

HIS 350R
AFR 374D/ WGS 350
Black Women in America
Fall 2013
The University of Texas at Austin

Dr. Daina Ramey Berry
Office: Garrison Hall Room 1.104
Office Hours: Mondays 1:00pm – 2:30pm and by appointment
Phone: 512.471.3261 (dept.)
Class: Mondays 3:00pm-6:00pm
Location: GAR 0.132
Unique ID: HIS 39895 AFR 374D 30645 WGS 47810

Course Description:

In a White House Blog posted on 10 February 2012, First Lady Michelle Obama announced the 2012 theme for Black History Month: Celebrating Black Women in American Culture and History. “They are women,” she explained, “who fought against slavery, who stood up for Women’s suffrage, and marched in our streets for our civil rights.” Continuing, she noted that African American women also “... stirred our souls and they’ve opened our hearts.” In addition to celebrating Black Women’s contributions, we must also look at the struggles women overcame to be a part of the American fabric; struggles over their images, representation, and reputation. No time is more important than now given the recent media shortcomings to understanding black womanhood from Harriet Tubman to Rachel Jeantel; Oprah Winfrey to Susan Rice.

To this end, the course will use primary sources, historical monographs, and essays to provide a chronological and thematic overview of the experiences of black women in America from their African roots to the circumstances they face in the present era. This seminar class will be discussion driven and will address the following topics: the evolution of African American women’s history as field of inquiry; African American women historians; the trans-Atlantic slave trade; enslavement in the United States; abolition and freedom; racial uplift; urban migration; labor and culture; the modern civil rights movement; organized black feminism; hip-hop culture; social and mainstream media; AIDS and the Black Women's Health study. Additionally, the course will draw upon readings written by and about African American women with a particularly emphasis on their approach to gender and race historiography.

Course Objectives & Flags:

Students should leave this course with a foundation to understand many of the discussions surrounding contemporary issues about race and gender in American society. Particular attention will be paid to helping students learn to think critically about historical issues.

Students will also gain the skills necessary to evaluate the different and sometimes contradictory interpretations offered by historians as well as gain insight into the methods used by historians to interpret the past. Attention will also be paid to strengthening students' oral and written communication skills.

This course carries the **Independent Inquiry** flag. Independent Inquiry courses are designed to engage you in the process of inquiry over the course of a semester, providing you with the opportunity for independent investigation of a question, problem, or project related to your major. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from the independent investigation and presentation of your own work.

This course carries the **Writing Flag**. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Class Etiquette:

Each student is expected to attend class, participate in discussions, and complete all reading and writing assignments by the deadlines indicated in this syllabus or any written addenda. Class discussions are an important component and students will be graded on their participation, contributions to discussions and engagement with their peers. It is the student's responsibility to come to class prepared to discuss the reading for this course; therefore, each student must arrive with two discussion questions based upon the weekly readings. Students are not allowed to record class interactions unless they have written permission from the professor. Please arrive to class on time and turn off cell phones and all other electronic devices including laptop computers. There will be a break during class in which students can check voicemails, emails, texts, etc.

Grading Policy:

Please note that this class, like other undergraduate courses at UT, will now utilize plus and minus options for final grades. However, class assignments are based on a point system with an overall course total of 100 points (see below). Class attendance is mandatory and late assignments are not accepted. The professor will consider medical or other emergencies with written documentation and/or prior notification on a case-by-case basis.

Eric McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1985).

Additional readings will be distributed electronically on Blackboard.

Policies and Procedures:

University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Plagiarism

The University's *Institutional Rules* (Section 11-802(d)) define plagiarism as including, "but not limited to, the appropriation of, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any other means material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source . . . and presenting that material as one's own academic work offered for credit." In other words, "**handing in someone else's work and taking credit for it as if it were your own.**" Source: History Department statement on Academic Integrity:

<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/history/about/academic-integrity.php>

For examples of plagiarism see the site above or the Student Judicial Services Website.

Documented Disability Statement

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone) or <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd>

Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students

E-mail is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, you are responsible for reading your e-mail for university and course-related information and announcements. You are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to your e-mail address. You should check your e-mail regularly and frequently—the university recommends daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-critical. You can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating your e-mail address at: <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>

Email in recent years has often mistakenly become a substitute for office hours and students sometimes abuse email by the nature of their comments, requests, demands, and questions. This practice will not be tolerated. The professor is an advocate of contact with students through office hours and prefers to meet in person. Therefore, this course will utilize email to post discussion questions for upcoming class meetings, notification of schedule changes, announcements for lectures on campus, or any other miscellaneous issues that relate to the course. Please be courteous over email and try to save questions for class discussions so that all students can benefit from the response.

Writing Center:

I strongly encourage you to use the Undergraduate Writing Center, FAC 211, 471-6222: <http://www.uwc.utexas.edu/>). The UWC offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT undergraduate, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. These services are not just for writing that has "problems": Getting feedback from an informed audience is a normal part of a successful writing project. The UWC's trained consultants work with students from every department on both academic and non-academic writing. Using methods that preserve the integrity of your work, they help you develop strategies to improve your writing and become a more independent writer. Whether you are writing a lab report, a resume, a term paper, a statement for an application, or your own poetry, UWC consultants will be happy to work with you.

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>

Emergency Evacuation Policy:

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside. Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not

McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*, Chapters 1-3, pp. 1-125.

Activity: PCL Library Workshop (Details TBD)

Week 9

October 28 **Black Women, Activism, and Informal Economies**

Readings: Proposal and Annotated Bib. Due

McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*, Chapters 4-6, pp. 126-220

*La Shawn Harris, "Madame Queen of Policy: Madame Stephanie St. Clair and African American Women's Participation in Harlem's Informal Economy," *Black Women, Gender & Families*, Vol. 2 No. 2, (Fall 2008), pp. 53-76.

Activity: Skype with a Scholar
Writing Center Workshop, "Writing Research Papers"

Week 10

November 4 **Health, Citizenship, and Black Power**

Readings: *Assata*

Activity: Guest Speaker, Ava Purkiss, UT Doctoral Student "Black Women and Health"

Week 11

November 11 **Class Presentations**

Readings: *Assata*

Reading Response #5 (11/10)

Activity: Discussion of *Assata*

Week 12

November 18 **Class Presentations**

Extra Office Hours 9/18 1:30-3pm

ROUGH DRAFT DUE

Activity Peer Review Exercise

Week 13

November 25 **Library And Reading Day**

Readings: *Melissa Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen*, "Michelle;" *Wanzo, "The Era of Lost (White) Girls," and *Emerson, "Where My Girls At?"

Week 14

December 2 **Class Conclusions – Black Women Today**

Activity Peer Review Feedback and Paper Revisions
Course evaluations

Week 15

December 9

No Class – SPECIAL OFFICE HOURS (TDB)

December 11

Final Papers Due: at 5:00pm on Blackboard