and Democratic Political Participation" in *Women Transforming Politics: An Alternative Reader*. eds. Cathy Cohen, Kathleen B. Jones, and Joan Tronto. pp. 387-397.

### Class 18

- Gillespie, Andra. 2016. "Race, Perceptions of Femininity, and the Power of the First Lady: A Comparative Analysis." in *Distinct Identities*. eds. Nadia Brown and Sarah Allen Gershon. pp. 234-250.

- Lemi, Danielle Casarez, Sarah Virginia Hayes, Maricruz Ariana Osorio. 2023. Chapter 15: “Theorizing Kamala Harris” in *Distinct Identities II*. eds. Nadia Brown and Sarah Allen Gershon. pp. 213-233.
- Davies, Elizabeth Jordie. 2023. Chapter 8: “Talking the Talk: Lori Lightfoot on Policing and Violence in Chicago.” in *Distinct Identities II*. eds. Nadia Brown and Sarah Allen Gershon. pp. 131-147.

### **Week 10: Black Feminism and the Movement for Black Lives**

#### **Class 19**

- African American Policy Forum, 2015. [Say Her Name Report](#) pp. 1-31.
- Carruthers, Charlene. 2018. *Unapologetic: A Black Queer, and Feminist Mandate for Radical Movements*. “Author’s Note,” “Introduction,” and Chapter 1: “All of Us or None of Us.” pp. ix-18.

#### **Class 20**

- Ritchie, Andrea J. 2017. *Invisible No More*, Chapter 10, “Resistance.” pp. 203-232.
- Davis, Angela Y. Gina Dent, Erica R. Meiners, and Beth E. Richie. 2022. *Abolition. Feminism. Now*. “Abolition,” pp. 29-76.