

# **Policing, Protest, and Politics: Queers, Feminists, and #BlackLivesMatter**

WOMENSST 295P / AFROAM 295P

Fall 2015

T/Th 4:00 – 5:15pm

212 Bartlett Hall

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Office hours: Th 1:30-3:30pm  
(*& by appointment only*)

## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

Over the past year few years, a powerful social movement has emerged to affirm to the country and world that Black Lives Matter. Sparked by the killing of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman in Sanford, Florida, and Zimmerman's acquittal as well as the police killings of other black men and women, including Michael Brown, Rekia Boyd, and Freddie Gray, this movement challenges police violence and other policing that makes black communities unsafe as well as social constructions of black people as inherently dangerous and criminal. Police violence against black people and the interrelated criminalization of black communities have a long history, older than the US itself. There is a similarly long and important history of activism and social movements against police violence and criminalization. Today, black people are disproportionately subject to police surveillance and violence, arrest, and incarceration. So, too, are other people of color (both men and women) and queer, trans, and gender nonconforming people of all races but especially those of color. This course will examine the history of policing and criminalization of black, queer, and trans people and communities and related anti-racist, feminist, and queer/trans activism. In doing so, we will interrogate how policing and understandings of criminality—or the view that certain people or groups are inherently dangerous or criminal—in the US have long been deeply shaped by race, gender, and sexuality.

## **COURSE MATERIALS**

Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography*

Beth Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation*

Please note that *Assata* is available online via the library at: <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/umassa/detail.action?docID=10635797>. All other readings are posted on the course website, [policingprotestpolitics2015.wordpress.com](http://policingprotestpolitics2015.wordpress.com). Please bring all relevant materials to class.

## **GRADING and ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Assignments**

**Participation (20%):** As a discussion-based class, full engagement is vitally important to your own learning as well as your peers'. This means coming to class having read all assigned materials and

being ready to ask questions and share comments; fully participating in class activities and discussions; as well as active listening. While I am institutionally situated as the instructor of this course, *we are all responsible for the learning we make possible during our time together*. You can expect me to come to class organized and prepared to lead you in our work together. Similarly, I will expect each of you to come to class fully prepared for our work. Coming to class unprepared is equivalent to not coming at all and signifies to your peers that you do not value intellectual exchange and the communal process of learning. Any activities not related to class (such as texting, completing assignments for other classes, writing sly secret notes to one another, etc.) will negatively affect your participation grade. I recognize some of you may be shy or uncomfortable in large group discussions. I acknowledge that engaged listening and note taking are also valid forms of participation. However, if speaking during class is overwhelming to you, consider preparing one specific point about the readings to address in class each day or challenge yourself to speak up once a week in some way. The blog on our class website is also another opportunity to participate. While we will not be using it for official assignments this semester, I encourage you to post relevant news, events, or thoughts about readings or class discussion that you didn't get a chance to say in class. Posting on the blog will be taken into consideration for your participation grade. Generally, in order to grade your participation, I must be able to see your process of working through the course material!

**Reflection Papers (35%):** Over the course of the semester, you are responsible for writing 10 reflection papers on class readings. These papers should be about 2-pages in length. In this paper, you should:

1. Discuss all the readings assigned for the class period.
2. Explain the author's or authors' main argument, including defining any key terms, and describe how they supported that argument.
3. Provide some critical commentary on that argument or one of the authors' points, in which you can: draw connections between that argument/point and other readings, class discussion, and/or current events; argue against or critique that argument/point; and/or ask a discussion question.

The primary purpose of these papers is to demonstrate your engagement with the readings. You may choose which readings you write about; however, you may only write one reflection paper per week (so you will write reflection papers 10 out of 14 weeks). These papers should be **turned in on Moodle by 8pm the day before** the class for which the readings are assigned.

**Final Project (45%):** In groups of three or four, you will produce creative public education projects—such as a poster series, a blog, a zine, or the curriculum for a teach-in—addressing a current issue related to criminalization and policing. As part of this project, you will write a short proposal and meet with me to discuss it (during week 8) and write an annotated bibliography with your group. During our last week of classes, your group will give a short presentation about your project to the class. Each of you will also write an individual paper about your project.

