

Women's Studies 520

Women of Color and Social Activism

Autumn 2005

Professor Cynthia Burack

274 University Hall

Phone: 614.292.2210

Office Hours: Tuesday,
2:00-4:00 p.m.

This course focuses on black feminist thought and on citizenship, leadership, democracy, and political activism. We will consider different perspectives on issues such as how to understand the relationship between political thought and political practice and what constitutes political leadership and activism for African American women. Besides considering these issues theoretically, we will address them using contemporary reports of women of color who are political activists and leaders.

Required Texts

Kimberly Springer, *Still Lifting, Still Climbing: Contemporary African American Women's Activism*, 1999 (Duke University Press)

Sheila Radford-Hill, *Further to Fly: Black Women and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2000 (University of Minnesota Press)

Angela Dillard, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner Now: Multicultural Conservatism in America*, 2001 (New York University Press)

Course Requirements

You must complete all readings by the dates indicated on the schedule below. I expect you to attend all class meetings, and I will keep track of attendance through the distribution of a role sheet at the beginning of every class period. It is your responsibility to sign the role sheet if you come to class late. You may miss 2 classes for any reason without penalty; for every absence after the 2nd, I will subtract 3 points from the highest possible grade on the Analytical Paper Project. Students with problems that require more than 2 absences from class during the quarter must speak to me. Late arrival at class should only occur in the event of an emergency. If you consistently arrive late or leave class early you should discuss your issue with me. In the absence of special circumstances you should be prepared to begin class on time with the necessary materials (including whatever books are assigned for that class session).

On Monday meetings throughout the quarter I will conduct class in a mixed lecture/discussion format, using lectures to deliver background and explanatory information. For Wednesday meetings I will expect all students to come prepared with a media piece (see instructions for the Analytical Paper Project below). These sessions will be conducted as group discussions. I expect that all students will participate in class discussions in a candid, thoughtful, and respectful manner. Please feel free to ask questions at any time. And remember: conflict is not a sign of disrespect but, rather, is

often an essential dimension of learning. You should plan to take notes during lectures and discussions in order to enhance your understanding and retention of information.

The Office for Disability Services (ODS) offers a variety of services and auxiliary aids for students with documented disabilities. To access services, students must provide ODS with documentation of the disability. ODS is located in 150 Pomerene Hall; you can contact them at 292-3307.

The OSU Writing Center, which offers free tutoring to students, is located at 475 Mendenhall Lab. You can obtain more information about the Center at http://cstw.ohio-state.edu/writing_center/index.htm, and you may contact them at 688-4291.

Plagiarism Policy

As defined by University Rule 3335-31-02, plagiarism is “the representation of another’s works or ideas as one’s own; it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person’s work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person’s ideas.” Plagiarism is one of the most serious offenses that can be committed in an academic community; as such, it is the obligation of this department and its instructors to report all cases of suspected plagiarism to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. After the report is filed, a hearing takes place and if the student is found guilty, the possible punishment ranges from failing the class to suspension or expulsion from the university. Although the existence of the Internet makes it relatively easy to plagiarize, it also makes it even easier for instructors to find evidence of plagiarism. It is obvious to most teachers when a student turns in work that is not his or her own and plagiarism search engines make it possible to document offenses. Always cite your sources. Always ask questions before you turn in an assignment if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism. Always see your TA or professor if you are having difficulty with an assignment.

Mid-Term and Final Examinations

The mid-term and final exams will be structured as essay exams. Approximately two weeks before each exam, I will distribute a study sheet with questions for which you should prepare responses. These responses will help you prepare for the exam. You may not use notes or texts in the exam. If you miss the mid-term exam for any reason you will make up that exam during the second hour of the final examination period. Please consult the schedule below for exam dates.

Analytical Paper Project

Not all of what we shall read and address in class from texts and lectures constitutes “theory,” but addressing what is often rendered as a theory/practice (or praxis) divide is

important in a class that examines social and political activism. Therefore, a large portion of this class will consist of discussions that center on media reports and analyses of the contemporary activism of women of color.

We will have eight Wednesday meetings during the quarter in which to introduce and discuss material that bears on activism. For these meetings, you will be required to have on hand: 1) a hard copy of a current article on the subject of social/political activism by women of color; 2) a hard copy of an analytical paper that you have written about the article; and 3) the text for which reading has been assigned for that class meeting.

The article you select must be current, although it may focus either on activism past or present. Articles may be culled from newspapers, magazines or (other) online sources, as long as they are dated and represent new material. Whatever the source of each article, you must find or create a hard copy. You will turn in these copies and their paired analytical papers at the end of the quarter and receive a grade that is equivalent to 1/3 of the course grade. Although you may make changes to response papers before turning them in for a final grade, I will collect the analytical papers at the end of Wednesday classes.

