

LIT 6358, ENG 4953 bell hooks

Theoretical Approaches to Black Cultural Studies

Mondays, 12:50-3:50 (with a fifteen-minute break in the middle)

Instructor: Dr. Tace Hedrick

Office: Turlington 4326

Office Hours: M 12:15-1:15, W 2:00-3:00

Email: Please use Canvas email

Room: English Department Seminar Room

Required Books:

Toni Cade Bambara *The Salt Eaters* 1980

bell hooks:

Feminism is For Everybody: Passionate Politics 2014

Black Looks: Race and Representation 1992

Where We Stand: Class Matters 2000

Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations 2006

The Will to Change: Men and Masculinity 2004

Bone Black: Memories of Girlhood 1997

Reel to Real: Race, Sex and Class at the Movies 2008

Course Reserves:

Cox, Courtney M. "Developing an Oppositional Gaze: Learning to Look with bell hooks." *Women's Studies in Communication* vol. 45, no.4, 2022, pp. 446-449.

del Guadalupe Davidson, Maria. "bell hooks and the Move from Marginalized Other to Radical Black Subject." *Critical Perspectives on bell hooks*. Edited by del Guadalupe Davidson, Maria, and George Yancy. Routledge, 2009.

Dozier, Ayanna. "bell hooks' Heartbreak Church." *Brooklyn Rail*. Feb 2022.

hooks, bell. "Feminism as a Persistent Critique of History: What's Love Got to Do with It?" *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*. Edited By Alan Read. Bay Press, 1996.

Fanon, Frantz. "The Fact of Blackness." *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Charles Lam Markmann. Grove Press, 1967.

Freire, Paulo. Chapter One. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. Continuum, 1989 (1970).

Cone, James. "The Human Being in Black Theology." *A Black Theology of Liberation*. Lippincourt, 1970.

hooks, bell. "Black Women Intellectuals." *Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life*. By bell hooks and Cornel West. South End Press, 1991.

Hillman, James. "Snake is not a Symbol." *Dream Animals*. Chronicle Books, 1997.

Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Letters to a Young Poet*. Translated by Joan M. Burnham; foreword by Kent Nerburn. New World Library, 2000.

Thich, Nhat Hanh. "Introduction" and "Restoring the Pure Land." *Anger: Wisdom for Cooling the Flames*. Riverhead Books, 2001.

Fromm, Erich. "The Practice of Loving." *The Art of Loving*. Harper, 1956.

Neal, Mark Anthony. "What the Hell is a Black Male Feminist?" *New Black Man*. Routledge,

2005.

- Awkward, Michael. "A Black Man's Place in Black Feminist Criticism." *Negotiating Difference: Race, Gender, and the Politics of Positionality*. University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Giroux, Henry. "Black, Bruised, and Read All Over: Public Intellectuals and the Politics of Race." *Class Issues: Pedagogy, Cultural Studies, and the Public Sphere*. Edited by Amitava Kumar. New York University Press, 1997.
- Hull, Gloria. "What it is I Think She's Doing Anyhow: A Reading of Toni Cade Bambara's *The Salt Eaters*." *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*. Edited by Barbara Smith. Kitchen Sink—Women of Color Press, 1983.
- Hall, Stuart. "Encoding, Decoding." *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Edited by Simon During. Routledge, 1994.
- Grossberg, Lawrence. "History, Politics and Postmodernism: Stuart Hall and Cultural Studies." *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. Edited by David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen. Routledge, 1996.

Requirements:

- 1 Class Presentation
- 3 Seven-to-Nine-Page Response Papers
- Assigned Class Discussion Questions

Course Description/Goals:

In this class, we'll be reading the works of feminist, public intellectual, race theorist and cultural worker bell hooks. We will also be doing some of what I call "reading around/with hooks": looking at other writers who have influenced her work in one way or another.

I envision this course as one which looks not only at the many concerns which hooks addresses (race, feminism, love, writing, teaching, cultural criticism) but also investigates ideas including: 1) how a black intellectual career is shaped over time; 2) how a reader balances, and/or values, the varied moments of an intellectual career; 3) what we think the terms "public" or "organic" intellectual mean; 4) what "black cultural studies" might be; and undoubtedly others.

Assignments: will be as follows: one Assigned 15-minute Presentation Paper (about 6 pages), three 7–9-page Response Papers and Assigned Class Discussion Questions. An incomplete will automatically negate the possibility of an A for the course.

