

## Black Women's History

### Professor Kellie Carter Jackson

Spring 2023

#### Course Description

This course focuses on African American women's history in the United States with certain aspects of Black women's activism and leadership covered within the African Diaspora. We will examine the ways in which these women engaged in local, national, and international freedom struggles while simultaneously defining their identities as wives, mothers, leaders, citizens, and workers. The course will pay special attention to the diversity of Black women's experiences and to the dominant images of Black women in America from Mumbet (the first enslaved Black woman to sue for her freedom and win) to contemporary issues of race, sex, and class in the Age of (Michelle) Obama. Participants will explore such questions as: What is Black women's history? How does Black women's history add to our understanding of American history? Where should Black women's history go from here?

#### Course Readings

1. Cooper, Brittany. *Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2019.
2. Cooper Owens, Deirdre. *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))
3. Dunbar, Erica Armstrong. *Never Caught: The Washington's Relentless Pursuit of Ona Judge*. New York: 37 Ink, 2018. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))
4. Hunter, Tera W. *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))
5. McGuire, Danielle L. *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance—a New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power*. New York: Vintage, 2011. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))
6. Mustakeem, Sowande' M. *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2016. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))
7. Obama, Michelle. *Becoming*. New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2018.

#### Course Requirements

- Contribute to nine discussion boards

- Complete five short papers (1–2 pages)
- Participate in at least three Q&As
- Complete a 15-page paper or project of appropriate rigor

### **Learning Objectives**

1. To provide the student with a general background in important trends, concepts, and interpretations relating to African American women.
2. To foster analytical skills, in particular those associated with the identification, interpretation, and critical evaluation of historical sources.
3. To prepare students with general research, writing, and communication skills necessary for the pursuit of a graduate education.
4. To present students with the study of social justice and tools with which to engage and encourage local, national, and global activism.
5. To cultivate a general interest in the history of African American women and an acknowledgment of its value toward understanding how historical ideologies and events of the past continue to influence those in the present.

### **Class Schedule**

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**Week 1:** February 9: What Is Black Women’s History?

#### Readings

- Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “African American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race,” *Signs* 17 (1992): 251–274. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 1 module.)
- bell hooks, “Sexism and the Black Female Slave Experience,” in *Ain’t I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, 15–49. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 1 module.)

#### Assignments

- Discussion Board One
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**Week 2:** February 16: Women and the Middle Passage

#### Readings

- Mustakeem, full.

#### Assignments

- Discussion Board Two

- Short Paper One due February 22
  - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

**Q&A Session One: Thursday, February 16 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET**

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**Week 3:** February 23: Women on the Run

Readings

- Dunbar, full.
- Stephanie Camp, "I Could Not Stay There...," *Slavery and Abolition* 23 (December 2002): 1–20. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 3 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Three
  - Final Paper/Project Question due March 1
    - In roughly 1–2 pages, outline the topic of your final paper or project. This should include a description of the paper or project you are proposing, some background information and historical context on your topic, and a justification for why your particular paper or project is worth pursuing.
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**Week 4:** March 2: Women Who Write

Readings

- Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, ed. Lydia Maria Child (Boston: 1861), available on Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 4 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Four
- Short Paper Two due March 8
  - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

**Q&A Session Two: Thursday, March 2 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET**

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**Week 5:** March 9: Women and Their Bodies

## Readings

- Cooper Owens, full.

## Assignments

- Discussion Board Five
  - Revised Topic Proposal and Proposed Bibliography due March 15
    1. Revise your initial proposal to incorporate your section professor's feedback AND
    2. Create an annotated bibliography containing at least five sources. Each of these sources should be followed by a short paragraph describing the source and what it will contribute to your final paper/project.
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## **Week 6:** March 16: Women, Respect, and Religion

### Readings

- Stephanie M. H. Camp, "The Pleasures of Resistance: Enslaved Women and Body Politics in the Plantation South, 1830–1861," *Journal of Southern History* 68, no. 3 (Aug. 2002): 533–572. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 6 module.)
- Evelyn Higginbotham, "The Politics of Respectability," in *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 185–229. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 6 module.)

### Assignments

- Discussion Board Six
- Short Paper Three due March 22
  - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

**Q&A Session Three: Thursday, March 16 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET**

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## **Week 7:** March 23: Women and Their Labor

### Readings

- Hunter, full.
- Association of Black Women Historians, "An Open Statement to the Fans of *The Help*," August 12, 2011. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 7 module.)

- Kellie Carter Jackson, "'She was a Member of the Family': Ethel Phillips, Domestic Labor and Employer Perceptions," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 3 & 4 (Fall/Winter 2017): 160–172. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 7 module.)

### Assignments

- Discussion Board Seven
  - Short Paper Four due March 29
    - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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## **Week 8:** March 30: Women and the Long Freedom Struggle

### Readings

- McGuire, full.

### Assignments

- Paper/Project Preview due April 5
    - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first five pages of your final paper.
    - Project: Submissions of the project preview will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.
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## **Week 9:** April 6: Women and Their Anger

### Readings

- Cooper, "White-Girl Tears," 171–200.
- Audre Lorde, "The Uses of Anger" (1981), Blackpast.org. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 9 module.)

