GENDER & RELIGION

Global Black Feminisms & Womanisms:
Epistemology, Spirituality and the Politics of Representation

REL 352R-000 #4295/WGS 352R-000 #4296/AAS 385-001 #4298/AFS 389-004 #4299
GER: HSC

Emory College  Spring 2014
Monday/Wednesday 8:30-9:45
123 Candler Library

Professor Callaway:
dianne.o@emory.edu
Office Hours: Mon: 2:30-4:30
Office Hours: (by appointment only)
(or by appointment on M/W/F)

SAMPLE SYLLABUS
FROM A PRIOR SEMESTER

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course invites students to place African American and African womanist/feminist and gender discourses in conversation around the themes of epistemology, spirituality and representation. We will begin with full awareness that African American and African scholars have gone to great lengths to expose and deconstruct the imperialistic features of White-Western feminist theory and theoretical engagement of women’s and gender issues in Africa and the African diaspora. With this backdrop in mind, we will seek to discover the extent to which African and African American women’s and gender studies scholars have engaged each other; and we will interrogate the nature of their explicit and implicit conversations, giving attention to: (1) assumptions and claims about knowledge production; (2) spiritual, religious and ethical motifs; (3) identity politics; and (4) feminist/womanist activism that seeks to address issues of race/heritage, culture, and sexuality. Pivotal figures include Chikwenye Ogunyemi, Alice Walker, Oyeronke Oyewumi, Audre Lorde, Ifi Amadiume, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Delores Williams. These and other scholars on the syllabus offer parallel and divergent perspectives on: (1) the status and roles of women in pre-colonial African societies; (2) women and institutionalized religion in Africa and African America; (3) the role of the sacred in African and African American women’s lives; (4) female genital rituals and sexuality; and (5) the symbolic meanings of ‘Africa’ for continental and diasporic women of African descent. Through a survey of powerful essays, scholarly texts, novels and documentaries, we will take up these and other topics during the course of the semester.

Course Requirements

1) CLASS PARTICIPATION: (15% of final grade). Regular attendance is required in order to pass this class. Without official written excuses from an administrative official, athletic coach or physician, more than three (3) absences will result in the reduction of your final grade by one grade level. For example, a final letter grade of (B) would be reduced to a (B-). It will help you to think about the evaluation of your class participation as follows: Attendance (5%), Attention (5%), Articulation (5%)
In order to facilitate productive discussion and engagement of the course materials, students will be asked to relate their questions and comments to the assigned readings. The following guidelines will also help students to prepare for class discussion:

1. Spend time before each class preparing for discussion by making notes in your texts or on a separate sheet of paper pertaining to specific passages from the readings that you want to discuss.

2. During class discussions, when raising a question or point about the assigned readings, make specific references to texts, authors and page numbers in question.

3. When responding to the questions or comments of fellow students try to listen carefully to your interlocutor’s question/position. Try not to make assumptions about your interlocutor’s intentions or motivations. When necessary, ask your interlocutor to clarify or restate her/his position. If you intend to refute or challenge the position of your interlocutor, try to support your own position by referring to the assigned readings and other course materials.

2) SCHOLARLY PRÉCIS & PRESENTATIONS: (30% of final grade). Each student will be responsible for composing 2 scholarly précis that present a personal and intellectual biography of an assigned author and offer a sound synthesis and cogent analysis of select weekly assignments. Students will present one of these orally in class over the course of the semester. Each précis/presentation will be worth 15% of the final grade. The précis must be submitted/presented in class on the due date. Students are expected to be present in class by 8:30 am in order to receive full credit for a précis submission or presentation. Late précis will not be accepted. Précis/presentation preparation guidelines will be distributed on January 16.

3) THEMATIC PAPER: (20% of final grade). Students will write a 5-7 page paper that addresses one of the major course themes covered in class between January 16 and March 5. Paper proposals consisting of a topic, thesis and preliminary outline will be due electronically on Saturday, February 15. The paper will be due electronically on Saturday, March 8 by 11:59 pm. Students will receive further guidelines for preparing topic proposals and writing the paper by February 5.