*Meeting: Week 8*

*Proposal (5%): Friday, October 30 by 11:59pm*

*Annotated Bibliography (8%): Thursday, November 12*

*Group Project (22%): Tuesday, December 15*

*Individual paper (10%): Tuesday, December 15, by 11:59pm*

**Extra Credit (+2%):** You may earn extra credit in this course by attending a campus, five colleges, or other community event that relates to the issues and topics of our course and writing a 1-2 page reflection paper about the event. This reflection must include:

1. A *brief* summary of the event
2. A reflection on how this event relates to or connects with what we're learning in class
3. Your personal response and a reflection about the event

Extra credit event opportunities will be posted on the course calendar and announced periodically throughout the semester. You are encouraged to propose events as extra credit opportunities. You may submit up to **2 extra credit reflections to earn up to 4% extra credit in total**. In order to receive credit, your reflection must be submitted no later than Tuesday, December 15.

All formal writing assignments should be typewritten in a simple 12 pt. Times New Roman font, double-spaced with 1" margins (be aware that MS Word defaults to 1.25" margins – you must change your preferences). All assignments should include your name, the date, and page numbers and be stapled together. Please use citations when appropriate and use a consistent citation style (for example, Chicago Manual or MLA). Be sure to proofread carefully for style and grammar. Submit all papers in Microsoft Word. Papers that do not follow proper formatting instructions may receive a 1/3 a grade deduction.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

**Email:** Please email me any time with questions or concerns. I have a policy of responding to email within 48 hours. Please plan accordingly. I may also occasionally send class readings, updates, and information to your email. Please read these emails carefully.

**Discussion:** This is a discussion-based class. I expect consistent and respectful participation by everyone in the class (not just talking in class but also active listening). Many of the topics we will discuss this semester may invoke strong feelings, and we must be mindful that there is never a "right" answer. We will have different opinions. One of the objectives of this course is to learn strategies for articulating one's opinion and for responding to others' comments both articulately and respectfully. We will sometimes, and maybe often, have contentious conversations. You may be uncomfortable and even personally challenged (by the class materials, by your classmates, or by me). I encourage you to be open-minded and expect you to listen and respond respectfully to each other (and me!). Discomfort is often necessary to learning. That being said, if you think a classmate is being disrespectful or is wrong, I encourage you to talk to them in or outside of class, or talk to me. If you think I have been disrespectful or wrong, I strongly encourage you to talk to me, either in or outside of class. I make mistakes and do not know everything, and I am constantly learning from my students. Finally, as part of the nature of the material we will cover, we will be talking about violence and oppression. If you ever feel the need to step outside of class, either for a short period of time or for the rest of class, you are welcome to do so. You will not be penalized for doing so but are responsible for any material you missed.

**Accessibility:** I am deeply committed to making my classroom accessible to all students. We all enter the classroom with different abilities, needs, and capacities. Please come talk to me if you are having trouble accessing any aspects of the course. If you have a disability and would like to request accommodations, please contact Disability Services, located in 161 Whitmore Admin.

Building, at 413.545.0892. If you are eligible, they will give you an accommodation letter, which you should bring to me as soon as possible.

**Attendance:** I expect you to attend every class meeting. You may miss up to two classes for reasons you deem valid—religious holidays, illness, emergencies, inescapable appointments. Each additional absence, up to six, will lower your participation grade by a full grade (i.e., from B to C). **If you miss more than six classes, YOU WILL FAIL THE COURSE.** In addition, patterns of lateness will adversely affect your grade, and I really discourage it because it is disruptive to class. Likewise, leaving early is discouraged and can adversely affect your grade. If you need to come late or leave early from class, please let me know in advance. If you do not attend class, it is your responsibility to ask a fellow class member for details and catch up. Please do not ask: “*Did I miss anything?*” If you were absent from class, you definitely missed something. Participation is a significant amount of your grade, and you cannot participate if you are not in class. Being present in class—both physically and mentally—is also crucial to building a cohesive and collegial community.

**Timeliness:** I do not accept late assignments unless we have come to a prior arrangement. Exceptions will be made under extraordinary (and documented) circumstances. I am generally willing to provide extensions or other accommodations when needed and discussed ahead of the deadline (not only for illness or other similar circumstances but if a major deadline for this class is the same as a deadline you have for another class). Please plan ahead and make requests for extensions by email at least 48 hours prior to the assignment deadline. Please also note that you are not guaranteed an extension if requested.

