

Womensst 394H/594
Spring 2005

Theorizing Black Feminisms
Wed: 3:35–6:05 pm - Bartlett 201

Professor Alex Deschamps

Office: Bartlett 7B » Tue 2:30 – 4:30 pm & Thu 2:30 – 3:30 pm and by appointment
Telephone: 545-1958 ▪ Email: afd@wost.umass.edu ▪ Website: courses.umass.edu/wost394h

Course Description, Goals and Objectives

To understand Black Feminist thinking, it is important to explore the context out of which it emerges. We will analyze the evolution of Black Feminist consciousness and thought in the U.S. from the 1930s to contemporary time, since the struggle for black women's liberation which emerged in the mid-1960s is a construction of both intellectual and activist tradition during slavery and during the anti-slavery movement. This course will also be an interpretative analysis of the work and thought produced by a range of leading black women writers, scholars and intellectuals in everyday and alternative locations for knowledge production. *For purposes of this course, Black Women encompasses all women of African descent/heritage in the diaspora.*

This seminar is designed to introduce and familiarize students with the theoretical contributions of African American and African Diasporan feminists working in a variety of disciplinary fields. These women all rely upon the notion that issues of race, gender, sexuality and social class are central, rather than peripheral to any history, analysis or assessment of life. During the course we will outline the basic principles and practices of Black Feminism, contextualize the emergence of contemporary feminist work in historical perspective and also examine the written and spoken texts of nineteenth-century feminist foremothers. We will identify and characterize the major issues which black feminists address as well as the various forms of resistance to social structures. Black women will be viewed as producers of knowledge and as transforming agents. We will study the works and contributions of early feminists as well as later and contemporary scholars and activists.

Once an understanding of black feminist traditions is established, we will revisit the question of Black Feminism, as well as the continuities and discontinuities in the various definitions and analyses as they have emerged over time. We will discuss the theoretical and methodological assumptions underlying the intellectual and political traditions upon which these scholars rely. And most importantly, the course will also explore (a) realistic obstacles Black women encounter; (b) ways in which Black women have (re)defined self and community; (c) building a community by explicating the interface between the feminist struggle of women of color in the U.S. and outside the U.S.; (d) examining feminist expressions in the African Diaspora; and (e) identifying ways in which we can serve as social change agents. Special attention will be given to linking Black Feminist thought and Black Feminist activism (theory and practice).

Course Requirements and Grading

- You are expected to complete your reading assignments. Preparation and participation are essential for maximizing learning and critical analysis. On occasion, you will be asked to develop discussion questions based on the reading assignments. For a deeper exploration of the material discussed in class, you will be encouraged to facilitate a class discussion.
- Regular and consistent attendance is mandatory due to the participatory requirements and discussions of course material in class. Since we meet one a week, in-class activities cannot be easily made up, therefore unexcused absences will affect your final grade. Guidelines for excused absences must be followed as outlined by University Policies (20%).

Course Requirements and Grading (Cont'd)

- Written assignments are to be submitted by the due dates as outlined in the syllabus. They must be typed double-spaced. Please note that mechanics of writing are important factors in your assignments. Three (2-3 pages) critical analysis papers. Due dates are in the course calendar. See guidelines below. (30%).
- Biomythography. We will discuss guidelines for this in class. You will write your biomythography (Audre Lorde) similar to writing the personal and the political but with focus on your identity and how that influences and determines your personal, social, and political thinking and decision making. You may also assume a different identity placing yourself in that particular social, cultural, and political world. (15%).
- Women’s Studies Seminar Series. You will be required to attend at least one of the presentations and discussions (calendar will be distributed), and write a response paper on the value of the intertextual resonance of feminist theorizing. (10%).
- There will be one (1) final project/research paper in this course. Guidelines and topics will be distributed and discussed. (25%).