4) DIALOGICAL PAPER: (35% of final grade). For the final paper (8-10 pages) students will write a scholarly research or conceptual paper that places an African American/diasporic scholar in conversation with an African continental scholar based upon one of the central themes of the course. Students will receive further guidelines for preparing topic proposals and writing the paper by March 26. Paper proposals, consisting of a topic, thesis and preliminary outline will be due electronically on Saturday April 12 by 11:59 pm. The final paper will be due on Friday, May 2 by 5:30 pm.

5) COURSE SUMMARY STATEMENTS: (voluntary supplemental submissions). Students may elect to submit supplementary course summary statements that synthesize the knowledge gained over the course of the semester within a cogent 1-2 page essay. Such submissions will be evaluated as extra credit and can potentially raise students’ final course grade. Students will be asked to share their statements in class. Submissions are due between April 23 and April 28. See syllabus schedule for further details.
6) CLASS ENVIRONMENT: The class environment is an intimate, vulnerable and personal space where students are constantly asked to share opinions and practice the performance of ‘public’ intellectual work. Students and instructors must show respect for one another at all times. You may not agree with another’s position, you may not even respect some of the viewpoints offered by others, but you must respect each person as a contributing member of the class. Given our pedagogical commitment to establishing an active learning environment, I encourage you to be flexible as you engage one another with sensitivity. I invite you to allow yourself and your peers adequate space to struggle with ideas and the exchange of perspectives.

Criteria for Evaluation

—accuracy and precision in oral expression and prose
—scholarly substance and rigor
—creativity, critical judgment and imagination
—contribution to the class discussion
—timely completion of written assignments

Writing Tips:

1) When preparing for discussion, and especially when writing papers, do not make unsupported assertions. Try to present the most convincing case for your argument. Think carefully and thoroughly about the evidence you will use to support your position. Always anticipate opposing critiques of your position and opposing arguments. Try to answer or address opposing positions as you present your own position. This will demonstrate that you are aware of alternative viewpoints and that you are capable of proposing and defending a thesis.

2) Your written work should not be first-draft presentations of your thoughts. When writing papers, give yourself ample time to read the assigned materials and to consult appropriate sources before making final decisions about your thesis statement and the supporting evidence that will provide structure for your argument and conclusion. For example, you might begin writing your final paper by making very strong statements about a point you aim to defend. However, in consulting the works of scholars in the field, you may see the need to modify your original thesis, or you may be compelled to abandon it altogether. This is to be expected in scholarly research and writing. You should not feel reluctant to change your argument if your reasons for changing it are more convincing than your original reasons for posing it. Just be sure that in the final paper (the draft that you hand in to be graded) your thesis statement is consistent with your argument (supporting evidence) and conclusion.

3) Please take advantage of all the resources available to you when writing your papers. Never hesitate to ask reference librarians for help in trying to locate scholarly sources. Never hesitate to ask the course instructor(s) for extra help in thinking through your ideas for your papers.

The following is a list of subject librarians at the Woodruff Library you may want to consult:

**Erica Bruchko**
Phone: 404-727-0657
E-mail: Berica@emory.edu
Subjects: United States History, African American Studies, American Studies
Elizabeth McBride
Phone: 404-727-6953
E-mail: libemb@emory.edu
Location: Room 226, Woodruff Library (ask for me at the Reference desk on Level 2)

Sandra Still
Contact Info:
phone: 404-727-1061
fax: 404-727-0408
E-mail: libsjs@emory.edu
Subjects: English and American Literature, Women's Studies

4) Utilize Emory University’s Writing Center. The Center provides writing tutors who can help you to organize your thoughts, review your paper drafts and improve your writing skills. CONTACT INFORMATION: http://writingcenter.emory.edu/index.html

5) Although late papers are almost never acceptable, do not refrain from communicating with course instructors about any difficulty that might prevent you from completing assignments on time. It is better to let us know than to avoid contact or conversation, even if the problem is time management or procrastination.

6) This syllabus is designed to guide you as you make your best attempt to complete the requirements for the course. Please refer to appropriate sections before turning in all written assignments:

1) the 2 two-page précis/presentations
2) the 5-7 page thematic paper
3) the 8-10 page dialogical paper

Use the writing mechanics guide, writing tips and criteria for evaluation to assess your work before submitting it for a grade. I encourage you to do this even if you are less than satisfied with the quality of your work. This will help you to keep a conscious record of your strengths and weaknesses, especially regarding academic discipline.