**Computers and Other Technology:** I do not allow cell phones to be used in our classroom. Please turn off your cell phones and/or ringers during class. If there is an emergency reason that you may need it, please let me know in advance. You may use a computer or tablet for readings and/or class notes. These should be used for class-related purposes only (i.e. not email, Facebook, Twitter, etc.). I reserve the right to ban the use of computers or tablets for any individuals or for the entire class (unless you need it for accessibility purposes). Please note that if I find their use distracting to the class, I will ban them.

**Policy on Plagiarism and Academic Honesty:** You are expected to be the sole author all of your assignments (aside from those specifically designated as group assignments) and properly cite all information, ideas, and writing you found in sources. If you are confused about how to properly cite your sources and/or avoid plagiarism, I suggest that you check out Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/> and <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>. In addition, please refer to the University’s Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures for more information: <http://www.umass.edu/ombuds/honesty>.

**Writing Help:** While I am happy to help you one-on-one with your writing, I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Center ([www.umass.edu/writingcenter/](http://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/)). In addition, the writing advisor for WGSS is Elise Swinford ([eswinfor@english.umass.edu](mailto:eswinfor@english.umass.edu)), who has drop in hours Wednesday, 11am-2pm, and Thursday, 1pm-4pm. She is also available for scheduled appointments Monday-Thursday, upon request. Her office is Bartlett 102A. Elise and/or the Writing Center can give you feedback on any stage or part of the writing process and are even better equipped to help you than I am.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**  
(SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

**Week 1**

**Tuesday, September 8 – Introduction**

**Thursday, September 10 – Foundations: Social Construction, Structural Racism, & Disposability**

- Carol A. Stabile, “Introduction” from *White Victims, Black Villains: Gender, Race, and Crime News in US Culture*
- Melvin L. Rogers, “Introduction: Disposable Lives” [you are only required to read through the paragraph that ends with footnote 13]
- Vesla M. Weaver, “Black Citizenship and Summary Punishment: A Brief History to the Present”

**Week 2**

**Tuesday, September 15 – Foundations: White Supremacy**

- George Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness”
- Andrea Smith, “Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of Color Organizing”

**Thursday, September 17 – Foundations: Power**

- Dean Spade, “What’s Wrong with Rights?”
- Dean Spade, “Rethinking Transphobia and Power—Beyond a Rights Framework”

**Week 3**

**Tuesday, September 22 – The criminalization of Blackness**

- Angela Davis, “Slavery, Civil Rights, and Abolitionist Perspectives Toward Prison”

**Thursday, September 24 – The Criminalization of Sexual and Gender Nonconformity**

- Joey Mogul, Andrea Ritchie, and Kay Whitlock, “Setting the Historical Stage” and “Gleeful Gay Killers, Lethal Lesbians, and Deceptive Gender Benders” from *Queer (In)Justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the US*

**Week 4**

**Tuesday, September 29 – Lynching and Anti-Lynching Activism**

- Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (1892)
- Equal Justice Initiative, *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*

### **Thursday, October 1 – Civil Rights Movement**

- “The Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955-1956: ‘Like a Revival Starting’”
- “Student Sit-ins in Nashville, 1960: ‘A Badge of Honor’”
- Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
  - o RECOMMENDED: “Freedom Rides, 1961: ‘Sticks and Bricks’”

### **Week 5**

### **Tuesday, October 6 – American Apartheid?**

- Loïc Wacquant, “From Slavery to Mass Incarceration: Rethinking the ‘Race Question’ in the US”
- Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, “The Construction of the Ghetto” from *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*

### **Thursday, October 8 – Black Power**

- Assata Shakur, *Assata*, Chs. 1-3 (pp. 3-70)
  - Black Panther Party, “What We Want, What We Believe” (1966)
- VIEW: *Black Power Mixtapes*

### **Week 6**

### **Tuesday, October 13 – No Class**

### **Thursday, October 15 – Black Power**

- Shakur, *Assata*, Chs. 6-13 (pp. 99-194)

### **Week 7**

### **Tuesday, October 20 – Black Power and COINTELPRO**

- Shakur, *Assata*, finish (pp. 195-274) and read both Forewords (pp. vii-xix)

### **Thursday, October 22 – Gay Liberation, Trans Liberation**

- Jennifer Worley, “‘Street Power’ and the Claiming of Public Space: San Francisco’s ‘Vanguard’ and Pre-Stonewall Queer Radicalism”
- VIEW: *Screaming Queens*