Guidelines for Content and Critical Analysis Response Papers

Your discussion questions and occasional critical analysis/response papers are suggested as a way to promote critical thinking, to monitor comprehension of the readings, to challenge your own thinking, and to help you engage in intellectual and practical discussions. Suggestions for writing the papers include (a) choose two or three points to help focus your response or critique and (b) take risks and incorporate your ideas about the subject, *but remember this is not about your opinion*. You *must* include content from the readings, you must comment on the contributions of the work, critically examine the “soundness” of the arguments, discuss insights gained or limitations to the analysis. Essentially, I want to know that you have read, understood, and analyzed the readings. Grades will be based on the quality and clarity of your arguments as well as the organization of your ideas.

Books

[Required Text]:	Patricia Hill Collins. <i>Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment</i> . (2 nd Edition). New York: Routledge, 2000.
	Angela Davis, <i>Blues, Legacies, and Black Feminism</i> . First Vintage Books, 1998.
	Audre Lorde. <i>Sister Outsider</i> . CA.: The Crossing Press, 1996.
	Margo V. Perkins. <i>Autobiography as Activism: Three Black Women of the Sixties</i> . Mississippi: University Press, 2000.
	E. Frances White. <i>Dark Continent of Our Bodies: Black Feminism and the Politics of Respectability</i> . Temple University Press, 2001.

Books (Cont'd)

[Required for Womensst 594 Students]:	Patricia Hill Collins, <i>Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism</i> . Routledge, 2004.
	Valerie Smith, <i>Not Just Race, Not Just Gender: Black Feminist Readings</i> . Routledge, 1998.
Additional Resource	Black Feminism Bibliography: http://www.library.ucsb.edu/subjects/blackfeminsm/
[Recommended]:	Katie Geneva Canon, <i>Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community</i> . Continuum, New York, 1996.
	Beverly Guy-Scheftal, <i>Words of Fire</i> . New York: The New Press, 1995.
	bell hooks, <i>Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center</i> . South End Press, 1984.
	bell hooks, <i>Ain't I A Woman</i> . South End Press, 1981.
	bell hooks, <i>Black Looks: Race and Representation</i> . South End Press, 1992.
	Kimberly Springer, <i>Still Lifting, Still Climbing: African Women's Contemporary Activism</i> . New York University Press, 2001.
	Bettye Collier-Thomas, <i>Daughters of Thunder: Black Women and Their Sermons, 1850-1979</i> . Jossey-Bass, 1998.
	Gail Elizabeth Wyatt, <i>Stolen Women: Reclaiming our Sexuality, Taking Back our Lives</i> . John Wiley & Sons, 1997.

Available at Food For Thought Book-Shop, North Pleasant Street, Amherst
and also on reserve in the library

Course Calendar

Wed January 26	<p><u>Black Feminisms: Definitions, Objectives, Frameworks, Early Expressions of Black Feminism</u></p> <p>Introductory Exercises, Syllabus, Goals, Expectations.</p> <p>Operational Definitions: Feminism, Black Feminism/Womanism, Feminist Scholarship, Gender, Race and Representation, Black Sexual Politics.</p> <p>Readings: [Handout/E-Reserve]–Maria W. Stewart, “<i>Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality, the Sure Foundation of Which We must Build, and Lecture Delivered at Franklin Hall</i>”, (Guy-Scheftall), pp. 23-33.</p> <p>[Handout/E-Reserve]–Ana Julia Cooper, “<i>The Status of Women in America</i>”, (Guy-Scheftall), pp. 43-49.</p>
Wed February 02	<p><u>Black Women (Re) naming, (Re) writing, (Re) claiming Feminism Feminism & Contributions to the Rhetoric</u></p> <p>Readings: [Text]–Patricia Hill Collins part 1, “<i>The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought</i>”, Chapters 1 & 2.</p> <p>[Text]–E. Frances White, “<i>Black Feminist Interventions</i>”, pp. 25-80.</p> <p>[Highly Recommended]–bell hooks, “<i>Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center</i>”, pp. 1-65.</p>
Wed February 09	<p><u>Black Feminist Theory as an Epistemic Site</u></p> <p>Readings: [Text]–Patricia Hill Collins Part 2, “<i>Core Themes in Black Feminist Thought</i>”, Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.</p> <p>[Handout/E-Reserve]–Michael Awkward, “<i>A Black Man’s Place in Black Feminist Criticism</i>”, <i>The Black Feminist Reader</i>, pp. 88-108.</p>
Wed February 16	<p><u>Social Construction of Whiteness: Theorizing the Historicity of Race, Gender, Sexuality</u></p> <p>Video Screening: Stuart Hall, Race, A floating Signifier and/or selections from “Without Sanctuary”</p> <p>Readings: [Handout/E-Reserve]-Nellie Y. McKay, “<i>Acknowledging Differences: Can Women Find Unity Through Diversity?</i>” James and Busia, pp. 267-283.</p> <p>Selected Readings to be researched.</p> <p>***Critical Analysis Paper 1 Due***</p>
Wed February 23	<p>No Class–Monday’s Schedule Re President’s Day Holiday</p>
<p>Intersectionalities, Interdisciplinaries, Conflicts, and Tensions: Always Race, Class, Gender, Sexuality and More</p>	
Wed March 02	<p><u>Feminism In and Out of the Academy: Emancipatory Praxis</u></p> <p>Guest Lecture</p> <p>Readings: [Text]–Angela Davis, “<i>Blues, Legacies and Black Feminism</i>”.</p> <p>[Web Assignment]-Contemporary Black Female artists.</p> <p>Group In-Class Assignments.</p>

