

**COURSE SYLLABUS****Course Overview:**

This course examines the complex experience of being a Black woman in America. It addresses such topics as identity, Black feminism, Black/White sisterhood, social mobility, and activism from a socio-historical perspective.

**Course Objectives:**

- To help students develop a knowledge base about the realities facing Black women in America;
- To help students understand the social reality of systems of oppression and how they impact on the life outcomes of Black women;
- To help students to develop a theoretical paradigm that could be applied to the examination of other excluded and marginalized groups;
- To help students to think critically about the relationship between race, class, and gender.

**Required Text:**

There will be no required text for this class. The reading materials will come from a variety of sources: books, journal articles, newspapers, etc. All reading materials will be provided as handouts to the students in class.

**Assignments:**

Students are required to read all assigned material prior to class and to develop a response statement for each of the readings. *The response statement should not be more than three to five sentences, not necessarily in paragraph format, which reflect the more relevant points of the article for the student. The response statements are not article summaries but rather what you the reader found to be most compelling.* The response statements will be used in class to further the discussion of the material therefore they are due the same day as the corresponding readings for that class. No response statements will be accepted after the due date.

Students will be divided into small groups. Each group is to develop a 30 minute presentation on a Black female activist and produce a three to five page paper summarizing the materials presented, accompanied by references. The presentations will be graded on creativity, content, and presentation. Students

are encouraged to be creative in their presentations, such things as multi-media presentations, monologues, and skits are acceptable. Students will receive a collective grade, meaning that all the members of the group will get the same grade. Each group will submit one paper representative of the collective efforts of the group.

*Final Grade will be calculated as follows:*

|                     |        |
|---------------------|--------|
| Response Statements | 75pts  |
| Group Presentation  | 15pts  |
| Class Attendance    | 10pts  |
| Total               | 100pts |

#### Attendance Policy:

Attendance is a critical element in a class such as this therefore it is given significant weight in relation to the overall grade. Beginning the second day of class students will be given 2 points towards their final grade for each class that they attend. There will be no partial credit given students are expected to attend both the morning and afternoon session. Because this is a week long course it is expected that individuals would schedule their time accordingly thus no excuses will be accepted for missed classes.

#### **Notice of Non-Discrimination**

Students who have special learning needs should notify the professor at the beginning of the course so that reasonable accommodations may be made when necessary.

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact the Office of Disability Services at (860) 465-5573. To avoid any delay in the receipt of accommodations, you should contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible. Please understand that I cannot provide accommodations based upon a disability until I have received an accommodation letter from the Office of Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **Session Objectives:**

The goal of the section is to introduce the students to the course material and course expectation through the review of the courses syllabus. Because of the potentially controversial material covered in the course it becomes necessary to spend time on developing a safe place where individuals feel comfortable sharing their points of view whatever they might be. In so doing, we will spend time developing some “rules of conduct”. Finally, we will spend the rest of the class time responded to the question of “Why Black women’s studies based on the students point of view and those shared in the readings.

### **Class #1**

- Individual introductions
- Course overview
- Discussion of Syllabus
- Lecture: The status of Black women’s studies

### **Readings:**

- Bell-Scott, P., Guy-Sheftall, B., Royster, & J. J. (1991). The promise and challenge of Black women’s studies. *NWSA Journal*, 3(2) , 28-36.
- duCille, Ann (1994). The Occult of True Black womanhood: Critical Demeanor and Black Feminist Studies. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society*, 19 (3), 591-630.
- Rooks, N.M. (2000). Like Canaries in the Mines: Black women’s studies at the Millennium. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society*, 25 (4), 1209-1212.

## **I. The Notion of Black Feminism**

**Section Objective:** The goal of this section is to introduce students to the major tenants of Black Feminism from an historical perspective. Students will explore the origins and development of Black feminism. They will examine the concept of “Double Jeopardy” and in so doing they will deconstruct the systems of gender and race oppression as experienced by Black women in the United States. This section will present the students with sufficient information to assist them in the recognition of the subtle nuances of race and gender oppression and will provide a theoretical foundation for further examination into the institutions that help to maintain the Black women’s disproportionate representation at the lower rungs of society’s status structure.

Readings:

- Brush, P. S. (2001). Problematizing the race consciousness of women of color. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 27 (1), 171-199.
- Collins-Hill, P. (1989). The social construction of Black Feminist thought. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 14 (4), 20-30.
- King, D. K. (1988). Multiple Jeopardy, multiple consciousnesses: The context of Black Feminist ideology. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 14 (1), 265-291.
- Lewis, D.K. (1988). A response to inequality: Black women, racism and sexism. In M. R. Malson, E. Mudimbe-Bogi, J.F. O'Barr, M. Wyer (Eds.) *Black women in America: Social science perspective* (pp. 41-63). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Weber, L. (1999). A conceptual framework for understanding race, class, gender, sexuality. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 22, 13-32.

