Black Feminist Thought (PH 329) Fall 2016
Dr. Mecke Nagel
Tuesdays 4:20-6:50
Office: 138A Old Main, Philosophy Dept.
Hours: W 2-4pm and by appt.
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Course Description:
Analysis of diverse Black feminist philosophical approaches to Black women's oppression and agency and Black liberation struggles. Comparison of Afrocentric political theories and movement strategies. (3 cr hrs) Fulfills: LASR. Cross listed with Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies.

Themes in Black Feminisms
- intersections of race, sexuality, gender identity and expression
- Black Lives Matter: critique of anti-black racism
- debate assimilation vs. cultural pluralism models
- emphasis of unity of struggle (vs. separatist politics)
- validate experience (of oppression and resistance to state violence)
- challenge anti-Black racism in institutions, esp. media and law
- how to validate theory ('race for theory') and intellectualism: heroic/talented tenth model vs. community/organic intellectual
- importance of women in the family and community (caretakers, other mothers)
- challenging internalized oppression (colonialism, white public patriarchy, homophobia)
- theorize about heteropatriarchy (Audre Lorde, Cheryl Clarke, Jewelle Gomez, Barbara Smith, Evelynn M. Hammonds, Combahee River Collective)
- solidarity with other Third world women (e.g., Alice Walker, Joy James)
- prison activism, speaking out against violence against women, FGM, police brutality, etc.
- critique of the 'studying down' research problem in the 'race for theory'
- diverse feminist theories:
  - Afro centrist standpoint theory (Pat Hill Collins)
  - postmodern feminism (bell hooks)
  - black womanist ethics (Alice Walker, Katie Cannon)
  - radical/revolutionary Black feminism (Joy James, Angela Davis, Ella Baker, Assata Shakur and others)
  - https://libcom.org/library/black-radical-tradition
  - http://bostonreview.net/reading-radicalism

Course Requirements:
1. This class is discussion centered. This means that everyone is expected to actively listen and speak to the issues before us. Bring questions on the readings to class.

2. Research Paper: a philosophically argued paper using the resources, texts from class, where you explore a major theme in Black Feminist Thought. A 7 page paper is due 10/4 and a 12-15 page paper elaborating on the draft at the end of the semester.

3. Two (2) Social/Political Papers: On a regular basis faculty and class members will announce events happening on campus or in the community (speakers, workshops, rallies, etc.). You will attend and write a short paper on each event within one week after you attend the event. Papers should be 1 page in length and typed, in which you evaluate the event and your response to it.

5. You are required to give one class presentation on the assigned readings. During the second week of class you’ll be asked to sign up for a topic. Your group will prepare a Power Point Presentation on the week’s assigned topic
and additional background material on the topic, which your group will select. Each speaker will present for 10 minutes and respond to questions from the audience. Submit your group’s Power Point by Noon, Monday.

More than 1 absence will adversely affect your grade. It is important that you come to all class sessions and to keep yourself informed in case you will have to miss a class.

**Required Readings:**
Angela Y Davis, *Women, Race, and Class*, 1983  
Melissa Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes and Black Women*, 2011  

**Evaluation Summary:**
- 1 Research Paper: 60 pts  
- Group presentation: 20 pts  
- Participation: 10 pts  
- 2 Event papers: 10 pts

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**Syllabus:**
**Week 1: Introduction to the Course**  
8/30  
*Introducing feminist political theory and some major strands (Black, liberal, radical, postcolonial, and socialist feminisms)*

**Week 2: “When and where I enter...”**  
9/6 Davis, chapters 1-4  
Truth, “Ain’t I a Woman?” (online)

**Week 3: Black Women’s Activism, 19th C**  
9/13 Davis, chapters 5-8

**Week 4: Black Women’s Activism, 20th C**  
9/20 Davis, chapters 9-12

**Week 5: Revolutionary Politics and Iconization: Case of Assata and Angela**  
9/27 James, “Radicalizing Feminism”; Combahee River Collective; Open letter from Assata Shakur” (in James/Whiting);  
Nagel, “Angela Y Davis and Assata Shakur as Women Outlaws” (online)

**Week 6: Literary Theory**  
Week 7: Literary Theory
10/11 Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book”; Awkward, “A Black Man’s Place in Black Feminist Criticism” (in James/Whiting);
Moynihan Report on the Black Family (online)

Week 8: October Break—no meeting on 10/18

Week 9: Black Feminist Standpoint Theory
Film: Ethnic Notions

Week 10: Race, Representation, Black Self-Determination
11/1 Preface, Intro, Chapters 1-4 (hooks)

Week 11: Race, Representation, Black Self-Determination
11/8 Chapter 5-8 (hooks)

Week 12: Race, Representation, Black Self-Determination
11/15 Chapter 9-12 (hooks)

Week 13: “…in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood”
11/22 Intro, chapters 1-2 (Harris-Perry)

Week 14: “…in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood”
11/29 chapters 3-5 (Harris-Perry)

Week 15: “…in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood”
12/6 chapters 6-7 (Harris-Perry)
final paper is due