Wed March 09	<u>Writing the Personal, Writing the Political</u>
Readings:	[Text]–Margo V. Perkins, “ <i>Autobiography as Activism</i> ”. ***Critical Analysis Paper 2 Due***
March 12-20	Spring Break Recess
Wed March 23	<u>Sexuality, Historicities, Identities: Refuting Black Women as Spectacle</u>
Readings:	[Text]–E. Frances White, “ <i>The Evidence of Things not Seen: The Alchemy of Race and Sexuality</i> ”, pp. 81-114. [Handout/E-Reserve]–Anne Fausto-Sterling, “ <i>Gender, Race, Nation. The Comparative Anatomy of ‘Hottentot’ Women in Europe</i> ”, 1815-1817 in Terry & Urla, <i>Deviant Bodies</i> , 1995, Indiana University Press, pp. 19-48. [Recommended]–Paula Giddings, “ <i>The Last Taboo</i> ”, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, <i>Words of Fire</i> , pp. 414-428.
Wed March 30	<u>Contemporaneous Issues, Silences, Tensions: (Re) Framing Race and Sexuality: Black Feminist Expansions and Queer Theory</u>
Readings:	Undergraduate Students: [Text]–E. Frances White, pp. 151-182. [Web Assignment]–Gender, Race, Sexuality, Queer Theory. Graduate Students: [Text]–Patricia Hill Collins, “Black Sexual Politics”. ***Critical Analysis Paper 3 due***
Wed April 06	<u>Black Feminism: Intersectionalities and Intertextualities</u>
Readings:	Undergraduate Students: Selections from “ <i>Back to the Drawing Board: African-Canadian Feminisms</i> ” edited by Njoki Nathane Wane, Katerina Deliovsky, and Erica Lawson. Graduate Students: [Text]–Valerie Smith, “ <i>Not Just Race, Not Just Gender</i> ”.
Wed April 13	<u>Sisterhood(s)-Dialogues and Conversations</u>
Readings	[Text]–Audre Lorde, “ <i>Sister Outsider</i> ”. Small Group and Roundtable Discussions. ***Biomythography Paper Due***
Wed April 20	<u>Counter Discourses: Diasporan Discourses</u>
Readings:	[Text]–E. Frances White, “ <i>Africa on My Mind</i> ”, pp. 117-150. [Handout/E-Reserve]–Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, “ <i>African Feminism: A Theoretical Approach to the History of Women in the African Disapora</i> ”.
Wed April 27	<u>Knowledge as Power of Praxis</u>
Readings:	[Text]–Patricia Hill Collins, Part 3, pp. 227-290. In Class Assignments and discussions. ***Last date to submit response paper from the WOST seminar series***
Wed May 04	<u>A New Generation of Activism: Further to Fly</u>
	Panel Discussion: Women of Color Leadership Network.
Wed May 11	<u>Synthesis and Summaries</u>
	Final Assignment Due

