

**Mapping Black Girlhood**

**through Black Women Writers**

Meridian Freedom Project

Meridian, MS

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**Course Overview:**

**Mapping Black Girlhood** will introduce students to Black Girlhood Studies, new and fast growing sub-field in Gender and Women’s Studies*.*  Students will begin by considering what is Black girlhood? What does it mean to be a Black girl in society? What are the experiences of Black girls? How can the experiences of girls be used to invoke positive systemic and institutional change? This course uses ethnographies, fiction, poetry, essays, performance, popular cultural critique, and theoretical analysis to examine the diverse representations of Black girls across historical time periods and contemporary geographies.

The work of this course is difficult and will require attendance to all classes, completion of all reading, thinking about the lessons from the readings and lectures, and coming prepared to engage in critical discussion. In teaching this course, I am less interested in imparting the “right” point of view than in encouraging students to think critically about race/class/gender/sexuality (intersectional identities) issues and drawing their own thoughtful conclusions.  In this spirit, we will create interactive learning environments where students will have the opportunity to participate and lead lectures and discussions. If you are having trouble understanding something in the course, or just want to explore a topic in more depth, please feel free to speak with me after class. I am happy to hear from you.

**Overall Course Objectives:**

* To further develop comprehension, writing, critical thinking and analytic skills.
* To identify the contributions of Black girlhood studies scholars to theory and praxis across various disciplines.
* To understand how historical/structural/institutional forces play a role in the lives of Black girls historically and in the present.
* To develop a clear understanding of the key theories and methodologies in Black girlhood Studies**.**

**Final Group Project:**

**Choreopoem**

Students will be responsible for writing and producing a choreopoem based on class readings and their lived experiences. A choreopoem is a collection of poems that are staged and usually set to music similar to N’tzoke Shange’s work that we read. This production should be 10-15 minutes and will incorporate all group members. Students are encouraged to be creative and will be guided through a rubric for the 5 poems that will be included in the choreopoems. Course time will be devoted to developing the individual poems and the final script rehearsal, but students are encouraged to work outside of classroom time on developing their individual pieces.

**Course Readings:**

Bowen, S. (2014). Introduction to trap feminism. <http://feministing.com/2014/01/08/explicit-content-a-brief-intro-to-trap-feminism/>

Brown, R. N. (2009). Forward and Introduction. In *Black girlhood celebration: Toward a hip-hop feminist pedagogy.* New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Brown, R. N. (2013). Introduction. In *Hear our truths: The creative potential of Black girlhood.* New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Bambara, T. C. (1996). Education of a storyteller. In *Deep sightings & rescue missions* (247-255). New York: Vintage Books.

Chavers, L. (2016, January). Here’s my problem with #blackgirlmagic. *Elle Magazine.* Retrieved from <http://www.elle.com/life-love/a33180/why-i-dont-love-blackgirlmagic/>

Combahee River Collective Statement

Durham, A. (2014). Introduction. In *Home with hip hop feminism: Performances in Communication and culture*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Finney, N. (2011). Brown girl levitation, 1962-1989 (pp. 58-59). In *Head off and split*. Evanston, IL: TriQuarterly Books.

Jarmon, R. (2013). Race and the politics of good vegetables in the ‘hood (pp. 12-17). *Black girls are from the future: Essays on: Race, Digital Creativity, and Pop Culture.* Washington, D. C.: Jarmon Media.

Lorde, A. (1995). A litany for survival. In *The black unicorn* (pp. 31-32). New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company Inc.

Ntozake, S. (1977). *For colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enough.* New York, NY: Scribner Poetry.

Robinson, J. (2015) Kasi to her homegirls: A performative memorial for those of us who are forgotten. Unpublished manuscript.

Walker, A. (1984). *In search of our mothers' gardens: Womanist prose.* San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

**Introductions + Why Black Girlhood**

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| **Day 1**  Review Syllabus: Q & A; ACT testing | **Day 2**  **Warm-Up:**  ACT English Practice  **Texts:** *For Colored Girls,* Introduction  **Daily Focus Question:** How are the narratives in For Colored girls relevant or not to today? | **Day 3**  **Warm-Up:**  ACT English Practice  **Texts:** Finish *For Colored Girls,*  **Daily Focus Question:** What does the visual setting of the choreopoem look like? In class screening of scenes from For Colored Girls the staged play (so that students can get an idea of what is expected of them for the final project) |

**Foundational Theories of Black Girlhood**

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| **Day 4**  **Warm-Up:**  ACT English Practice  **Texts:** “Education of a Storyteller” & “Race for Theory”  **Daily Focus Question:** How does Bambara define education? What is praxis? | **Day 5**  **Warm-Up:** ACT English Practice  **Texts:** “Education of a Storyteller” & “Race for Theory”  **Daily Focus Question:** Compare and Contrast definitions of education and praxis in “Education” and “Race.” | **Day 6**  **Warm-Up:**  ACT English Practice  **Texts:** “Womanism”  **Daily Focus Question:** What are the distinctions of Womanism and Black Feminist Theory? | **Day 7**  **Warm-Up:**  ACT English Practice  **Texts:** Combahee River Collective Statement  **Daily Focus Question:** How does the Combahee River Collective Statement theorize Black Feminism? |

**Theories + Methods + Challenges to Theory**

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| **Day 8**  **Warm-Up:**  ACT English Practice  **Texts:** “Black Feminist-Womanist Paradigm”  **Daily Focus Question:** As a theoretical frames, what does Black feminism and womanism offer to research on Black girls ?  How is the theory used to understand the praxis of Black girlhood? | **Day 9**  **Warm-Up:**  ACT English Practice  **Texts:** “On Going Home”  **Daily Focus Question:** What are the major human rights challenges facing citizens of China? Relating to gender? Imprisonment? Environmental issues? | **Day 10**  **Warm-Up:**  ACT English Practice  **Texts** “Trap feminism”  **Daily Focus Question:** How do Hip Hop Feminism and Trap Feminism diverge from Womanism and Black Feminism?  How does these frameworks inform Black girlhood? |

**Necessity/Cost of Black Girlhood**

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| **Day 11**  **Warm-Up:**  ACT English Practice  **Texts:** Black girlhood celebration  **Daily Focus Question:** What is Black girlhood? How is the practice of SOLHOT different from other organizing constructs for Black girls? | **Day 12**  **Warm-Up:**  ACT English Practice  **Texts:** “Brown Girl Levitation” “A litany for survival”  **Daily Focus Question:** Consider the distinctions of girl and woman. Are there any? If so what? Consider Brown’s definition as well. What are economic ecosystems and how are they at play in the lives of Black girls? | **Day 13**  **Warm-Up:**  ACT English Practice  **Texts** “Hear Our Truths Introduction”  **Daily Focus Question:** What is the creative potential of black girl?  What does it mean to use Black girlhood as an organizing construct?  What does a world that values Black girls look like | **Day 14**  **Warm-Up:**  ACT English Practice  **Texts:** “Speak Her Name”    **Daily Focus Question:** What does Lorde mean when she says “speak because we were never meant to survive” and how is this work in conversation with Robinson’s piece on Kasi Perkins? |

**Final Projects and Presentations**

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| **Day 15**  **Warm-Up:**  ACT English Practice  *In Class Poetry Workshop* | **Day 16**  **Warm-Up:**  ACT English Practice  *In Class Poetry Workshop* | **Day 17**  **Warm-Up:**  ACT English Practice  *In Class Poetry Workshop* | **Day 18**  **Warm-Up:**  ACT English Practice  *In Class Poetry Workshop* | **Day 19**  ACT Post-Test | **Day 20**  Choreopoem  Performances |