

SOCI 4460
Black and White Women in the South
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:20 AM – 12:45 PM
Instructor: Zandria F. Robinson, PhD

Office Phone: 678-3778
Office Location: Clement 309D
Office Hours: By Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the often times fraught relationship between black and white women in the American South from slavery to the contemporary moment. It views power and social relationships between black and white women through the lens of *intersectionality*, a black feminist framework that sees the structural oppressions of race, class, and gender as interlocking and inextricable. Further, it reckons with what scholar Tara McPherson calls the *lenticular logic* of southern history—the inability of Americans, and perhaps whites in particular, to think about black and white experiences simultaneously. Drawing on the concepts of intersectionality and lenticularity, this course surveys black and white women’s relationships during slavery and Jim Crow and metanarratives about those relationships in literature, public discourse, and the national imagination.

COURSE MATERIALS

Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie*
Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*
Rebecca Sharpless, *Cooking in Other Women’s Kitchens*
Lillian Smith, *Killers of the Dream*
Patricia Yaeger, *Dirt and Desire*

GENERAL COURSE EXPECTATIONS

I expect you to come to class, to come to class on time, to come to class prepared, and to be attentive and engaged throughout class. I realize that you have classes beyond this class and lives beyond the University, but I expect that you will have done the necessary work before class, including the readings and other assignments as due, with care, effort, and diligence. I expect that you will have eaten before class and that you will not bring a value meal of any sort to class. Small snacks and beverages are permissible, but I expect that they will not be loud or disruptive. I expect that you will not talk while I am talking or while others are talking and that you will be respectful of me and of your colleagues. I expect that you will not use your cell phone in class for any purpose, and I expect that should you need to use your cell phone, you will excuse yourself from class with minimum disruption. I expect that you will take notes by hand in class to increase your cognitive engagement with course discussion and materials as well as to deter you from making Amazon purchases and tweeting during class. (If you have a compelling, learning-related reason why using a tablet or laptop is better for you, please discuss this with me.) I expect that you will not plagiarize. I expect that you will turn assignments in on time, as late assignments are only accepted in the event of the Zombie Apocalypse, and then only in the event that you survive. If I am taken in the Zombie Apocalypse, note that your assignment is still due.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reading Reflections. Each Tuesday by 8 AM, you will respond thoughtfully and critically to the readings for that week in a 1 – 2 page reflection. You **should not** summarize the reading. Instead, you should consider the following questions: What about the text resonated with you? How is this reading related to things you already know and/or to previous readings? What did you not understand about the course readings? You will complete a total of 10 reading reflections over the course of the semester. These are to be turned in via eCourseware. **Reading reflections are worth 20% of the final grade.**

Midterm Examination. The midterm examination will cover all of the course material for the first half of the course, and will evaluate your ability to explicate theoretical concepts vis-à-vis course themes. The examination will occur in class on March 6, 2014 and will require a blue book. **The midterm exam is worth 20% of the final grade.**

Final Examination. The final examination is comprehensive, although it will focus on course materials covered in the second half of the course, and will evaluate your ability to apply theoretical concepts to a range of course themes. The examination will occur in class during our scheduled exam time on May 8, 2014 and will require a blue book. **The final exam is worth 20% of the final grade.**

Choose Your Own Adventure

Article/Book Review Essay. You choose a book from the list in the appendix of the syllabus and write a 3 – 5 page critical review of it. You will relate the text to course concepts and evaluate the text's contribution to our understanding of race, class, gender, and region. **The book review is worth 20% of the final grade.**

Film Review Essay. You choose a film from the list in the appendix of the syllabus, watch it, and write a 3 – 5 page critical review of it. You will treat the film as a text and critically “read” it, relating it course concepts and demonstrating the race, class, gender, and regional narratives it articulates. **The film review is worth 20% of the final grade.**

Blog Post. In response to current events in the media, course discussions, and/or course texts, write a 750-word blog post that critically and succinctly examine some aspect of the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, and region. Your blog post should include relevant pictures and hyperlinks to other blogs or texts as necessary. See [New South Negress](#) and [Pop South](#) for inspiration. **The blog post assignment is worth 20% of the final grade.**

Research Paper. In consultation with the instructor, you choose a research topic of interest to you and develop it over the course of the semester. Your topic should critically consider the intersections of race, gender, and region. You may draw on course texts, but your paper should draw on at least five outside scholarly sources. The research paper assignment consists of a one-page proposal and annotated bibliography, a draft, and a 10 – 15 page final paper. **The research paper is worth 40% of the final grade.**

Documentary Project. In consultation with the instructor, you will develop and execute a media documentary project (photo essay, website, or film documentary) that critically considers the intersections of race, gender, and region. It should draw on five scholarly sources. The documentary project assignment consists of a one-page proposal and methodology outline, a draft storyboard, and a final edited documentary project and accompanying explanatory write-up. You may collaborate with up to two other students on this project. **The documentary project is worth 40% of the final grade.**

COURSE CALENDAR

This is a suggested reading schedule so that you might pace yourself to keep up with the amount of material. However, I suggest you read ahead as much as possible to glean maximum benefit from the course discussion. The “Major Text” is the text that will be central to our discussions in a particular section of the course, and I strongly suggest bringing the text to class and reading as much of it as possible BEFORE each section of the course.

