

## **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, Evelyn 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



**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**

10/25 hooks, "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory;" Hill Collins, "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought;" Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" (in James/Whiting)  
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**