## II. The Nature of Black /White Sisterhood

**Section Objectives:** Black women have been engaged in an ongoing struggle for recognition of their unique plight as members of several different oppressed groups. Their experiences and concerns have traditionally been subsumed under those of Black Men and White women. For centuries tensions existed in the relationship of Black women and White women for that very reason. In this section the students will explore the nature of that relationship, the origins of the tensions between the two groups, Black and White Women, as well as an examination of their current relationship.

Readings:

- Carby, H. V. White women listen! Black feminism and the boundaries of sisterhood. (handout).
- Solsberry, P.W. (1994). Interracial couples in the United States of America. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 16(3), 304-318.
- Thornhill, E. (1985). Focus on Black Women. *Canadian Journal of Women and Law*, 1 (1), 153-162.
- Wyatt, J. (2004). Toward cross race dialogue identification, misrecognition, and difference in feminist multicultural community. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 29 (3), 903-925.

### III. Black Women, Identity, and Images

**Section Objectives:** Black women in the United States have been haunted by control images that have impacted on their experience in this country. These images have persisted for centuries and have been in some ways been a negative force in the liberation of Black women. In this section the students will explore the nature and origins of these images of Black women as well as their impact on Black women's lives. The students will explore the black woman's struggle for self definition and issues of identity. They will also examine the impact of these images on those efforts. In addition, the students will also be asked to critically examine the impact of such images in their own lives and how they have impacted on their relationships with Black women and their understanding of their experience in this country.

**Homework Assignment:** Students are asked to bring in a video clip showing or talking about a black woman or women. The students should be prepared to share their view and reactions to the clip. The clip should no be more than 3 to 5 minutes long and students are only expected to say a few words about the Clip, i.e. What stood out about it for them? What image do they believe it supports? What are the implications for promoting such an image about Black women?

#### Readings:

- Collins-Hill, P. (1990) Mammies, matriarchs, and other controlling images In P. Hill Collins *Black, Feminist Thought* (pp.64-81).
- Collins-Hill, P. (1996). What is in a name? womanism, black feminism, and beyond. *Black Scholar*, 26 (1), 9-18.
- McCauley-Jarrett, D. (1996). A women's madness. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 5 (3) 353-364.
- Parks, E. E. , Carter, R.T. Gushue, G. V. (1996). At the crossroads: Racial and womanist identity development in Black and White women. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 74(6), 624-63.
- Schooler, D., Ward, M. L., Merriwether, A., Caruthers, A. (2004). Who's that Girl: Televisions role in the body image development of young White and Black women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 28 (1), 38-47.

### IV. Black Women and Issues of Social Mobility

**Section Objectives:** The struggle for social and economic justice for Black women has been a long one. The impact of their membership has had an affect on various aspects of Black women's lives and their ability to become upwardly mobile. In this section students will examine the various social

institutions and their role in supporting and hindering Black women's efforts for social mobility. The students will examine Black women's experiences in relation to education and work, and various coping strategies that Black women have applied in their efforts to negotiate these institutions.

Readings:

- Aguilar, M.A. & Williams, L.P. ( 1993). Factors contributing to the success and achievement of minority women. *AFFILIA*, 8 (4), 410-424.
- Carby, H. (1992). Policing the Black women's body in an urban context. *Critical Inquiry*, 18 (4), 738-756.
- Huges, D. & Dodge, M. A. (1997). African American women in the workplace. *Journal of American Journal of Community Psychology*, 25 (5), 581-593.
- Hucles-Sanchez, J. V. 91997). Jeopardy not a bonus status for African American women in the workforce. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 25 (5) 565-573.

**V. Black Female Activists: Class presentations**

**Section Objectives:** In this section the students will have the opportunity to examine more closely the lives of Black women who have had an influence on American Society. For many of the students this will be their first introduction to some of the great Black women of American society. They will have a chance to look critically at the lives and contributions of these women and bring to light their accomplishments. They will also be able to develop their skills in the area of critical thinking and public speaking, and working within tasks groups.

**VI. Class summary and Evaluation**

**Section Objective:** In conclusion the students will be asked to share their experiences in the class, what they learned, and how they felt about the process. They will also be asked, in addition to the formal written evaluation, to examine critically the instruction and materials as well as offer any suggestion for improvement in the future.