WOST 394H/594 BLACK FEMINIST/WOMANIST THEORY PROF. A. DESCHAMPS
SPRING 2005 TOPICS AND GUIDELINES FOR FINAL ASSIGNMENT

Choose *one* of the following topics and write a 10 - 15 page paper. As already mentioned, all papers must be typed double-spaced, and well documented (footnotes, bibliography as per agreed style). Indicate specific references and resources whether from texts, class discussions, films and videos, or other research areas. Be sure to speak and consult with me on your choice of topic. *You must have your topic selected no later than March 09, 2005.* You will also have access to a *beginning* bibliography of Black Feminist/Womanist Works and Writings. *Be creative with your paper. You may incorporate visuals with your final project. The paper should be rhetorically appropriate for the purposes of the class. It should include scholarly research, analysis of texts, and original thought.* You will also be graded on content and analysis, presentation, style, format, mechanics, applicability and transferability.

Graduate Students are expected to submit a 25 page paper. I want to encourage you to think of your paper as a beginning article for submission to a journal or for a conference presentation.

1. You may select a topic of your choice related to the material discussed in the course with focus on a theme or issue in regards to argumentation, identity, difference and epistemology. Be sure to discuss this with me. I would like to suggest some relevant and contemporaneous topics such as Sexuality, Religion, Diasporan, Activism, Politics of Representation, Identity Politics.
2. Select at least one book or some articles, by a non black feminist and a black feminist, writing on the same topic. Contrast the ideas/issues/concerns of the black feminist with those of the non black feminist. Discuss these feminists' efficacy in addressing concerns of women of African descent. How applicable are these theories and issues on the micro, meso, macro levels?
3. Perspectives on Black Women Writers. This is a great way to do intersectionality and intertextuality. Historically, until the 1940s, black women in both Anglo- and Afro-American literature have been usually assigned stereotyped roles and images usually as context for some societal dilemma or problem. Research and report on a collection of literary essays or a selection of books which present ideas central to black feminist views; essays that articulate the development of a black feminist perspective; essays that speak to the development of the self in Black women's literature. You could use fiction as well. You may want to read Tony Morrison. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination.*
4. Write (A) a biographical essay on Audre Lorde's contribution to feminist scholarship generally, and to academic feminism in particular, or (B) pick two or three primary theories of Audre Lorde to illustrate in an original paper or project. Here are two recent texts about Audre Lorde. (1) "Warrior Poet: A Biography of Audre Lorde" by Alexis De Veaux, 2004. (2) "Conversations with Audre lorde" edited by Joan Wylie Hall, 2004.
5. Theory Outside The Box. Using the Text, *Autobiography as Activism* and Angela Davis' *Blues, Legacies and Black Feminism* as templates, (or other choices) choose a topic, theme, issue, an activist, a writer,and do a creative project (photographic essay, documentary, play, media critic, art critic.....) something creative that will draw on the theoretical themes of the course. Here is your chance to "do" theory, to demonstrate "other" forms of making theory accessible, to develop your own thinking. Please bear in mind that you would be expected to "theorize" and submit a theoretical analysis of this project, at least 8 pages.

