

**Professor Stephane Dunn**  
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**Office Hrs.: by appointment. Mon. & Wed.**

Please make sure your OSU e-mail is activated and/or forward your OSU email to the email address that you primarily use. In order to get announcements, cancellations, last-minute, or other class related business, each student will subscribe to the class listserv.

English 578.02  
**Gender, Race, and Sex: 1970s Black Revolution Films**  
Spring Quarter 2002, M, 2:30-5:18; W, 2:30-4:18

“We shall have our manhood. We shall have it or the earth will be leveled by our attempts to gain it.”

-Eldridge Cleaver

“The discourse of black resistance has almost always equated freedom with manhood, the economic and material domination of black men with castration, emasculation. Accepting these sexual metaphors forged a bond between oppressed black men and their white male oppressors. They shared the patriarchal belief that revolutionary struggle was really about the erect phallus, the ability of men to establish political dominance that could correspond to sexual dominance.

-bell hooks

“I didn’t see that it comes automatically to nationalist struggles to devalue the contributions of women, as well as gays or anybody else who doesn’t fit the profile of the noble warrior or the elder statesman. I had already come to see that what a lot of people were referring to as revolutionary concepts were not revolutionary at all, but reactionary. What I didn’t understand was just how hard it really is to even conceptualize effective revolution, the kind of revolution that might really change our present global inhumane and inequalitarian economic and political arrangements.”

-Michelle Wallace

“A film may have incredibly revolutionary standpoints merged with conservative ones”

-bell hooks

**Course Description:**

The focus of this course is 1970s black revolution films, some of which have become cult classics in the commonly called “blaxploitation” movie genre. Specifically, our focus will be the politics of gender, race, and sex in these cinematic representations of black power and black revolution. We will utilize feminist film criticism, black feminist, and cultural criticism in our exploration of the historical, political, and social roots of this particular popular culture phenomenon, concentrating especially on their relationship to the films’ images of femininity and masculinity.

### **Goals:**

\*Explore and understand better issues of representation and the collusion of race, gender, and sexuality in the 1970s black revolution themed action film, emerging during the Black liberation movements of the late-1960s–early 1970s. We will develop the ability to critically engage and analyze film in discussion and writing as well as the political and social implications of cultural productions.

### **Required Texts:**

Wallace, Michelle, *Black Macho & the Myth of the Superwoman*

Van Deburg, William L., *New Day in Babylon : The Black Power Movement and American Culture 1965-1975*.

Yearwood, Gladstone L *Black Film as a Signifying Practice*

**\*The other required readings are on electronic reserve.**

### **Requirements and grading:**

1. Attendance is mandatory. Absence without specific approval and official written documentation of illness will be penalized.
2. Students are required to do the readings and participate actively in class discussion. Each Wednesday class (except one Monday or announced otherwise), a group of students will lead the discussion by making oral presentations of at least fifteen minutes each, focusing on the main arguments of the author(s), offering a critical evaluation, raising critical questions, and making connections to the week's film, thus helping to set the agenda for the class discussion. You should seek to highlight themes/issues relevant to those of central focus in the class generally and/or that expand these. Participation, including oral discussion 20%
3. Each student is required to send in by email a response to the forthcoming week's assigned readings. The response will be of 300-500 words (one to two double-spaced pages, 12 pt. font, courier), and must be sent to me by Sunday at 10:00 p.m. Send these as an attachment; if I experience trouble with accessing the file I will ask that you cut & paste. If you do not receive a response email of confirmation, you should check to make sure that it sent and arrived. **Response papers will not be accepted after the due time.** Your response needs to be a critical reflection that demonstrates your close reading of the texts; you will explore a central idea and/or question that the reading (s) raised for you. For Week 3 only, do two response papers, one for Wallace and one for Guerrero. 20%
4. Midterm exam (essay) on theories, readings, discussions, and screenings. 20% of final grade.
5. Final exam, same format 20% of final grade
6. Short paper, 4-5 pp. 20% of final grade

### **Late Work Will Not Be Accepted!**

I will mark and **record** your response paper card with either a checkmark for credit or an X for no credit (for **inadequate**, **incomplete**, or **sloppy** work) (10 credits=A; 9=B; 8=C+; 7=C; 6=D)

### **Course papers:**

In the course paper, you will further develop our class investigation in an analysis of a film not covered in class, using one or more of the theories/themes from the assigned readings and class discussions. Use class readings & critical materials as your central research tools.

- Students are responsible for understanding the meaning of plagiarism and for knowing how to cite words/and or ideas. Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will result in course failure.
- If you have a particular officially **documented** disability and need assistance please discuss this with me. Also, contact for particular needed accommodations.

## **TENATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Wk. 1**

**Mon., Jan. 6**

**Introductions.**

**Read: Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”; excerpt from Jane**

**Gaines, “White Privilege and Looking Relations” for Wednesday.**

**Wed., Jan. 8**

**Feminist Film Criticism (Mulvey, Gaines).**

**Read: Mary Ann Doane, excerpt from “Dark Continents”; hooks, “Race and Sex” in**

***Yearning*.**

### **Wk. 2**

**Mon., Jan. 13**

**hooks. Doane. Documentary (?).**

**Read: (for Wednesday) William L. Van Deburg, “What is Black Power.”**

**Wed., Jan. 15**

**Black Power. Documentary.**

**Read: Michelle Wallace, Intro. & Part I. *Black Macho*; Ed Guerrero, “The Rise and**

**Fall of Blaxploitation.”**

### **Wk. 3**

**Mon., Jan. 20**

**No Class: MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. HOLIDAY!**

**Wed., Jan. 22**

***Black Macho* . “The Rise and Fall. . .”**

**Read: Gladstone Yearwood, Chapter Six (on *Sweetback*);**

**Wk. 4**

**Mon., Jan. 27**

**Screening: *Sweet Sweetback’s Baadasssss Song***

**Read: excerpt from Melvin Van Peebles, Intro. to *Sweetback*.**

**Wed., Jan. 29**

***Sweetback*. Readings on *Sweetback*.**

**Read: excerpts, Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice***

**Wk. 5**

**Mon., Feb. 3**

***Sweetback* contd. *Soul on Ice*. Documentary.**

**Wed., Feb. 5**

**Midterm exam.**

**Read: Yearwood, Chapt. Two, pp. 42-62, Chapt. Three, pp. 94—110.**

**Wk. 6**

**Mon., Feb. 10**

**Screening: *The Spook that Sat by the Door*.**

**Wed., Feb. 12**

***The Spook*. Yearwood.**

**Read : Van Deburg, “Black Power in Afro-American Culture.”**

**Wk. 7**

**Mon., Feb. 17**

**Screening: *Shaft***

**Wed., Feb. 19**

***Shaft*. Van Deburg.**

**Read: Wallace, Part II.**

**Wk. 8**

**Mon., Feb. 24**

**Screening: *Cleopatra Jones***

**Wed., Feb. 26**

***Cleopatra Jones. Wallace (Part II).***

**Read: excerpt from Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology* & Lisa Anderson,**

**“Myth of the Whore.”**

**Wk. 9**

**Mon., Mar. 3**

**Screening: *Foxy Brown*.**

**Wed., Mar. 5**

***Foxy Brown* . Gilman & Anderson.**

**Read: hooks, “Representations” (*Yearning* ).**

**Wk. 10**

**Mon., Mar. 10**

**Screening: Documentary.**

**Wed., Mar. 12**

**Representation and Popular Culture. Final paper due.**