

Black Feminist and Womanist Theory (AFA 3332)
African American Studies
University of Florida

Spring 2025

Instructor: J.E. Young, Ph.D.

Class Time: Tuesday 8:30 – 10:25 a.m. & Thursday: 9:35 a.m. – 10:25 a.m.

Class Location: Flint Hall 0119

Email: je.young@ufl.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12pm – 1pm or by Appointment.

Course Description:

This is an interdisciplinary survey of African American and Afro-descendant women's contributions to feminist theory. Instead of endeavoring to pinpoint an exact origin for the emergence of Black Feminist and Womanist Theory, we will explore how they came to proliferate U.S. academic and political discourse. Our course will challenge deficiency models of race, gender, and class discrimination by considering Black women's theorizing about agency and empowerment. To that end, we will study intersectionality, precolonial African understandings of gender, contested conceptualizations of woman(ism), womanist theology as well as the emergent hip-hop feminism.

The course is outlined in five parts:

Part A: Sojourner Truth & Intersectionality.

Part B: Womanism.

Part C: Womanist Theology.

Part D: Zora Neale Hurston.

Part E: The 21st Century.

Required Texts:

Hurston, Zora Neale. (1937). *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

Phillips, Layli. (Ed.). (2006). *The Womanist Reader*. Routledge Press.

Smiet, Katrine. (Ed.). (2021). *Sojourner Truth and Intersectionality: Travelling Truths in Feminist Scholarship*. Routledge Press.

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. (1982). Harcourt Publishers.

Learning Objectives:

By the conclusion of this course students will be able to:

1. Identify primary Womanist and Black Feminist theorists and their arguments.
2. Discuss the key debates between major theorists in the field.
3. Critically engage material through regular written analysis.

The Learning Environment

In order for this to be a successful class, we must work together to promote an atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable expressing their opinions. I expect everyone to treat each other with the utmost respect.

Communication:

In any communication, i.e. face-to-face or via email, you are to refer to me as Professor Young. Since they are professional communications, all your e-mails to me must, at a minimum:

- 1) Have a subject line that accurately expresses the purpose of the email (e.g., “Assignment Question for AFA 3332”).
- 2) Open with a salutation (such as “Hello/ Hi/ Greetings Professor Young”) and have a closing with your full name. If you send me an e-mail that does not follow the basic conventions laid out above, you will receive a reply from me that simply reads “Please see the syllabus.”

Late or Missed Assignments:

Only emergencies that would also result in an excused absence are valid reasons for submitting an assignment late. If special considerations prevent you from fulfilling course obligations (such as prolonged illness), please provide me with documentation.

Artificial Intelligence (AI):

Generative AI tools should not be used for course assignments.

Assignment Information

All assignments should be typed, double-spaced, proofread, and follow MLA, APA, or Chicago guidelines for formatting citations and bibliographies. Information and ideas that are not your own must be appropriately cited.

Grading Scale: 945-1000 95-100 **A** | 895-944 90-94 **A-** | 865-894 87-89 **B+** | 835-864 84-86 **B** | 795-834 80-83 **B-** | 765-794 77-79 **C+** | 735-764 74-76 **C** | 695-734 70-73 **C-** | 665-694 67-69 **D+** | 635-664 64-66 **D** | 595-634 60-63 **D-** | 594- 59 or below **F** |

Course Assignments:

Weekly Analytical Précis:	200 Pts. (10 Total)
Research Topic:	50 Pts.
Abstract and Sources:	50 Pts.
Outline/ Annotated Bibliography:	100 Pts.
Class Presentation & Attendance:	100 Pts.
Rough Draft:	200 Pts.
Final Draft:	300 Pts.
Total:	1000 Pts.

Required Assignments:

1. As part of the weekly workload, students are required to complete all material for each weekly class section with vigorous analysis, discussion, and writing on of the material.

You are required to participate in class. This means that during our two class sessions, I should hear from you at least once. Please make substantive contributions: asking thoughtful questions during the lectures, responding to questions from the instructor, and actively participating in our group discussions.