Bibliography of Additional Readings

1. Patricia Hill Collins. *What's In A Name? Womanism, Black Feminism, and Beyond*.
2. Ann Ducille. *The Occult of True Black Womanhood: Critical Demeanor and Black Feminist Studies*.
3. Ula Taylor. *The Historical Evolution of Black Feminist Theory and Praxis*.
4. Maria W. Stewart. *Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality, the Sure Foundation of Which We must Build and Lecture Delivered at Franklin Hall*. (Guy-Scheftall) 23-33.
5. Anna Julia Cooper. *The Status of Women in America*. (Guy-Scheftall) 43-49.
6. Joy James. *Ella Baker, Black Women's Work and Activist Intellectuals*.
7. Deborah K. King. *Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology*. (Guy-Scheftall). 294-312.
8. Deborah E. McDowell. *New Directions for Black Feminist Criticism*. African American Literary Theory. 167-178.
9. Sherley Anne Williams. *Some Implications of Womanist Theory*. African American Literary Theory. 218-222.
10. Hazel V. Carby. *Woman's Era: Rethinking Black Feminist Theory*. African American Literary Theory. 242-256.
11. Barbara Christian. *The Race for Theory*. The Black Feminist Reader. 11-22.
12. Michael Awkward. *A Black Man's Place in Black Feminist Criticism*. The Black Feminist Reader. 88-108.
13. bell hooks. *Black Women Shaping Feminist Theory*. The Black Feminist Reader. 131-145.
14. Kimberle Crenshaw. *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Anti-discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Anti-racism Politics*. The Black Feminist Reader. 208-238.
15. June Jordan. *A New Politics of Sexuality*. (Guy-Sheftall) pp. 405-411.
16. Paula Giddings. *The Last Taboo*. (Guy-Scheftall) pp. 414-428.
17. Evelyn Hammonds. *Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality*. African American Literary Theory. 482-497.
18. Cheryl Clarke. *Living the Texts Out: Lesbians and the Uses of Black Women's Traditions*. (James & Busia) 214-227.
19. Deborah E. McDowell. *Black Feminist Thinking: The "Practice" of "Theory"*. African American Literary Theory. 557-579.
20. Robert F. Reid-Pharr. *Tearing the Goat's Flesh: Homosexuality Abjection, and the Production of a Late Twentieth-Century Black*. African American Literary Theory. 602-622
21. Nellie Y. McKay. *Acknowledging Differences: Can Women Find Unity Through Diversity?* (James & Busia). 267-282.
22. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn. *African Feminism: A Theoretical Approach to the History of Women in the African Diaspora*.
23. Cindy Courville. *Re-examining Patriarch as a Mode of Production* (James & Busia). 31-42.
24. Stanlie James. *Mothering: A Possible Black Feminist Link to Social Transformation?* James & Busia. pp. 44-54.
25. Frances White. *Africa on my Mind: Gender, Counter Discourse and African American Nationalism* (Guy-Sheftall) 503-522.
26. Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie. *African Women, Culture and another Development*. (James & Busia) 102-116.

WOST 394H/594

FIFTY BLACK WOMEN WHO CHANGED AMERICA

Amy Alexander. *Fifty Black Women Who Changed America*. 1999. Carol Publishing Group. N.J.

“It is black women who are able to see out of their blackness, out of their poverty, and sometimes out of their privilege. So I believe it is going to be black women who will find the answers to many of the problems we face today.” (Jonetta Cole. Educator and former president of Spelman College)

Phillis Wheatley	Sojourner Truth
Harriet Tubman	Ida B. Wells Barnett
Mary Church Terrell	Madame C. J. Walker
Mary McLeod Bethune	Zora Neale Hurston
Alberta Hunter	Bessie Smith
Hattie McDaniel	Marian Anderson
Ella Baker	Josephine Baker
Dorothy West	Katherine Dunham
Mahalia Jackson	Dorothy Height
Rosa Parks	Billie Holiday
Gwendolyn Brooks	Fannie Lou Hammer
Lena Horne	Ella Fitzgerald
Ruby Dee	Shirley Chisholm
Eartha Kitt	Leontyne Price
Maya Angelou	Lorraine Hansberry
Odetta	Toni Morrison
Audre Lorde	Sonia Sanchez
Barbara Jordan	June Jordan
Betty Shabazz	Johnetta Cole
Mary Frances Berry	Marian Wright Edelman
Tina Turner	Charlayne Hunter Gault
Aretha Franklin	Nikki Giovanni
Angela Davis	Alice Walker
Susan Taylor	Whoopi Goldberg
Oprah Winfrey	Florence Griffith Joyner