### **Week 8**

### **Tuesday, October 27 – Gay Liberation, Trans Liberation**

- Third World Gay Revolution (NYC), “What We Want, What We Believe” (1971)
- Che Gossett, Reina Gossett, and AJ Lewis, “Reclaiming Our Lineage: Organized Queer, Gender-Nonconforming, and Transgender Resistance to Police Violence”

### **Thursday, October 29 – Criminalizing Black Culture, Post-Civil Rights**

- Excerpts from *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (AKA The Moynihan Report): pp. 1-6, 29-45 (RECOMMEND: pp. 15-27)

**\*\*\* DUE: Final project proposals**

### **Week 9**

#### **Tuesday, November 3 – Law and Order Politics and the Rise of Mass Incarceration**

- Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* excerpts (pp. 40-94)

#### **Thursday, November 5 – Policing: Broken Windows and Zero Tolerance**

- George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson, “Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety” (1982)
- Christian Parenti, “Discipline in Playland: Zero Tolerance: The Science of Kicking Ass” from *Lockdown America*

### **Week 10**

#### **Tuesday, November 10 – Policing Sex, Policing Gender**

- Joey Mogul, Andrea Ritchie, and Kay Whitlock, “The Ghosts of Stonewall” from *Queer (In)Justice*
- Dani McClain, “Being ‘Masculine of Center’ While Black”

#### **Thursday, November 12 – #BlackLivesMatter**

- Alicia Garza, “A Herstory of the #Black Lives Matter Movement”
- Darnell L. Moore, “Not Yet Here: Internal Abolition in a Black Queer Future”

**\*\*\*DUE: Annotated bibliography**

### **Week 11**

#### **Tuesday, November 17 –The Politics of Black Rage**

- Audre Lorde, “The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism”
- bell hooks, “Killing Rage: Militant Resistance”
- Read at least two of the following:
  - o Benji Hart, “In Support of Baltimore: Or, Smashing Police Cars Is Logical Political Strategy”
  - o Michael Gould-Wartofsky, “When Rioting is Rational”
  - o Ijeoma Oluo, “Riots Are Not Counterproductive”
  - o Natasha Lennard, “Baltimore Didn’t Go from Peace to Violence. The Violence Was There All Along.”
  - o Carol Anderson, “Ferguson Isn’t about Black Rage Against Cops. It’s White Rage Against Progress.”

### **Thursday, November 19 – Black Feminism and Violence**

- Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement”
- Combahee River Collective, “Why Did They Die? A Document of Black Feminism”
- Beth Richie, “The Problem of Male Violence against Black Women” in *Arrested Justice* (pp. 23-63)
  - o RECOMMENDED: Barbara Smith, Untitled

### **Week 12**

### **Tuesday, November 24 – Abolitionist Feminisms and Carceral Feminisms**

- Richie, “How We Won the Mainstream but Lost the Movement” and “Black Women, Male Violence, and the Buildup of a Prison Nation” in *Arrested Justice* (pp. 65-124)

### **Thursday, November 26 – No Class: Thanksgiving**

### **Week 13**

### **Tuesday, December 1 – Abolitionist Feminisms and Carceral Feminisms**

- Richie, “The Matrix: A Black Feminist Response to Male Violence and the State” and “Conclusion” in *Arrested Justice* (pp. 125-166)

### **Thursday, December 3 – Queer/Trans Abolitionist Politics**

- Morgan Bassichis, Alexander Lee, and Dean Spade, “Building an Abolitionist Trans and Queer Movement with Everything We’ve Got”
- Jayden Donahue, “Making It Happen, Mama: A Conversation with Miss Major”

### **Week 14**

### **Tuesday, December 8 – Alternative Models and Project Presentations**

- CARA, “Taking Risks: Implementing Grassroots Community Accountability Strategies”
  - o RECOMMENDED: Mychal Denzel Smith, “Abolish the Police. Instead, Let’s Have Full Social, Economic, and Political Equality”
  - o RECOMMENDED: Mariame Kaba, “Thinking Through the End of Police”

### **Thursday, December 10 – Project Presentations**

### **Week 15 - Finals**

### **Tuesday, December 15**

**\*\*\*DUE: Final projects and papers, by 11:59pm**