2. The first assignment submission on the course material will be due on **Tuesday, January 21, 2025, before our class session**. All submissions must be made before the exact deadline listed or face point deductions.
3. The course involves a significant amount of autonomous work. This requires discipline to succeed. Each week students will engage a substantial amount of wide-ranging materials, including academic scholarship, primary sources, and sometimes interviews or lectures.
4. Every week, each student will submit a **five to seven paragraph**, cited analytical Précis that replies to critical questions, key arguments and evidence in readings, and synthesizes the importance of any assigned media content. Your submission should include:
 - a. A summary of all texts for the week (who, what, when, where).
 - b. A reflection on how this reading relates to the broad themes of the course (why important).
 - c. The major thesis, theoretical, analytical, and/or methodological perspective.
 - d. 1-2 reflective questions you would like to discuss with your peers.

Please submit your responses in narrative form with complete sentences. It should be typed, double-spaced, proofread, and follow MLA, APA, or Chicago guidelines for formatting citations and bibliographies. Lists and bulleted posts will not receive credit.

5. Before Week 4, students will identify a research paper topic and submit it to Professor Young for approval. On Week 5, students will submit an abstract and a list of **at least five credible peer-reviewed sources** they will use in their major project. On Week 8, students will submit a substantial outline and annotated bibliography of **at least seven credible peer-reviewed sources** they will use in their final.
6. During Weeks 9 and 11 students will present their proposed research to the class.
7. During Week 13 students will circulate a seven-page double-spaced paper draft to Professor Young and a student peer reviewer for appraisal (selected at random by the professor). Title pages, abstracts, and references are not included in the page requirement.
8. The 15-page, double-spaced final draft of the paper will be due at **11:59pm on Friday, May 2, 2025**. The paper should include **11 credible peer-reviewed sources**. Title pages, abstracts, and references are not included in the page requirement.

Final Research Essay:

The final paper will be an essay on a topic of your choosing that is related to the course. Make sure the essay paper has a clear argument. Writing an abstract (250 – 500 words) and an outline of your paper will help you with this process. Use at least 4 readings from the class.

Part 1: Brief Bibliography & Abstract of Paper Due February 13th by 11:59pm.

Each student must prepare a two-page paper which includes a list of books, journal articles, archival materials (if relevant), newspaper articles, and other important sources about their subject, plus a 150 to 250-word description of the key themes or issues they want to examine about the subject.

Part 2: Detailed Outline w/ Annotated Bibliography Due March 6th by 11:59pm.

Each student must prepare a detailed outline of their final paper, along with an annotated bibliography of the materials that they are using to prove their argument and/or thesis.

Part 3: Rough Draft Due April 10th by 11:59pm.**Part 4: Final Draft Due May 2nd by 11:59 p.m.****UNIVERSITY INFORMATION****Disability Accommodations:**

Students with disabilities who feel they may have access issues are invited to discuss their concerns with the instructor. They are also urged to contact the Disability Resource Center if they need special assistance or extra time to complete assignments because of their disability and should also contact me privately within the first week of the semester to discuss their situation. Please bring with you the necessary documentation from the Disability Resource Center:

Disability Resource Center
University of Florida
Disability Resource Center
001 Reid Hall

Voice: (352) 392-8565
FL Relay Service: (800) 955-8770
DRCTesting@ufsa.ufl.edu
<https://disability.ufl.edu/>

Title IX Policy:

The Title IX Policy and its associated guidelines and procedures are designed to ensure a safe and non-discriminatory educational and work environment and to meet the legal requirements set forth in the U.S. Department of Education's Title IX Amendments of 1972. This umbrella policy identifies the behavioral expectations that will meet the goal of establishing and maintaining a safe and healthy environment – free from all forms of gender inequity – for all individuals working, learning, residing, volunteering, and visiting our community. Implicit in this goal, is the expectation that all members of the University community act toward this commitment by

promptly reporting any suspected violation of this policy.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Reflections are due on Tuesdays before our class session. Weekly readings should be completed beforehand.

❖ Week 1: January 13 – 16, 2025.

- Tuesday January 14, 2025.
 - Introductions & Course Overview

PART A: Sojourner Truth.

- Thursday January 16, 2025.
 - The Sojourner Truth Memorial Committee (<https://sojournertruthmemorial.org/>).
 - Ar'n't I A Woman? - Ain't I a Woman?
(<https://sojournertruthmemorial.org/sojourner-truth/her-words/>).

❖ Week 2: January 20 – 24, 2025.

Written Reflection #1 Due January 21st in class.

- Smiet, Katrine. (Ed.). (2021). *Sojourner Truth and Intersectionality: Travelling Truths in Feminist Scholarship*. Routledge Press.
 - Chapter 1, “Beyond the Historical Truth: Feminist Knowledges as Traveling Truths.”

