

The Ohio State University  
The Department of African American and African Studies

Course: AFAMAST 3086/History 3086  
Black Women in Slavery and Freedom

New GE: Lived Environments (Theme)  
Old GE: Historical Studies; Social Diversity, U.S.

**Professor:**

**Term:**

**Meeting Time/Place:**

**Office Hours Time/Place:**

### Course Description

This course examines the lives, labors, cultures, and experiences of Black women in the United States, giving special attention to resistance movements and political consciousness. We will explore how Black women grappled with gender, race, class, and sexuality, as well as the ways in which they have labored for self- definition and autonomy. We will seek to understand the ways in which gendered and raced identities were invented (and reinvented) in the American context, using intersectional perspectives to think through how race and gender categories combined to raise unique barriers to Black women's thriving, and how they have battled to overcome such barriers. Using both primary and secondary sources, we will study the past through the words of those who lived it and sharpen our ability to analyze and interpret the arguments of leading historians. Black women have been central to the formation of communities, resistance efforts, family structures, survival, and so many other aspects of life; therefore, this course centers Black women's own perspectives, learning from the ways that they have represented themselves across media, including histories, music, artwork, and more.

### Course Goals

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At the end of the semester, students should be able to

- *Recognize* Black women's myriad contributions to U.S. culture and politics
- *Understand* key theoretical frameworks developed by Black women for better thinking through U.S. social life.
- *Think critically* about the social construction of identity categories, including race, class, gender, and sexuality.
- *Articulate* how such identity categories affect differential social and political experiences across demographics in the U.S. context.
- *Describe* the long history of Black women in this country, particularly with respect to ongoing struggles for freedom as they define it.
- *Interrogate* the role of both state and structural/systemic power in maintaining white supremacy in the U.S.
- *Appreciate* the contemporary diversity of Black feminist political thought, and its solidarities with struggles by other marginalized groups.

## New GE: Lived Environments (Theme)

**GE Rationale:** The history of Black women in America cannot be understood without attention to the particular socio-political and geographic nexuses in which it has emerged. Therefore, this course fulfills requirements in the Lived Environments theme by interrogating environments both physical and conceptual. In particular, this class will explore the *cultural* and *intellectual* environments that Black women have constructed in response to *economic* and *political* environments designed for their exploitation.

### **Goal 1:**

Successful students will explore a range of perspectives on the interactions and impacts between humans and one or more types of environment (e.g. agricultural, built, cultural, economic, intellectual, natural) in which humans live.

- Expected Learning Outcome 1.1: Successful students are able to engage with the complexity and uncertainty of human-environment interactions.
- Expected Learning Outcome 1.2: Successful students are able to describe examples of human interaction with and impact on environmental change and transformation over time and across space.

### **Goal 2:**

Successful students will analyze a variety of perceptions, representations and/or discourses about environments and humans within them.

- Expected Learning Outcome 2.1: Successful students are able to analyze how humans' interactions with their environments shape or have shaped attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviors.
- Expected Learning Outcome 2.2: Successful students are able to describe how humans perceive and represent the environments with which they interact.
- Expected Learning Outcome 2.3: Successful students are able to analyze and critique conventions, theories, and ideologies that influence discourses around environments.

Old GE: Historical Studies

**Goal:** Students recognize how past events are studied and how they influence today's society and the human condition.

### **Expected Learning Outcomes**

1. Students construct an integrated perspective on history and the factors that shape human activity.
2. Students describe and analyze the origins and nature of contemporary issues.
3. Students speak and write critically about primary and secondary historical sources by examining diverse interpretations of past events and ideas in their historical contexts.

Old GE: Social Diversity, United States

**Goals: Students understand the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture in the United States and across the world in order to become educated, productive, and principled citizens.**

### **Expected Learning Outcomes**

- **SOCIAL DIVERSITY IN THE UNITED STATES**
  1. Students describe and evaluate the roles of such categories as race, gender and sexuality, disability, class, ethnicity, and religion in the pluralistic institutions and cultures of the United States.
  2. Students recognize the role of social diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values regarding appreciation, tolerance, and equality of others.

