



Black Sound: Black Life

**AML 4453 - Studies American Lit & Culture
Instructor: Kimberly Williams**

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She/her pronouns**

Office Hours	Thursday 5:00-6:30 PM at TUR 4359 (or zoom)
Class Meeting Tuesday	Tuesday: Period 8 - 9 (3:00 PM - 4:55 PM), MAT0115
Class Meeting Thursday	Thursday: Period 9 (4:05 PM - 4:55PM), MAT0114

Course description:

What is sound studies and how does it relate to Blackness? How does sound help us understand geography, power, and culture? How can sound serve as an artifact for history and document a specific time? For this course, we will expand our senses to critically think about Black studies and Black life with an emphasis on listening, studying, and creating sonic research.

We will utilize sound as our entryway to study the histories of sonic terror on the plantation and its relationship to media studies and Black consciousness. However, we will also research sonic healing as testimonial care work through Black feminist studies. This includes oral storytelling, music performance, and Black rest studies. How have Black people curated deliberate sites of sonic joy on the plantation via Negro spirituals or hamboning and later on digital platforms like the 2021 Verzuz battles?

The coursework includes readings and listening(s) from Lucille Clifton, bell hooks, Solange, Notorious B.I.G., and more. We will engage with foundational texts like Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and hear its reverberation into Janelle Monae's *The ArchAndroid* or Childish Gambino's "This is America." Our material is multidisciplinary and spans across slave narratives, contemporary poetry, music performance, and film studies. The units will reflect specific times and placement in Black life. Our major projects encompass research writing, creating sound trees, and digital writings.

Learning Outcomes and Objectives:

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication, and critical thinking:

- Students will demonstrate competency in Black studies terminology, concepts, and theories. This includes researching, presenting, and integrating terminology into assignments and discussions.
- Students will learn how to analyze and adopt sound as a methodology to explore and articulate Black life that encompasses concepts of gender, sexuality, class, and more.
- Students will communicate knowledge, ideas, and assertions clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will learn how to formally present on a variety of theories that spans Black studies, queer theory, ecofeminism, and Black feminism.
- Students will cultivate analytical information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems. This includes individual and group projects examining a variety of mediums.

Course Readings:

All materials are posted on Canvas or embedded into the syllabus. You are required to watch films before the session from various streaming sites or library rentals.

Grading:

This course will include heavy material with real time issues happening locally, nationally, and globally. It is important to come to class prepared with questions, commentary, and meaningful feedback. Importantly, because of the weight of the material and its relation to our lives and

breath, I understand the necessity of breaks and care. I am here to help with course flow and also guidance for extensions. Please visit office hours, email me, and keep in steady communication. Remember, extensions require *prior* communication to the deadline (versus a late entry which is not accepted).

Grading Scale:

A	4.0	93-100	930-100	C	2.0	73-76	730-769
		0					
A	3.6	90-92	900-929	C-	1.67	70-72	700-729
-	7						
B	3.3	87-89	870-899	D	1.33	67-69	670-699
+	3			+			
B	3.0	83-86	830-869	D	1.0	63-66	630-669
B	2.6	80-82	800-829	D-	0.67	60-62	600-629
-	7						
C	2.3	77-79	770-799	E	0.00	0-59	0-599
+	3						

1. **In-class participation 100 points:** This includes class participation (active engagement and vocal discussion) during class sessions.
2. **Critical Responses 100 points:** This series of assignments and activities include trending topics related to course material and pop culture. The assignments encompass listening sessions, A.I activities, and critical responses to class material.
3. **Article Annotations 100 points:** Annotate or comment, question, and *write back* to an article via Canvas.
4. **Sound Tree 300 points:** The sound tree presentation is a group critical, sonic breakdown of class material and that relationship to music, production, and composition.
5. **Final Project 300 points:** A collaborative project involving options with curation, history, or mixtape analysis.

Class Policies:

1. You must complete all assignments to get credit for this course.
2. *Attendance:* After 4 unexcused absences, you run the risk of failing the course. For me to excuse your absence, you will need to email me beforehand. It is essential to keep in contact and share how I may help. I want you to succeed in this course! Excused absences are consistent with university policies in the undergraduate catalog and require appropriate documentation. Please note, it is your responsibility to gather missed work from a peer when you are absent. For further information, please consult this link: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>
3. *Concerning issues that might affect your progress:* If you experience any kind of hardship that affects your progress during the class, which include financial or health-related issues, email me as soon as possible.
4. *Email responses and civility:* Please email me about class matters through Canvas, and whenever you send me an email during the week wait at least 24 hours for a reply. Emails received during the weekend will be answered on Monday. You can address me as Kimberly and use proper, formal greeting when using electronic communication.
5. *Classroom behavior:*
 - a. Participation will be required and will affect your grade. This includes being an active, engaged learner and also a generous partner or group member.
 - b. Any prejudiced or generally disrespectful comments made during the class will not be tolerated. Respect will ensure our class runs smoothly and will keep the discussion focused.
 - c. *UF's policy on Harassment:* The University of Florida is committed to providing a safe educational, working, and residential environment that is free from sexual harassment or misconduct directed towards any and all members of the community: <https://titleix.ufl.edu/report/>
6. *Paper Format and Submission:* All assignments will be submitted on Canvas.
7. *Late Papers/Assignments:* Late work will not be graded unless you inform me by email at least 24 hours before the assignment is due. Reach out and stay with steady communication for extensions and help.
8. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities.* Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
9. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism.* UF students follow The Honor Pledge: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: 'On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.'" The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions.>