January 16, 2014: Course Introductions

Theoretical Introductions

Major Text: *Reconstructing Dixie*

Jan 21: Introduction & Chapter 1; **Reading Reflection 1 Due (Covering Intro – Chapter 2)**

Jan 23: Chapter 2

Jan 28: Chapter 3; **Reading Reflection 2 Due (Covering Chapters 3 & 4)**

Jan 30: Chapter 4; **Blog Post Due**

“O, You Happy Free [White] Women!”¹ Black & White Women in the Antebellum South

Major Text: *Within the Plantation Household*

Feb 4: Acknowledgments, Prologue, and Chapter 1; **Reading Reflection 3 Due**

Feb 6: Chapters 2 & 3; **Documentary Project Proposal Due; Research Paper Proposal Due**

Feb 11: Chapters 4 & 5; **Reading Reflection 4 Due**

Feb 13: Chapters 6 & 7 & Epilogue; **Film Review Due**

Beyond “The Help”: Gender, Labor & Power in the Jim Crow South

Major Text: *Cooking in Other Women’s Kitchens*

Feb 18: Preface, Introduction, & Chapter 1; **Reading Reflection 5 Due**

Feb 20: Chapters 2 & 3

Feb 25: Chapters 4 & 5; **Reading Reflection 6 Due**

Feb 27: Chapters 6 & 7; **Book Review Due**

March 4: Midterm Examination Review

*****March 6th: MIDTERM EXAMINATION*****

Deconstructing Southern Whiteness

Major Text: *Killers of the Dream*

March 18: Introduction, Foreword, & Part 1; **Reading Reflection 6 Due**

March 20: Part 2

March 25: Part 3; **Reading Reflection 7 Due**

March 27: Part 4

Draft & Reading Week: NO CLASS, April 1 & 3

Documentary Project Storyboard & Research Paper Draft Due by April 4th at Noon

¹ Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Writing/Righting the Region: New Views of Black & White Women in the South

Major Text: *Dirt & Desire*

April 8: Prologue, Chapters 1 & 2; **Reading Reflection 8 Due**

April 10: Chapter 3

April 15: Chapter 4; **Reading Reflection 9 Due**

April 17: Chapter 5

April 22: Chapter 6; **Reading Reflection 10 Due**

April 24: Chapters 7 & 8

April 29: Course Wrap-Up and Final Exam Review

Research Papers Due

Documentary Projects Due

*****The final exam will be held May 8, 2014 from 8 AM – 10 AM.*****

KEY DATES

Reading Reflections: Jan 21 & 28; Feb 6, 11, & 25; March 18 & 25; April 8, 15, & 22

Blog Post Due: Jan 30

Paper and Project Proposal: Feb 6

Film Review: Feb 13

Book Review: Feb 27

Midterm: March 6

Paper and Project Drafts: April 4

Final Papers and Projects: April 29

Final: May 8

Notes:

Blog Post Assignment Due January 30, 2014

Blogging is increasingly the way new ideas are communicated, especially in our fast-paced social media society. However, blog writing can be complex, as you must convey a new idea in a critical and compelling way that attracts readers. For this course, you will write 750 words of original content critically evaluating some topic related to the intersection of race, gender, and region. Feel free to respond to current events and events in popular culture. Your blog should have a clear point of view, make an argument, and implicitly demonstrate a relationship to course content. Although blog writing is in some ways less formal than traditional essay writing, treat your blog posts as more or less formal commentaries. You should include links to other blog posts, articles, photos, and/or YouTube videos in your post to direct readers to the content with which you are in conversation. You should also include tags for your post, which blog writers use to help readers easily search the subject matter of posts. Posts will be graded on originality of content, critical thought, grammar, and integration of course materials, ideas, and resources. For more blog inspiration, see [New Black Man](#), [Red Clay Scholar](#), [Racialicious](#), and [Tressie McMillan Cottom](#).

Film Review Essay Assignment Due February 13, 2014

Not all text is visual. Films can also be “read” and critically evaluated. This film review is not a “liked it” or “hated it” review, but rather a critical analysis of the message the film is conveying about race, class, gender, and region and the intersections thereof.

Choose from the list below and write a critical review of the film. Adhere to these guidelines.

1. There should be little to no summary of the plot in your review. Plot summary should only be included to make your argument, not to tell the story.
2. Consider the ways in which the film comments on race, class, gender, and region, or the intersections of those statuses. What is the film saying about the South? Race? Gender? Class? America?
3. Clearly describe and articulate *how* the film achieves/does what you say it does. Is it the scenery? The camera lens? The plot or action? The dialogue? The accents? The wardrobe? How so?