❖ Week 3: January 27 – 31, 2025.

Written Reflection #2 Due January 28th in class.

- Smiet, Katrine. (Ed.). (2021). *Sojourner Truth and Intersectionality: Travelling Truths in Feminist Scholarship*. Routledge Press.
 - Chapter 3, “Ain't I a Woman: Feminist Theory and the Unstable Subject of ‘Woman.’”

PART B: Woman(ism).

❖ Week 4: February 3 – 7, 2025.

Written Reflection #3 Due February 4th in class.

Research Topic Due February 6th by 11:59 p.m.

- Phillips, Layli. (Ed.). (2006). *The Womanist Reader*. Routledge Press.

- Walker, Alice. (1983). *Womanist*.
- Chapter 3, “Clenora Hudson-Weems’s Africana Womanism.”
- Collins, Patricia Hill. “What’s in a Name? Womanism, Black Feminism, and Beyond.”

❖ Week 5: February 10 – 14, 2025.

Written Reflection #4 Due February 11th in class.

Abstract and a List of at Least Five Sources Due February 13th by 11:59pm.

- Combahee River Collective. “A Black Feminist Statement.”
- Phillips, Layli. (Ed.). (2006). *The Womanist Reader*. Routledge Press.
 - Lemons, Gary L. “To Be Black, Male and ‘Feminist’: Making Womanist Space for Black Men.”
- Lorde, Audre. (1978). “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic As Power.”
- In-Class Screenings
 - [VIDEO] CAN TV. (2021). *The Light of Truth: Ida B. Wells National Monument*

❖ Week 6: February 17 – 21, 2025.

Written Reflection #5 Due February 18th in class.

❖ Week 7: February 24 – 28, 2025.

- Lorde, Audre. (1980). “Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference.”
- Lorde, Audre. *Selected Poems*.
- Oyèrónké, Oyèwùmí. (1998). “Making History, Creating Gender: Some Methodological and Interpretive Questions in the Writing of Oyo Oral Traditions.”

PART C: Womanist Theology.

❖ Week 8: March 3 – 7, 2025.

Written Reflection #6 Due March 4th in class.

Substantial Outline and Annotated Bibliography Due March 6th by 11:59pm.

- Phillips, Layli. (Ed.). (2006). *The Womanist Reader*. Routledge Press.
 - Chapter 6, “Theology.”

❖ Week 9: March 10 – 14, 2025.

Student Presentation #1 on Tuesday, March 11th in class.

- Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*.

- Letters 1-45.

❖ Week 10: March 17 – 21, 2025.

SPRING BREAK

❖ Week 11: March 24 – 28, 2025.

Student Presentation #2 on Tuesday, March 25th in class.

- Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*.
 - Letters 46-94.

PART D: Zora Neale Hurston.

❖ Week 12: March 31 – April 4, 2025.

Written Reflection #7 Due April 1st in class.

- Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.
 - Chapters 1-10.

❖ Week 13: April 7 – 11, 2025.

Written Reflection #8 Due April 8th in class.

Rough Draft Due April 10th by 11:59pm.

- Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.
 - Chapters 11-20.

❖ Week 14: April 14 – 18, 2025.

Written Reflection #9 Due April 15th in class.

- Hudson-Weems, Clenora. (1989). "The Tripartite Plight of African-American Women as Reflected in the Novels of Hurston and Walker."
- Sadoff, Diane F. (1985). "Black Matrilineage: The Case of Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston."

PART E: The 21st Century.

❖ Week 15: April 21 – 23, 2025.

Written Reflection #10 Due April 22nd in class.

- Phillips, Layli. (Ed.). (2006). *The Womanist Reader*. Routledge Press.
 - Helen (Charles). “The Language of Womanism: Rethinking Difference.”
- Aisha Durham, Brittney C. Cooper and Susana M. Morris. (2013). “The Stage Hip-Hop Feminism Built: A New Directions Essay.”
- Ali, Khalilah. (2021). “Towards a Bad Bitches Pedagogy.”
- The Crunk Feminist Collective. (2019). “Self-Care is Crunk.”

❖ Week 16: April 24 – May 2, 2025.

- Students are strongly encouraged to meet with Professor Young at least once during this period to discuss their Final Research Paper.

❖ **LAST DAY OF CLASSES APRIL 23, 2025.**

❖ **READING DAYS BEGIN APRIL 24, 2025.**

❖ **FINAL PAPER DUE MAY 2, 2025 by 11:59 p.m.**