Students with Disabilities: If you experience any disability that requires individual adaptation in order to complete the requirements for this course, and/or to meet with instructors, please feel free to speak with us so that appropriate accommodations may be arranged.

BOOKS FOR PURCHASE: (AT EMORY BARNES & NOBLE)

1. Ifi Amadiume, Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion & Culture
2. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, If it Wasn't for the Women...: Black Women’s Experience and Womanist Culture in Church and Community
4. Amy Molloy, However Long the Night: Molly Melching’s Journey to Help Millions of African Women and Girls Triumph
5. Oyèrònké Oyèwùmí, The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses
6. Oyèrónkẹ Oyèwùmí, African Women and Feminism: Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood
7. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, The River Between
8. Alice Walker, Possessing the Secret of Joy
9. Delores Williams, Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk

ALL COURSE TEXTS WILL BE ON RESERVES DIRECT AT WOODRUFF LIBRARY AND LINKED TO OUR BLACKBOARD COURSE SITE. ADDITIONAL MATERIALS CAN BE ACCESSED DIRECTLY AT THE BLACKBOARD COURSE SITE.

Schedule of readings (subject to change). Students are advised to read the materials each week in the order presented.

Wed, January 16: Introduction to the Course; Review of Syllabus

DISPLAY BLACKBOARD GLOSSARY OF FEMINIST/WOMANIST TERMS
DISTRIBUTE GUIDELINES FOR PRÉCIS/PRESENTATIONS

Mon, January 20: NO CLASS, MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. HOLIDAY

Wed, January 22: Womanisms and Feminisms in Africa and African America

Alice Walker, In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens, xi-xii CH

READ THROUGH GLOSSARY OF FEMINIST/WOMANIST TERMS: Make a few notes about what you learned or wish to know more about after reading through the glossary.

Mon, January 27: What Should We Do with the Lavender Elephant in the Room of Global Black Feminist/Womanist Gender-Talk?

Ifi Amadumé, “In the Company of Women: Love, Struggle, Class and Our Feminisms,” Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion & Culture, 199-207 (Chapter 9) BB
SECTION I: AFRICAN EPSTEMOLOGY & SOCIAL ORGANIZATION


Oyèrónké Oyèwúümí, “Preface,” ix-xi; “Visualizing the Body: Western Theories and African Subjects,” 1-30 (Chapter 1), The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense Of Western Gender Discourses


Oyèrónké Oyèwúümí, “(Re)constituting the Cosmology and Sociocultural Institutions of Òyó - Yorùbá,” The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense Of Western Gender Discourses, 31-64 (Chapter 2)


Wed, February 5:  Undoing Assumptions and Understanding African Anafemales in the Òyó, Nigerian Context Contd. & Scholarly Writing Goals

Read Grammar & Punctuation Checklist thoroughly at Blackboard course site and come to class with your preferred grammar/composition resource guide or manual of style.

DISTRIBUTE GUIDELINES FOR THEMATIC PAPER & PAPER TOPIC PROPOSAL

SECTION II: Matriarchs • Mothers • Mistresses • Mammies • Mediums

Mon, February 10:  Africa’s Matriarchal Heritage: Theorizing African Women’s Social and Moral Influence


Wed, February 12:  Mothers, Mistresses, Mammies and Mediums: Theorizing African American Women’s Social and Religious Experience

Delores Williams, “Preface,” ix-xvi; “Introduction,” 1-12; “Hagar’s Story: A Route to Black Women’s Issues,” 15-33 (Chapter 1); “Tensions in Motherhood: from Slavery to Freedom,” 34-59 (Chapter 2), Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk,

6
Mon, February 17: Mothers, Misstresses, Mammies and Mediums: Theorizing African American Women’s Social and Religious Experience Contd.