Class participation: Part of what will be required of students is to learn the art of the good question: learning is often more about how to ask good questions than it is about "knowing" something. Thus, while I expect everyone to come to class having read and make notes of the assignments for the day (there is a lot of reading here, which while not necessarily all difficult will require careful marshaling of one's time), I also expect everyone to come prepared for discussion not only with comments but with questions which will open up discussion amongst us. Thus, **each student should come with at least one section, quote, or paragraph about which they are prepared to enter into discussion with the rest of the group, even if someone has been assigned with questions for that particular day.**

Class Presentations:

Hooks cites many writers as part of the intellectual context for her own writing and thought. One of our questions in our examination of hooks' thinking could be, "how do these other thinkers inform, transform, or are counter to her concerns?" Here we could think about Frantz Fanon, Paulo Freire (an important influence on hooks' ideas about pedagogy), James Cone, Erich Fromm (important for her ideas about love), and others you may come across in our readings; these will be on your Course Reserves.

Toward that end, each student will choose one of hook's books on our list, plus whatever readings are connected to that particular text. Each student will present a focused but in-depth 15-minute presentation, which can be handled in several different ways:

- 1) Make a presentation that is **briefly** informative—one or two sentences is sufficient—about the general ideas in hooks' text **and** about any influential readings (do not simply repeat what has been said in the texts). For instance, you can say, "This text deals generally with gender, class, and racial representation in films." **Then** take the rest of the presentation to discuss **a theme or major idea** shared across these texts.
- 2) If you want to look just at the hooks text under discussion, be very briefly informative about the general ideas found there (again, one or two sentences), and then again discuss in more depth a major concern or theme hooks addresses in that book.
- 3) Or you can look at **two or three contemporary reviews** of the hooks text you chose and make an in-depth, interpretive, and theoretically grounded discussion of her **reception** in alternative, scholarly, and mainstream presses.

Each student should have a download of the following to put up on Canvas the day of the response paper:

- A type-written, double-spaced copy of the response paper for each student, and a works cited of whatever resources you used for your response paper.

August

Week One

M 25 Please work on the "Definitions/Discussion" sheet in your Canvas Announcements. Please read the tips for good discussion questions on Canvas Announcements.

Course Reserves:

Henry Giroux, "Black, Bruised, and Read All Over: Public Intellectuals and the Politics of Race."

hooks, "Black Women Intellectuals"

hooks, "Sisterhood: Political Solidarity between Women"

September

Week Two

M 1 **Labor Day**

Week Three

M 8 Bambara, *The Salt Eaters*

Course Reserves:

Hull, "What It Is I Think She's Doing Anyway"

Week Four

M 15 *The Salt Eaters*

Course Reserves:

hooks, "Seeking After Truth"

Response Paper #1 DUE

Week Five

M 22 *Bone Black: Memories of Girlhood*

Course Reserves:

Cone, "The Human Being in Black Theology"

Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness"

Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*

Week Six

M 30 *Feminism is For Everybody: Passionate Politics*

Course Reserves:

hooks, "Feminism as a Persistent Critique of History: What's Love Got to Do with It?"

October

Week Seven

M 6 *Where We Stand: Class Matters*

Course Reserves:

hooks, "Class Dismissed: The Issue Is Accountability"

Week Eight

M 13 *Reel to Real*

Course Reserves:

Dozier, "bell hooks' Heartbreak Church"

Response Paper #2 DUE

Week Nine

M 20 Film Showing and Discussion: The Oppositional Gaze

Week Ten

M 27 *Black Looks: Race and Representation*

Course Reserves:

del Guadalupe Davidson, "bell hooks and the Move from Marginalized Other to Radical Black Subject"

November

Week Eleven

M 3 *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*

Cox, "Developing an Oppositional Gaze: Learning to Look with bell hooks"

Week Twelve

M 10 Discussion: Resistant/Outlaw/Oppositional Art

Week Thirteen

M 17 *The Will to Change: Men and Masculinity*

Course Reserves:

Mark Anthony Neal, "What the Hell is a Black Male Feminist?"

Michael Awkward, "A Black Man's Place in Black Feminist Criticism."

Response Paper #3 DUE

Week Fourteen

M 24 **Thanksgiving**

December

Week Fifteen

M 1 Wrap-Up Discussion

Last Day of Class