WOMENSST 394H/594 THEORIZING BLACK FEMINSISMS PROF. DESCHAMPS

Assignments and Class Leadership

We are meeting once a week so the expectation is that you pace yourself and read thoughtfully and critically. I expect that everyone will come to class ready to participate fully, lead discussions, and contribute both knowledge and analyses (theoretical, grounded in the personal if relevant, and praxis). Discussion leaders will be assigned for every week’s readings and each group member must bring in questions to contribute to the discussion and analysis. It might be necessary to pair discussion leaders to share the responsibility for organizing the class. I will require you to save all questions because (1) this will help with your analysis papers; (2) when looking back over the series of questions, students should be able to identify recurrent themes and concerns in their own intellectual development; and (3) these questions will enable you to make coherent analysis in your final papers. Sometimes I will give you questions and themes to help you seque with the readings.

Community Journal

Each class period, a different person(s) will be assigned to the community Journal. Note takers will be responsible for recording during the class, and then producing a synopsis/summary (not exceeding two pages) to be distributed to the other members of the class (I will make the copies). This will enable everyone to actively participate in discussions and exercises. In the end, each student will have a collected set of class notes that bore witness to the “subjectivity” of the “objective” classroom experience. This process should be interesting and informative because note takers will have to reflect on what happened in class in order to condense the discussion to two written pages. Recipients of the notes will be able to analyze the different ways of interpretation and recording which will also be another point of pedagogical analysis and of standpoint theory.

Discussions Leader(s)

February 09, 2005 _____	_____
February 16, 2005 _____	_____
March 02, 2005 _____	_____
March 09, 2005 _____	_____
March 23, 2005 _____	_____
March 30, 2005 _____	_____
April 06, 2005 _____	_____

April 13, 2005 _____

April 20, 2005 _____

April 27, 2005 _____

May 04, 2005 _____

Community Note takers

February 09, 2005 _____

February 16, 2005 _____

March 02, 2005 _____

March 09, 2005 _____

March 23, 2005 _____

March 30, 2005 _____

April 06, 2005 _____

April 13, 2005 _____

April 20, 2005 _____

April 27, 2005 _____

May 04, 2005 _____

WOST 394H THEORIZING BLACK FEMINISMS A.DESCHAMPS
02/27/2003 CONVERSATIONS WITH AUDRE LORDE

Why does the work of Audre Lorde matter?

Discuss the nature, form, and context of her contributions to: Literature and Creating new Literary forms, Culture, Politics, Navigating Multiple Coexisting Identities as well as Political Intersectionalities, Feminist Theory, Activism and the Academy, A Multiplicative Lens of Analysis,

What is this *Erotic* of which Lorde speaks? What is your *Erotic*?

If Audre Lorde were to visit us in this room, what would you say to her? What questions would you ask? What topic or theme do you think she would choose to address to your generation? To this class? Why?

Role Plays.

WOST 394H THEORIZING BLACK FEMINISMS A.DESCHAMPS
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Role Plays.

WOST 394H BLACK FEMINSIT/WOMANIST THEORY DESCHAMPS
SISTERHOOD: A DIALOGUE AND CONVERSATION SESSION Spring 2003

Break up into groups of **four**. Using today's readings from the Audre Lorde Text, *Sister Outsider*, each one of you **must** discuss **one** reading which **spoke** to you the most. What? Why? (20 mins.)

Come back together as a large group. Have a conversation about the interconnections of these three essays: (1) *The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action*, (2) *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*, (3) *The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism*. (30 mins.)

- Lorde asks no more of us than she does of herself: that we pay attention to those voices we have been taught to distrust, that we articulate what they teach us, that we act upon what we know. Just as she develops themes, reworking and building on them over time to create theory, so, too, can we integrate the material of our lives. How can we do that ? How can you do that in your present lives? in your present relationships? In your work, voluntary or paid? In your scholarship?
- How can “anger” be put to work, to be productive? How can anger be loaded with information and energy? Make a distinction between “anger” that is “shrill” and “anger” that can be “expressed and translated into action.....” p.127.
- Make connections to Lorde's work, Patricia Hill-Collins Black Feminist Thought, and Frances E. Whites Scholarship.