From the UF Student Honor Code:

A Student must not represent as the Student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- a. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
 - b. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student's own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student's own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
 - c. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
 - d. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.
10. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu), which will provide appropriate documentation to give your instructor early in the semester.
 11. *Students who are in distress* or who are in need of counseling or urgent help: please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to you. UF's Counseling and Wellness Center offers additional support: 352-392-1575, or contact them online: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>
 12. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
 13. *Grade Appeals*. In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by addressing appeals to administrative assistant Carla Blount at cblount@ufl.edu. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
 14. *Course Evaluations*. Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages requesting that you do this online: <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/>

COVID Statement: In response to COVID-19, the following recommendations are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones. If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit one.uf for screening / testing and vaccination opportunities. If you are sick, stay home. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 to be evaluated. Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work.

A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Generates and elaborates on original ideas relevant to the course content ● Assignment provides evidence to support claims ● Assignment incorporates source material appropriately and effectively ● Assignment displays clear organizational forethought ● Assignment is free of rhetorically unaware grammatical, stylistic, and/or technical errors
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Follows most instructions specific to the assignment description ● Incorporates and elaborates ideas relevant to the course content ● Assignment provides evidence to support most of its claims ● Assignment incorporates source material appropriately ● Assignment has an identifiable organizational structure ● Assignment contains rhetorically unaware grammatical, stylistic, and/or technical errors
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Follows some instructions specific to the assignment description ● Incorporates ideas relevant to the course content ● Assignment provides evidence to support some of its claims ● Assignment incorporates source material ● Assignment has an identifiable organizational structure ● Assignment contains rhetorically unaware grammatical, stylistic, and/or technical errors
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Follows very few instructions specific to the assignment description ● Incorporates ideas irrelevant to the course content ● Assignment provides little to no evidence to support its claims ● Assignment incorporates no (or very little) source material ● Assignment has an unclear organizational structure ● Assignment contains distracting and rhetorically unaware grammatical, stylistic, and/or technical errors
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Follows very few instructions specific to the assignment description ● Incorporates ideas irrelevant to the course content ● Assignment provides little to no evidence to support its claims ● Assignment incorporates no (or very little) source material ● Assignment has an unclear organizational structure ● Assignment contains distracting and rhetorically unaware grammatical, stylistic, and/or technical errors

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Date	Assigned Readings and Classwork	Homework Due
Unit 1: The Sound of Woke		
TR 8/24	Syllabus and brief course introduction	
TU 8/29	*What is close reading and how do we listen? *The History of Woke *Leadbelly track	Student worksheet DUE
TR 8/31	* <i>Black Mo'nin'</i> : Fred Moten * <i>Can You be Black and Listen to This?</i> : Elizabeth Alexander	Annotation DUE
TU 9/5	* <i>Till Mourning Comes: An Exploration on Hip Hop, Suicide, and Spirituality</i> : Jay-Paul Hinds	
TR 9/7	* Negro Spirituals and Hip Hop	Annotation DUE
TU 9/12	* Black Noise. White Ears: Resilience, Rap, and the Killing of Jordan Davis	
TR 9/14	*Class vocabulary assigning *Black Lives Matter Music Videos	Response DUE Friday
Unit 2: The Sound of Sankofa		
TU 9/19	*Class vocabulary presentations *Sign-up and Sound Tree discussions	Class Vocabulary entry DUE
TR 9/21	*Kara Walker *Jennifer Stoeber excerpt	
TU 9/26	*Harriet Jacobs excerpt *clipping. "The deep" *Ayana V. Jackson	

TR 9/28	* Music and Struggle with Slavery *Stono Rebellion	Response DUE Friday
TU 10/3	*Samuel Floyd excerpt	
TR 10/5	* Roots: The Impact of African Music * Black Influence on Country Music	Annotation DUE
TU 10/10	*Watch <i>Little Richard: I am Everything</i>	
TR 10/12	*Greg Tate excerpt (<i>Everything but the Burden</i>)	
Unit 3: The Sound of the Future		
TU 10/17	*Kevin Quashie excerpt *Solange: <i>A Seat at the Table</i> *Notorious B.I.G.	
TR 10/19	*Kyra Gaunt excerpt *Missy Elliot	Response DUE Friday
TU 10/24	* <i>An Oral History of Sampling: From Turntables to Mashups:</i> Eduardo Navas	
TR 10/26	* <i>DJs, playlists, and community: imagining communication design through hip hop:</i> Victor Del Hierro	Annotation DUE
TU 10/31	* How Verzuz is Bridging... *Timbaland and Verzuz	
TR 11/2	* Craig Aurthur visit	
TU 11/7	* <i>Dance or Die:</i> Alyssa Favreau *Janelle Monae <i>The ArchAndroid</i>	Report DUE
TR 11/9	*Group project discussion and progress report	
Unit 4: Group Project Presentations		
TU 11/14	*Brainstorming worksheet and discussion	
TR 11/16	*Presenting 101	
TU 11/21	*Working day	

TR 11/23	In-class office hours	
TU 11/28	*Presentations	
TR 11/30	*Presentations	Report DUE
TU 12/5	*Presentations	