Delores Williams, “Social-Role Surrogacy: Naming Black Women’s Oppression,” 60-83 (Chapter 3); “Womanist God-Talk and Black Liberation Theology,” 161-170 (Section From Chapter 6); “Womanist-Feminist Dialogue: Differences and Commonalities,” 187-199 (Section From Chapter 7), Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk B

Wed, February 19: Mothers, Ministers and Mediums: Theorizing African American & African Women’s Social and Religious Experience


Mon, February 24: Mothers, Mediums, Mediators and the Cross: Womanist Theology and African Caribbean Heritage Religions


Wed, February 26: Colonial Interventions and the Disruption of African Women’s Spiritual Heritages


Mon, March 3: Colonial Interventions and the Disruption of African Women's Spiritual Heritages Contd.

Wed, March 5: Reflections, Discussion and Questions about Thematic Paper

Finish discussing previous material and address questions about the thematic paper

THEMATIC PAPER DUE ELECTRONICALLY SATURDAY, MARCH 14 BY 11:59 PM

SECTION III: WOMANIST AND FEMINIST LITERARY IMAGINATION & CRITICISM

Mon, March 10: NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK (Read Assigned Articles and Novel)
Wed, March 12: NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK (Read Assigned Articles and Novel)

Mon, March 17: The African American Womanist Literary Imagination

Alice Walker, Possessing the Secret of Joy v-199  (Preface/Front Matter & Parts 1-14) B

DOCUMENTARY: Parmar Prabrita, Warrior Marks (view select clips in class)


Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, “Alice in Motherland: Reading Alice Walker on Africa and Screening the Color ‘Black,’” in Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí ed., African Women and Feminism: Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood, 159-185 (Chapter 6) B


Nugi wa Thiong’o, The River Between 1-152 (Entire Text) B

DISTRIBUTE GUIDELINES FOR FINAL DIALOGICAL PAPER & PAPER TOPIC PROPOSAL
Mon, March 31:  An ‘Indigenous’ Approach to Eradicating Female Genital Cutting in Africa

Aimee Molloy, *However Long the Night: Molly Melching's Journey to Help Millions of African Women and Girls Triumph* (Entire Text)

**Assignment:** Visit Tostan’s Web page on Female Genital Cutting:

**In Class:** Tostan: Empowering Communities to Abandon Female Genital Cutting (FGC)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcX32brTU48 (9 minutes) & Discussion of final dialogical paper

---------------

Lecture by Lisa Hoelle, Emory University, Graduate Division of Religion

**SECTION IV: THE PROMISE AND PROBLEM OF ‘AFRICA’**

Wed, April 2:  ‘Purpling’ African Historical and Political Studies

Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, “Making History, Creating Gender: The Invention of Men and Kings in the Writing of Òyó-Yorùbá Oral Traditions,” *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense Of Western Gender Discourses*, 80-120 (Chapter 3) B

Mon, April 7:  ‘Purpling’ African Historical and Political Studies Cont'd.

Ifi Amadiume, “Gender and Social Movements in Africa: A West African Experience, 109-143 (Chapters 5) Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion & Culture B


Wed, April 9:  Re/Presenting African Women in Black Feminist Scholarship


**DIALOGICAL PAPER TOPIC PROPOSAL DUE SATURDAY, APRIL 12 BY 11:59 PM**

Mon, April 14:  Race Pride, Masculinity and Black Feminist Consciousness

Wed, April 16: Africa, Black Nationalism and Black Feminist Thought & Africa as Ultimate Symbol and Sacred Homeland


Lecture by Lisa Hoelle, Emory University, Graduate Division of Religion

Mon, April 21: Revisiting Foreign Interventions, Assistance and Activisms in Africa


Hauwa Ibrahim, Practicing Shariah Law: Seven Strategies for Achieving Justice in Shariah Courts, xxv-26 (Preface-Chapter1); 185-219 (Chapter 7)

Lecture by Lisa Hoelle, Emory University, Graduate Division of Religion

SECTION V: CONCEPTUAL SYNTHESIS OF COURSE THEMES

Wed, April 23: Synthesizing: Epistemological, Spiritual & Theo-ethical Insights

Discuss student Epistemological & Spiritual/Theo-ethical Course Summary Statements and final paper drafts

Mon, April 28: Synthesizing: Insights into the Politics of Representation

Discuss student Politics of Representation Course Summary Statements and final paper drafts

FINAL PAPERS DUE NO LATER THAN FRIDAY, MAY 2 AT 5:30 PM. PAPERS SHOULD BE EMAILED TO THE PROFESSOR AND TEACHING ASSISTANT. NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.