WOMENSST 394H THEORIZING BLACK FEMINISMS SP'2003 DESCHAMPS

Write...free write....write from your stream of consciousness.....write with passion.....give voice to your feeling, your thinking, your emotion, your anger, your passion, your joy, all of you.....in prose, in poetry, however,The title is **POSSIBILITIES**. Write whatever that means at this point. (10 mins.). No talking during this exercise. Share (10 mins.).

Reflecting on Lorde's, *Sister Outsider* and Nellie McKay's, *Acknowledging Differences*, discuss with practical solutions how women can begin to find unity through diversity. Use yourselves in this class room. Lorde, "*I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there. See whose face it wears. Then the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices*", and McKay, "*Coming to terms with some differences will always present great difficulties for us, difficulties that may appear almost insurmountable at times. Yet we must face them honestly*" and Moraga, "*it is [in] looking to the nightmare that the dream is found. There the survivor emerges to insist on a future, a vision....born out of what is female*". (20 mins).

February 02, 2005 Black Feminist Thought – Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment

“Suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group makes it easier for dominant groups to rule because the seeming absence of an independent consciousness in the oppressed can be taken to mean that subordinate groups willingly collaborate in their own victimization.”

1. Collins claims that Black women’s oppression has been structured along three interdependent dimensions. What are they?
2. How have feminists suppressed Black women’s ideas? How have Black male intellectuals suppressed Black women’s ideas?
3. Collins says that Black women have a unique standpoint from which to view and analyze society. What does Collins mean by “**Black women’s standpoint?**” Explain. Where does it come from? Why does Collins argue that no standpoint is neutral? Why does Collins argue that certain groups find more difficulty in making known their standpoint to themselves and others?
4. Define **subjugated knowledge**.
5. What does Collins mean by the “**process of rearticulation**” and what is the role of African-American women intellectuals in this process?
6. How does Collins incorporate people who are not black women into the black feminist project?
7. How does Frances E. White complement or contradict Collin’s themes? What is her proposal for a **narrative alternative** of Black feminists voices and theories?
8. Frances E. White cites a number of Black feminists in this first chapter. Who are they? What are their arguments? Where are the **different similarities** in their thinking and in their recommendations?
9. In what ways has bell hooks contributed to all of this debate? How does she illustrate Black Women’s Contribution to Feminist Theory?

February 09, 2005 Black Feminist Theory as an Epistemic Site

What is Michael Awkward's contribution to the Black feminist debate? Can men be feminists? Can Black men be Black feminists? Be clear about your line of argumentation. What are some of Awkward's recommendations for the **inclusion or even incursion** of Black men into the feminist project?

Articulate how all of the above theories are applicable and transferable to all women, to feminism on a whole. What aspects are salient to your own lives, to your scholarship, and to the discourse about women and gender?

“The experience of Black women must be seen as a multiplicative, multilayered, and indivisible whole, symbolized by the equation one times one, not one plus one. This experience is characterized not only by oppression, discrimination, and spirit-murder, but by strength and love and transcendence as well”.

Adrienne Wing

CONVERSATIONS: THEORIZING BLACK FEMINISMS AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WHITENESS

Black women's bodies continue to be highly contested sites where political meanings of race and gender are constantly negotiated. Not unlike the policing of black women's bodies under enslavement and the historical construction of "true womanhood," contemporary proscriptions placed on black women's bodies reinforce racial, gender, and sexual stereotypes. Illustrate examples from Spike Lee's *bamboozled* that speak to these proscriptions. What contemporary examples can you also cite where Black women's bodies continue to be highly gendered and raced and sexualized? Think of Sports (the aftermath of the debut of the 'infamous' Cat Suit at the 2002 U.S. Open Women's Tournament), think of public policy, think of the academy,.....what are possible implications? Discuss the complex task for contemporary Black women to define their own image, one that necessarily both incorporates and subverts these stereotypes, myths and fantasies. Any recommendations?

CONVERSATIONS: THEORIZING BLACK FEMINISMS AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WHITENESS

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