### Assignments

- Discussion Board Eight
- Short Paper Five due April 12
  - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

**Q&A Session Four: Thursday, April 6 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET**

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**Week 10:** April 13: Women on the Political Run

Readings

- Watch Shola Lynch, dir., *Chisholm '72: "Unbought and Unbossed,"* 20th Century Fox, 2016. (A link to this video can be found in the Week 10 module.)
- Barbara Jordan Speeches (A link to these readings can be found in the Week 10 module.)
  - Statement on the Articles of Impeachment (July 25, 1974)
  - Democratic National Convention Keynote Address (July 12, 1976)
  - Democratic National Convention Address (July 13, 1992)

Assignments

- Rough Draft due April 19
  - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first ten pages (at minimum) of your final paper.
  - Project: Submissions of the project rough draft will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.

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**Week 11:** April 20: Women and #MeToo

Readings

- Nell Irvin Painter, "Hill, Thomas, and the Use of the Racial Stereotype," in *Race-ing Justice, En-gendering Power*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York: Pantheon, 1992), 200–214. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 11 module.)
- Angela Onwuachi-Willig, "What About #UsToo?" *Yale Law Journal* forum, June 18, 2018. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 11 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Nine

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**Week 12:** April 27: Women and Michelle Obama

Readings

- Obama, full.

Assignments

- Final Paper/Project due May 3

**Q&A Session Five: Thursday, April 27 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET**

## Assignment Descriptions

### Short Papers

Throughout each term students will complete five short papers. Each of these assignments should be 1–2 pages in length, in 12 pt. font, and double-spaced. Students have the option of responding to a prompt created by their section professor or to one of their own design. Prompts should reflect the themes discussed in course readings.

### Discussion Board Posts

Students will respond to nine virtual discussion board posts for each course. Discussion boards are led by the section professor, who will provide an analytical prompt related to course material and instructions for participation. These prompts will give students the opportunity to interact with fellow students and share their interpretation of course themes.

### Question-and-Answer Sessions

Throughout the semester the lead scholar of each course will conduct five Q&As. Students **MUST** attend at least three of these sessions for each course they are taking. **In order to receive credit for attending each Q&A, you must complete a 1–2 paragraph evaluation within 24 hours of participation.** Note: If students cannot attend three of the five Q&A sessions, they may receive credit by viewing archived Q&As and completing a 1–2 page review of topics covered for each missed Q&A.

### Final Paper/Project

For the final assignment of each term, students will choose to complete either a 15-page research paper or a research project. The research paper can be a traditional position paper that uses original research to prove a thesis statement or a historiography paper that critically examines how American historians have interpreted the same event differently and why shifts in historical debates may have occurred. Research projects are a public-education tool designed for the general population, teachers, and/or students of varying ages. Sample projects include (but are not limited to) vodcasts, documentary editing and transcription, podcasts, websites, annotated readers, walking tours, or museum exhibits. Lesson plans *will not* be accepted. A 5-page paper narrative must accompany the project. The section professor must approve research projects.

Both final assignment options require students to ask an open-ended historical question (something that does not have an easy yes or no answer) that they do not yet know the answer to. They will then use the research process (pulling from a variety of resources, mostly primary source documents) to explore that question and create a thesis-driven answer. Regardless of whether students choose to pursue a paper or project, papers and projects are broken down into smaller assignments, or scaffolded, throughout the semester. This method breaks up a large grade into smaller constituent grades and allows students time to incorporate instructor feedback into their assignment.



## Scaffolded Assignments

- Final Paper/Project Proposal (2%):

In roughly 1–2 pages, you should outline the main question, topic, or purpose of your final paper or project. This should include a description of the paper or project you are proposing, some background information on and historical context for your topic (answer the questions who, what, where, and when), a brief description of your research plan (this does not need to be very specific, but should outline how many weeks you plan to research, if you need to schedule research trips or if your sources are published or available digitally, and when you plan to begin writing), and a justification for why your particular project or paper is worth pursuing (What is the significance of this topic? What does it add to our historical knowledge? Are you filling a gap that other historians have overlooked, such as considering race, ethnicity, or gender?)

- Revised Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (3.5%):

This assignment will give you the opportunity to incorporate the feedback you received on the first draft of your proposal. In addition to incorporating your section professor's comments, you will also submit a proposed bibliography listing five sources you plan to use in your research for your final product. Each of these sources should be followed by a brief summary (3–5 sentences) of the source and what it will contribute to your research process.

- Paper or Project Preview (5%):

This will give you the opportunity to show the progress you have made on your final project or paper and get some early-stage feedback from your section professor. For a final paper, this should be roughly the first five pages of what will ultimately be your final submission. For a final project, determine with your section professor an appropriate portion of your final submission to turn in.

- Rough Draft (10.5%):

For a final paper, this should be, at minimum, the first ten pages of what will ultimately be your final submission. For a final project, determine with your section professor an appropriate portion of your final submission to turn in.

- Final Product (21%):

**Final Paper:** Final papers should be at least fifteen pages in length. These can take the form of research papers or historiography papers.

**Final Project:** Much like the final paper option, a final project is meant to prove that you have mastered the content covered by this course. We encourage you to be creative in your approach to this project, though it should be equivalent in rigor and workload to a final paper.