Additional requirements are as follows:

- You must choose as least 4 different sources for your articles.
- At least one article you choose must focus on conservative social or political activism by a woman/women of color. If you get to the end of the class and have not collected one example in this category you will have to go back and find one at the risk of receiving a lowered grade for not completing the assignment.
- No more than 2 articles may focus on art or entertainment, even if the content of the art/entertainment being produced is likely to be understood as constituting social activism.
- Each analytical paper should be no briefer than 500 words and no longer than 600. Include a word count at the end of each response paper.

In writing the analytical papers, do not summarize the article. The analytical paper should analyze the article, commenting on it in a way that goes beyond the material presented. Questions to consider can include: what is the nature of the social or political intervention being discussed? To which audience(s) or institution is the intervention aimed by the activist(s)? What effects do you think this activism is likely to have, and why? When relevant, use other course readings to comment on the article content.

Grading

Midterm exam	1/3
Final exam	1/3
Analytical Paper Project	<u>1/3</u>
	100%

Schedule of Readings and Examinations:

This schedule is subject to change. Changes announced in class will be considered to have become a part of the course syllabus.

- Wed Sep 21 Introduction to the course. *Complete "Pretest"*
- Mon Sep 26 **Springer:** Kimberly Springer, Introduction (1-13); "Four Mission Statements" (37-46). **Radford-Hill:** Introduction and Chapters 1-2 (xv-24)
- Wed Sep 28 **Class discussion. Dillard:** Introduction (1-23). *At some point in your reading of selections from Dillard, you might want to read the review of her book that appeared in the New York Times in 2001. Written by Scott L. Malcomson, it can be found on the web at <http://www.nytimes.com/books/01/03/04/reviews/010304.04malcomt.html>*
- Mon Oct 3 **Dillard:** Chapters 1-2
- Wed Oct 5 **Class discussion. Springer:** Aronette M. White, "Talking Black, Talking Feminist: Gendered Micromobilization Processes in a Collective Protest Against Rape" (189-218)
Mid-Term Study Guide Distributed
- Mon Oct 10 **Dillard:** Chapter 3; **Springer:** Wendy G. Smooth and Tamelyn Tucker, "Behind But Not Forgotten: Women and the Behind-the-Scenes Organizing of the Million Man March" (241-258); Lynn M. Eckert and Dionne Benson-Smith, "Crossing Lines: Mandy Carter, Grassroots Activism, and Mobilization '96" (259-274)
- Wed Oct 12 **Class discussion. Springer:** Frances Gateward, "Documenting the Struggle: African American Women as Media Artists, Media Activists" (275-296)
- Mon Oct 17 **Springer:** Kristin Anderson-Bricker, "'Triple Jeopardy': Black Women and the Growth of Feminist Consciousness in SNCC, 1964-1975 (49-69); Benita Roth, "The Making of the Vanguard Center: Black Feminist Emergence in the 1960s and 1970s" (70-90)
- Wed Oct 19 **Class discussion. Springer:** Kristin Myers, "Racial Unity in the Grass Roots? A Case Study of a Women's Social Service Organization" (107-130)
- Mon Oct 24 **Springer:** Jennifer E. Smith, "ONAMOVE: African American Women Confronting the Prison Crisis" (219-240); Vanessa Tait,

“‘Workers Just Like Anyone Else’: Organizing Workfare Unions in New York City” (297-324)

- Wed Oct 26 *Mid-Term Examination*
- Mon Oct 31 **Springer:** M. Bahati Kuumba, “Engendering the Pan-African Movement: Field Notes from the All-African Women’s Revolutionary Union” (167-188); Loretta J. Ross, “Epilogue: African American Women’s Activism in the Global Arena” (325-339)
- Wed Nov 2 **Class discussion.** *Hand in all articles and analytical papers through 11/2*
- Mon Nov 7 **Springer:** Deborah Grayson, “‘Necessity Was the Midwife of Our Politics’” (131-148)
- Wed Nov 9 **Class discussion.**
- Mon Nov 14 **Springer:** Sharon D. Wright, “Black Women in Congress During the Post-Civil Rights Movement Era” (149-163)
- Wed Nov 16 **Class discussion. Radford-Hill:** Chapter 4 (39-53)
- Mon Nov 21 **Radford-Hill:** Chapter 5 (55-68)
- Wed Nov 23 *Thanksgiving Break.* A suggestion: begin reading **Radford-Hill** for next class session
- Mon Nov 28 **Radford-Hill:** Chapters 6-8 (69-102).
- Wed Nov 30 **Class discussion.** *Last Day of Class; hand in Analytical Paper Project*
- Mon Dec 5 *Final Exam: 3:30-5:18. Be on time!*