<b>Required Texts</b>
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Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought*

Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope: A History of Black Women in America*

All other texts will be made available via Carmen

<b>Course Assignment and Grading Scale</b>
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#### **Class Discussion (20%)**

Class discussions are a vital component of our course. You will need to come to class having read and completed all assignments. You should be prepared to speak and engage in class discussion in a meaningful manner. You will be required to lead discussion at least once over the course of the semester, we will pass around a sign-up sheet for which day you will lead by the second week of class. When you lead discussion, you will need to come prepared with questions to ask your classmates, as well as additional notes to guide discussion. You will need to turn these in the day that you present.

#### **In Class Assignments/Quizzes (10%)**

This part of your grade will be comprised of in-class readings quizzes and short writing assignments. There is not the possibility to make-up assignments done in class, so you will need to speak to me about an alternative assignment if you have an excused absence.

#### **Response Papers (40%)**

You will need to write 4 Response papers over the course of the semester. Each paper will have its own short prompt. However, in general, they will each ask you summarize and respond some specific aspect of the work that appears to be particularly significant, thought-provoking or revealing about Black Women and their lives. In addition to considering the assigned readings for the week, you will be asked to make connections between the reading in question and some other material, whether internal to the class or from outside it.

Each of the five papers should be 3-4 pages long, and they are due in class on the day when the particular book or reading is the topic of discussion. Paper 1: Due between weeks 2-4 Paper 2: Due

between weeks 5-7 Paper 3: Due between weeks 8-10 Paper 4: Due between weeks 11-12 Paper 5: Due between weeks 13-15.

### **Long Research Paper (30%)**

For this assignment, students will choose a research topic, study it, and write about it. The topic should be consistent with the ideas and issues addressed in the course and determined in consultation with the professor. Specifically, the topic must engage in some way with the historicity, geographical distribution, and intersectionality of some aspect of Black and African experience in the world. Essays should be 5-6 pages in length, double-spaced, 12 pt. font (or roughly 1500-1800 words). Essays may incorporate readings and discussions from class but must expand on our classroom work with outside research and study. Students may also refer to their own experiences with the topic, but not exclusively. Self-reflection must be coupled with comparative study and research, using primary and secondary source materials. This research may involve online research databases (such as Wikipedia) but must employ a variety of published sources (newspaper articles, scholarly articles, encyclopedia entries, monographs, book chapters, etc.). Papers must include a paragraph describing the nature and scope of the research conducted. To locate relevant references, you should all familiarize yourselves with the university library system and its online databases, *and you must cite your sources properly!* My preference is for Chicago author-date style, which can be referenced [here](#).

### **Grading Scale:**

93 - 100 (A)  
90 - 92.9 (A-)  
87 - 89.9 (B+)  
83 - 86.9 (B)  
80 - 82.9 (B-)  
77 - 79.9 (C+)  
73 - 76.9 (C)  
70 - 72.9 (C-)  
67 - 69.9 (D+)  
60 - 66.9 (D)  
Below 60 (E)

<b>Course Policies and Resources</b>
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### **Land Acknowledgement**

We acknowledge that the land The Ohio State University occupies is the ancestral and contemporary territory of the Shawnee, Potawatomi, Delaware, Miami, Peoria, Seneca, Wyandotte, Ojibwe and Cherokee peoples. Specifically, the university resides on land ceded in the 1795 Treaty of Greenville and the forced removal of tribes through the Indian Removal Act of 1830. We want to honor the resiliency of these tribal nations and recognize the historical contexts that have and continue to affect the Indigenous peoples of this land.

### **Disability Services**

**The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu); 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue.**

### **Mental Health**

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](http://ccs.osu.edu) or calling [614-292-5766](tel:614-292-5766). CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at [614-292-5766](tel:614-292-5766) and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

### **Sexual Misconduct/Relationship Violence**

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator at [titleix@osu.edu](mailto:titleix@osu.edu)

### **Diversity**

The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. We are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among each member of our community; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.

## Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

<b>Tentative Schedule*</b>
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### Week 1

Mon

Overview of the course

Wed

1. Frances Beale, “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female, *Words of Fire*, 146-156.

### Week 2

Mon

1. “Introduction: Standpoint Theory as a Site of Political, Philosophic, and Scientific Debate,” *Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*, 1-16.
2. Jane Coaston, “The Intersectionality Wars,” *Vox*, May 28, 2019.