Films

- *Sherman's March: A Meditation on the Possibility of Romantic Love In the South During an Era of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation*
- *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- *The Color Purple*
- *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*
- *Winter's Bone*
- *Mud*
- *The Wild and Wonderful Whites of West Virginia*
- *12 Years a Slave*
- *Beasts of the Southern Wild*
- *Mississippi Damned*
- *Down in the Delta*
- *Coal Miner's Daughter*
- *Bastard Out of Carolina*

Article/Book Review Assignment Due February 27, 2014

Write a review of an article or a book from the list below. Reviews should be 3 – 5 pages and should accomplish the following:

1. Briefly but thoroughly summarize the main argument of the text. Do not quote excessively (no more than two lines in your review should be quotes) from the text to do this.
2. Outline the methods the author uses to make her or his argument, and then critically evaluate those methods. Are they appropriate? Are they logically sound?
3. Outline the theoretical contributions the author is making and/or drawing upon to make her or his argument.
4. Relate the findings in the text to the main course concepts.
5. Respond critically to the text. Evaluate what you learned and how this text improved or supplemented your understanding of course materials.

Articles & Book Chapters

- Andersen, Margaret. 2005. "Thinking About Women: A Quarter Century's View." *Gender & Society* 19(4):437-455.
- Barnett, Bernice McNair. 1993. "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement: The Triple Constraints of Gender, Race, and Class." *Gender and Society* 7(2):162-182.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2005. "Why Black Sexual Politics?" Pp. 25-52 in *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*.
- Dill, Bonnie Thornton. 1988. "Our Mothers' Grief: Racial Ethnic Women and the Maintenance of Families." *Journal of Family History* 13(4):415-431.
- Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. 1992. "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor." *Signs* 18(1):1-43.
- Frederickson, Mary E. 2011. "Beyond Heroines and Girl Strikers: Gender and Organized Labor in the South." Pp. 112-134 in *Looking South: Race, Gender, and the Transformation of Labor from Reconstruction to Globalization*.
- Rushing, Wanda. 2009. "Gender, Race, Ritual, and Social Power: Memphis and the Paradoxes of Tradition," Pp. 153-186 in *Memphis and the Paradox of Place: Globalization in the American South*.

Books

- Boyd, Valerie. *Wrapped in Rainbows: The Life of Zora Neale Hurston*
- Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*
- Duck, Leigh Anne. *Southern Modernism, Segregation, and U.S. Nationalism*
- Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*
- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*
- O'Connor, Flannery. *A Good Man Is Hard to Find and Other Stories*
- Smith, Lillian. *Strange Fruit*
- Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*
- Wallace-Sanders, Kimberly. *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory*
- White, Deborah Gray. *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South*

Research Paper Assignment
Proposal Due February 6th; Draft Due April 4th; Final Paper Due April 29th

The research paper gives you the opportunity to explore a topic in which you are interested in more depth and receive expert feedback focused towards improving your writing and research skills. This assignment is ideal for students working on a thesis or independent study project and is essential for students planning to attend graduate school. Research papers can be critical evaluations of the existing literature on a topic and/or can draw on original research. The assignment consists of three components:

Paper Proposal. The paper proposal should briefly describe the topic you are going to explore, the method by which you intend to explore it, and most importantly *why this topic is important*. Before selecting a topic, you should consult with the instructor and also do some preliminary research of your own. Even if your topic has been “done” before, what new or unexplored view do you plan to bring to it?

Paper Draft. Drafts are essential to the writing process. Good writing requires multiple drafts. To get you into the habit of writing drafts for yourself, you will submit a draft of your work. The draft should be more than a skeleton outline but does not necessarily have to be completely finished. It should, at the very least, include your major arguments and method, and I should be able to clearly follow what you are planning to argue and accomplish in the paper. I will provide you with thorough feedback on your draft. The more work you do on the draft, the less work you’ll have between the draft and the final paper.

Final Paper. The final paper should include a title page, an abstract, the text of the paper, and a bibliography page. The required citation style is APA or ASA.

Documentary Project
Proposal Due February 6th; Draft Due April 4th; Final Paper Due April 29th

Documentary is a method of investigation and presentation of information that draws on texts—written, aural, or visual—to answer a set of research questions or tell a story. Documentary methodologies bring together media and traditional forms of research inquiry in the humanities and social sciences to increase the accessibility, creativity, and depth of our engagement with important research questions. For this project, you can complete an oral history, launch a new blog with a minimum of 10 comprehensive posts, complete a photo essay, or film and edit a documentary.

Project Proposal. The project proposal should briefly describe the topic you are going to explore, the method by which you intend to explore it, and most importantly *why this topic is important*. Before selecting a topic, you should consult with the instructor and also do some preliminary research of your own. Even if your topic has been “done” before, what new or unexplored view do you plan to bring to it? Why is this question best answered with documentary methods?

Storyboard Draft. Your draft should include sample photographs or footage, a website design plan, or audio of oral history interviews. You should also include a written narrative about your draft submission, highlighting the sources on which you are drawing to situate the research questions you are asking through your work, and outlining how you envision the final project coming together.

Final Project. The final project should include a brief paper outlining the project rationale and methodology with a title page, abstract, and bibliography. You should also submit a link to your work.