Wed

1. Patricia Hill Collins, “Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought,” *Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*, 103-126.

## **Part 1: Enslavement and Resistance**

### Week 3

Mon

1. *Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter One

Wed

1. *Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter Two

### Week 4

Mon

1. Mon Daina Berry, *Swing the Sickle for the Harvest is Ripe*, Chapter 1, “I Had to Work Hard, Plow, and Go and Split Wood Jus’ Like a Man’: Skill, Gender, and Productivity in Agricultural Settings.”

Wed

*Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter Three.

### Week 5

Mon

1. Angela Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," *Words of Fire*, 199-219.

Wed

1. Angela Davis, "The Legacy of Slavery: Standards for a New Womanhood", *Women, Race, and Class*, 3-29.

### Week 6

Mon

1. Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, Chapter One

Wed

1. *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, Chapter Two

### Week 7

Mon

1. *Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter Four

Wed

1. *Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter Five

## **Part 2: Free Black Women and Nineteenth Century Political Activism**

### Week 8

Mon

1. *Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter Six

Wed

2. *Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter Seven

### Week 9

Mon

1. Sojourner Truth, "Woman's Rights"; "When Woman Gets Her Rights Mann Will Be Right" *Words of Fire*, 35-38.
2. Anna Julia Cooper, "The Status of Women in America" *Words of Fire*, 44-50
3. Ida Wells-Barnett, "Lynch Law in America," *Words of Fire*, 70-76.

Wed

1. *Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter Seven

### Week 10

Mon

1. *Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter Eight

Wed

2. *Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter Nine

## **Part 3: Black Women's Activism in the Twentieth Century**

### Week 11

Mon

1. Angela Davis, "The Meaning of Emancipation According to Black Women," *Women, Race, and Class* 87-98
2. "Education and Liberation: Black Women's Perspective" 99-109.
3. Angela Davis, "Woman Suffrage at the Turn of the Century: The Rising Influence of Racism," 110-126.

Wed

1. Lorraine Hansberry, Introduction by Margaret B. Wilkerson"; "Simone de Beauvoir and *The Second Sex: An American Commentary*," 125-142

### Week 12

Mon

1. Introduction, *Words of Fire*, 229-230.
2. The Combahee River Collective, A Black Feminist Statement, *Words of Fire*, 231-240.

Wed

1. Documentary Screening

### Week 13

Mon

1. bell hooks, "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory", *Words of Fire*, 270-282
2. Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference", *Words of Fire*, 284-292.
3. Cheryl Clarke, "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance," *Words of Fire*, 242-252.

Wed

1. Patricia Hill Collins, "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought", *Words of Fire*, 338-358.
2. Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," *Sister Outsider*, 41-48.

## **Part 4: Black Women and the Contemporary Conjuncture**

### Week 14

Mon

1. "A Conversation with Founding Scholars of Intersectionality Kimberlé Crenshaw, Nira Yuval-Davis, and Michelle Fine," *The Intersectional Approach: Transforming the Academy through Race, Class, and Gender*, 61-78.
2. [Intersectionality Matters Podcast, Episode 3.](#)

Wed

1. "#BlackLivesMatter: the birth of a new civil rights movement," the guardian
2. [A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement by Alicia Garza, \*The Feminist Wire\*, October 7, 2014.](#)
3. ["How a Hashtag Defined a Movement"](#) (YouTube)

### Week 15

Mon

1. [Sheri-Marie Harrison, "New Black Gothic," \*Los Angeles Review of Books\*, June 23, 2018.](#)

2. [Toni Morrison, "Making America White Again," \*The New Yorker\*, November 14, 2016.](#)
3. [Childish Gambino, "This is America," YouTube.](#)

Wed

1. Emily Lordi, "Surviving the Hustle: Beyoncé's Performance of Work," *Black Camera* vol. 9, no. 1 (fall 2017): 131-145.
2. [Hanif Abdurraqib, "Jamila Woods Conjures Ghosts," \*Pacific Standard\*, May 31, 2019.](#)

Week 16

Wrap-Up

TBD

\*Changes in the schedule will inevitably occur, so stay tuned to Carmen for updates. I will never alter the course without giving you sufficient notice, nor will I alter it in a way that results in more work for you.